

# Potatoes SA cultivates bright futures

By Rotondwa Raligidima, Potatoes SA

Since 2007, Potatoes SA has been dedicated to fostering the next generation of agricultural leaders through its internship and workplace experience programme. This initiative plays a vital role in bridging the gap between academic learning and practical work within the agricultural industry.

Potatoes SA has always recognised the importance of providing students with hands-on experience to complement their formal education from the start. As a result, the internship and workplace experience programmes were created to allow students to gain valuable insights and skills essential for success in the agricultural sector.

Through the internship programme, Potatoes SA assists students who require practical experience to complete their qualifications, by finding farms to place them and providing them with a stipend to take care of their daily needs. Students are placed for a total of 24 months: The first 12 months are spent completing their qualification, followed by another 12 months dedicated to acquiring workplace experience.

## Collaboration creates opportunity

One of the main strengths of Potatoes SA's programme is its collaborative approach. Over the years, the organisation has partnered with various industry stakeholders to improve the programme's effectiveness. These collaborations have allowed students to access a wide range of experiences and opportunities tailored to their interests and career aspirations.

One of the current prominent collaborators is Potato Seed Production (PSP), a well-known producer of high-quality potato seeds. Since the programme began, PSP has

been crucial in providing internship opportunities, enabling students to engage in seed production processes, and contributing to improvements in potato farming methods. Joel Dalamba, a student from the Potchefstroom College of Agriculture, is in his final year and requires practical experience to graduate. He has been placed with PSP.

Another integral partner is Prokon, a non-profit organisation specialising in quality assurance within the South African fresh produce industry. Through Potatoes SA's collaboration with Prokon, students have gained invaluable workplace experience, with many securing permanent positions upon completion of their internships due to their commitment and dedication to the work. Currently, a student is placed with Prokon. This successful partnership highlights the programme's effectiveness in equipping students with the skills and experience needed for their professional careers.

## Monitoring progress

Potatoes SA recently visited Prokon at the Klerksdorp Fresh Produce Market. This visit was part of Potatoes SA's ongoing efforts to monitor the progress of their interns. The focus was on evaluating the challenges, experiences, and learning of the intern, Lesego Motsemme. During this visit, we evaluated Motsemme's progress in providing quality assurance services. It was evident that Motsemme is dedicated and hardworking, showing significant growth and skill development in the role.

We would like to commend Jabulani Molefe, Motsemme's supervisor, whose guidance and mentorship have been instrumental in his professional growth journey. From inspecting the finest produce to



Francois Strauss from Potatoes SA engaging with students at the Elsenburg Agricultural Training Institute's open day.

implementing robust quality control measures, Motsemme is thriving under the Prokon team's guidance. We are proud of his dedication and the strides he is making.

## Exhibitions and achievements

To further share our tertiary pipeline programmes, which include bursaries, internships, and workplace experience opportunities, Potatoes SA actively participates in exhibitions at various educational institutions. These exhibitions are designed to inform students about the range of



Dr Ivan Meyer, the Western Cape minister of agriculture, with Rotondwa Raligidima and Francois Strauss from Potatoes SA at the Elsenburg Agricultural Training Institute's open day.



*Lesego Motsemme, Potatoes SA intern, with his supervisor Jabulani Molefe, quality control inspector at Prokon SA, at the Klerksdorp Fresh Produce Market.*

programmes available to support their academic and professional growth.

On 13 April 2024, the Western Cape government invited Potatoes SA to showcase its programmes at the Elsenburg Agricultural Training Institute's open day. This event provided an excellent platform to

engage with students, answer their questions, and inspire them to pursue careers in agriculture.

The success of Potatoes SA's internship and workplace experience programme is further exemplified by its alumni's achievements and contributions to the agricultural sector. Many former interns have gone on to become leaders and innovators, driving positive change and advancements in various fields related to potato farming and beyond.

### Focus on the future

As Potatoes SA looks towards the future, the organisation remains dedicated to refining and expanding its internship and workplace experience programme to meet the evolving needs of students and the agricultural industry. Through ongoing collaboration and mentorship, Potatoes SA continues to cultivate futures and inspire the next generation of agricultural professionals.

Potatoes SA continuously seeks and appreciates collaboration from other industries, organisations, and producers willing to assist students and improve their lives. This support can be in the form of placements or funding. Anyone interested in collaborating with Potatoes SA is encouraged to reach out and contribute to this transformative initiative.

Potatoes SA's internship and workplace experience programme is a testament to the organisation's enduring commitment to nurturing talent and fostering excellence in the agricultural sector. By actively engaging with educational institutions and industry partners, Potatoes SA is sowing the seeds of success for future generations. 🌱

For more information on Potatoes SA's internship and workplace experience programme, email [rotondwa@potatoes.co.za](mailto:rotondwa@potatoes.co.za) or visit [www.potatoes.co.za](http://www.potatoes.co.za).

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