

Empowering communities through small-grower programmes

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South Africa ranks among the countries with the highest rate of income inequality in the world, compared to other middle-income countries. This means extremely high levels of absolute poverty. While the country may be food secure, a large number of South African households are food insecure. Potato farming plays a significant role in ensuring food security and economic growth.

Recognising its importance, Potatoes SA manages the small-grower development programme to empower communities, aspiring potato producers and the youth. As part of this transformative initiative, potato trials were conducted in Mpumalanga, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape.

Importance of small growers

Small-scale and subsistence agricultural production is a contributor to food security. It seems counter-intuitive to promote subsistence or small-scale agricultural production in a semi-industrialised economy such as South Africa. However, rising food prices, particularly that of maize, wheat, and now potatoes which form a staple diet of the poor in South

Africa, pose serious problems for the urban and rural poor as most are net buyers of food.

Demonstrations aim to teach potato production, promote food security, encourage commercialisation and foster engagement among stakeholders. The programme is an ambitious endeavour aimed at promoting inclusivity and sustainable agriculture. By providing training and support to communities, aspiring producers and the youth, the programme seeks to uplift individuals by equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge in potato farming. Through these initiatives, Potatoes SA aims to foster economic empowerment, food security and job creation.

Stakeholder engagement

To ensure the success and effectiveness of the potato planting trials, engagement with relevant stakeholders is crucial. Collaboration with stakeholders allows participants to benefit from the knowledge and resources provided by government agencies, enhancing their understanding of best practices in potato production.

The potato planting trials



The application of fertiliser demonstrated to producers and the community of Katkop in Maclear in the Eastern Cape.

are not only aimed at teaching farming techniques but also focus on community involvement and participation. The trials create a platform for knowledge-sharing, networking, and collective learning. This communal approach fosters a sense of ownership and helps build strong relationships within the agricultural sector.

The potato planting trials thus far conducted under the small-grower development programme yielded fruitful results. Participants gained practical experience, learned about market access, and gained insight into



A potato seed planting demonstration in Witklip in Mpumalanga.



Thembekele Thembisile Hani local municipality officials, community and neighbouring producers planting seed potatoes



Steve Tshwete local municipality officials, community and neighbouring producers in Delmas in Mpumalanga.



Maclear local municipality officials, community and neighbouring producers in the Eastern Cape.

the commercialisation process. The knowledge gained from the trials will empower individuals to pursue potato farming as a sustainable livelihood option and contribute to the overall development of the agricultural sector.

Moving forward

It is essential to build upon the success of these potato planting trials. Continued support, training, and mentorship should be provided to the participants. Furthermore, expanding

the programme to reach more communities and aspiring producers is crucial for creating a sustainable and inclusive potato farming industry in South Africa.

Potato planting trials held under the programme have demonstrated the transformative power of agricultural initiatives. By providing knowledge and resources, Potatoes SA is fostering economic empowerment, promoting food security and encouraging

sustainable agricultural practices. The collaboration with stakeholders supports the comprehensive engagement in driving agricultural development. 🌱

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