

A notable internship experience

By Relebogile Tlomatsana, Potatoes SA intern

My name is Relebogile Tlomatsana and I come from Westonaria, a small town in the West Rand. I hold a National Diploma in Agriculture (Mixed Agriculture) from the Potchefstroom College of Agriculture. I feel honoured to be interning with Potatoes SA for a 12-month period in their transformation division. This division aims to enhance all industry participants' skills, knowledge, and capabilities, including producers, processors and other stakeholders.

By providing training, resources, and support, the division aims to empower individuals and communities to thrive and contribute to the growth and development of the potato industry. I have had the privilege of participating in many of the tasks undertaken by the transformation division.

Taking transformation seriously

Earlier this year, the transformation division hosted the Potatoes SA Transformation Symposium. This symposium had a significant impact, sparking innovation and growth among new-era producers and connecting them with industry leaders. It was a wonderful opportunity to network with other producers and agricultural professionals, gaining exposure to various agricultural sectors and drawing inspiration from the remarkable contributions our producers make to the country.

The transformation division has a significant impact on many of our potato producers nationwide. Most of these producers participate in the Potatoes SA transformation programmes, with committees formed according to regions. We recently had the opportunity to organise

regional meetings where one of the main agenda points was to nominate the chairperson for each region for the year. This involved preparing agendas, minutes, and ballot papers that allowed producers to elect their designated representatives. It was incredibly fascinating to witness the unity among black potato producers within their respective regions.

Practical experience

I also had the opportunity to be part of the Mzansi Young Farmers Indaba, an event hosted by *Food for Mzansi*. Our team participated in the exhibitions, showcasing our work at Potatoes SA.

Recently, I also took part in Nampo Harvest Day alongside my colleagues, gaining exposure to various agricultural sectors. Nampo's purpose is to connect producers with the entire value chain, including inputs, machinery, food processing, precision agriculture, marketing, and financing solutions. It provided an excellent opportunity to observe the machinery, implements, and inputs that producers use daily. One of the most impressive aspects was witnessing advanced technology and tools that make farming easier and more efficient.

Potatoes SA collaborates with various stakeholders, including Prokon. Prokon offers workplace experience and imparts skills to undergraduate students, supporting the Potatoes SA tertiary pipeline bursary programme. We had the opportunity to visit a fresh produce market, where we met one of the bursary beneficiaries currently completing their experiential learning in Matlosana (previously known as Klerksdorp).

It was a fascinating experience and we gained valuable insight into the daily activities of an intern at the fresh



Relebogile Tlomatsana at the Potatoes SA exhibition table at the Mzansi Young Farmers Indaba.

produce market. We observed how vegetables, especially potatoes, are inspected before being distributed to external markets. This highlighted the pivotal role fresh produce markets play in distributing and marketing fresh food within South Africa. This experience underscored the importance of these markets in ensuring the quality and availability of fresh produce across the country.

Potatoes SA's transformation programmes are making a genuine difference and it is a true honour and privilege to be learning the ropes here. I hope to learn much more, hone my abilities and expertise, collaborate with a diverse team, and work in an atmosphere that supports my development beyond the scope of my job description. 🍅

For more information on Potatoes SA's internship and other transformation programmes, visit www.potatoes.co.za.

Mondstuk van die Suid-Afrikaanse aartappelbedryf • Mouthpiece of the South African potato industry

CHIPS

VOL 38 NO 4 • JULY / AUGUST 2024

**POTATOES SA CONGRESS &
SEED POTATO GROWERS' FORUM
PROGRAMME 2024**

**KULTIVAR- EN VERWERKINGS-PROEWE
ONDER BESPROEING OP PETRUSBURG
EN MARBLE HALL IN 2023**

**Precision breeding for
resilient spuds**

**Empowering small-scale
producers through the EDP**

**Market monitor:
First 22 weeks at FPMs**