

# Dr Gudani Millicent Managa: A journey of perseverance and success

By Rotondwa Raligidima, Potatoes SA

The Potatoes SA bursary recipient, Dr Gudani Millicent Managa, was born and raised in Itsani, in the heart of Venda in Limpopo.

Her mother, Johanna Managa, is a single parent who strongly believes in the power of education to transform lives as it did with her daughters. Dr Managa's upbringing made her appreciate the value of hard work, dedication and perseverance. Her younger sister, Konanani, shares her passion for science.

Dr Managa is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of South Africa, where she contributes to various research projects, publishes articles in journals, supervises and mentors postgraduate students, and shares her knowledge and professional expertise with her colleagues.

## A door opened ...

Dr Managa heard of the Potatoes SA bursary programme and became a beneficiary in 2013. At that time, she was studying at Potchefstroom College of Agriculture and pursuing a Diploma in Agriculture, which she completed within three years, graduating at the top of her class.

The Potatoes SA bursary programme played a crucial role in

funding her undergraduate studies, fully covering her tuition, books, accommodation and meals. She indicated that the awarded bursary was a significant turning point in her academic career, leading to her pursuing her postgraduate studies.

The Potatoes SA bursary programme not only assisted her in achieving her academic goals, but also helped her realise her potential as a professional in the field of agriculture.

According to Dr Managa, her journey since being awarded the Potatoes SA bursary has been nothing short of remarkable. Her academic and professional achievements are a testament to her hard work and dedication. After completing her undergraduate degree, she went on to obtain a master's degree (*cum laude*) in 2018 and her PhD in 2021. She obtained both qualifications in agriculture at Tshwane University of Technology.

## Cashing in on opportunities

After completing her undergraduate diploma, Potatoes SA placed her at Product Control for Agriculture at the Tshwane Fresh Produce Market to gain workplace exposure. She worked as a product quality inspector specialising in potatoes.

She fondly remembers her first opportunity to attend the Potatoes SA Symposium, hosted in Cape Town. This was a milestone where she gained invaluable knowledge and broadened her network.

Her success in securing multiple scholarships and gaining international exposure is a testament to the programme's impact. During her PhD journey, she was awarded an international mobility scholarship to Université de la Réunion on Réunion Island where she got the opportunity to conduct research on lactic acid bacteria, fermentation of chayote

leaf (*Sechium edule*), and pineapple (*Ananas comosus*) to produce smoothies.

Her contribution to the potato industry is remarkable. She has dedicated a portion of her career to disseminating knowledge regarding various potato cultivars, sharing best practices for growing and marketing potatoes and engaging with small-scale producers. Her work has helped producers improve their yields and profitability while also promoting sustainable practices that protect the environment.

## Improving the programme

Dr Managa strongly recommends the Potatoes SA bursary programme to students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, as it greatly reduces the financial burden of education and builds a concrete foundation for unlimited learning through various opportunities. She suggests that Potatoes SA improves its outreach strategies to different communities by providing enhanced mentorship opportunities. The programme should possibly also regularly review bursary expenses per each institution's fee structure to benefit more students.

Dr Managa highlights that, given the high unemployment rate in South Africa, it would be beneficial to invest in integrating Potatoes SA bursary recipients into the South African potato industry upon completion of their studies.

Her story serves as an inspiration to many, highlighting the importance of initiatives that empower aspiring individuals to achieve their academic and professional dreams. 🌱

For more information about the Potatoes SA bursary programme, email [rotondwa@potatoes.co.za](mailto:rotondwa@potatoes.co.za).



Dr Gudani Managa during her PhD graduation at the Tshwane University of Technology in 2021.



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