

Empowering Eastern Cape producers: A path to agricultural transformation

By Brian Makhele, transformation specialist, Potatoes SA

Amid the green fields and fertile soils of South Africa's agricultural landscape, a stark reality persists, namely the glaring absence and sluggish pace of transformation. Despite the nation's fervent aspirations for inclusivity and equity, the promise of empowering historically disadvantaged producers remains largely unfulfilled, casting a shadow over the potential for genuine progress.

As the agricultural sector grapples with persistent inequalities and systemic barriers, the urgent need for decisive action and meaningful reform looms large, challenging entrenched power dynamics and calling into question the commitment to true transformation.

An informative day

Despite all these challenges, a significant event unfolded on 10 April this year in the serene setting of Matuana farms in Ugie, offering



Wandile Mbonambi, marketing officer at Khula! shared some insights into marketing dynamics.

hope for emerging producers in the Eastern Cape. Hosted by Potatoes SA alongside the Joe Gqabi Economic Development Agency, the potato producers' information day became a rallying point for agricultural empowerment and economic growth.

The occasion was attended by the executive mayor of the Elundini local municipality, who underscored the indispensable role of collective effort in driving transformative change. Against the backdrop of the district's rich agricultural potential, particularly in potato cultivation, the mayor's address emphasised the imperative of governmental and stakeholder collaboration to realise shared aspirations.

Rendani Murovhi, Potatoes SA's transformation manager and a passionate advocate for agricultural advancement, illuminated the path towards expansion and inclusivity in potato farming. Despite facing constraints such as limited funding, Murovhi's unwavering optimism resonated deeply, infusing attending producers with a renewed sense of purpose and possibility.

Funding opportunities

Central to the event agenda was the dissemination of crucial information regarding funding avenues and market access opportunities. Representatives from institutions, including the Industrial Development Corporation, Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Small Enterprise Development Agency, the Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and Standard Bank, offered valuable insights into various funding models and eligibility criteria.



Rendani Murovhi, Potatoes SA's transformation manager, spoke about inclusivity.

Moreover, the event provided a platform for industry stakeholders such as Khula! and Frimax Foods to share valuable insights into market dynamics and the Khula! input ecosystem. With an extensive array of over 5 000 products, Khula! is simplifying agricultural input procurement, while Frimax Foods shed light on the burgeoning demand for potato-based snacks, signalling promising market prospects for producers.

Potatoes in practice

A highlight of the day was the immersive experience offered to attendees, allowing them to witness firsthand the intricate process of sorting and packaging potatoes. This hands-on engagement not only demystified the complexities of production but also served as a potent source of inspiration, reaffirming producers' commitment to excellence and growth.



A newly installed potato sorting machine was demonstrated to producers. The machine was funded by the Jobs Fund and Land Bank.

Despite bad weather conditions, the turnout exceeded expectations, with over 100 attendees demonstrating remarkable resilience and dedication to leveraging knowledge and seizing opportunities for advancement. Their resilience in the face of challenges underscored the profound impact of collective endeavour in driving agricultural progress.

Hope ignited

Expressions of gratitude permeated the event, with the host producer extending heartfelt appreciation to stakeholders for their unwavering support. Potatoes SA, in particular, was commended for its instrumental role in orchestrating a memorable and impactful day.

As the event drew to a close, an air of optimism filled the atmosphere, imbuing the farming community with renewed enthusiasm and determination. The shared knowledge and insights not only

equipped producers with the tools to navigate funding landscapes but had also reignited a sense of hope and possibility within their hearts.

The information day stands as a testament to the transformative power of collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and collective action. It serves as a beacon of hope for emerging producers in the Eastern Cape, charting a trajectory toward agricultural prosperity and sustainable growth.

With stakeholders and governmental entities united in purpose, the path to a vibrant and inclusive agricultural landscape is possible, promising a brighter and more prosperous future for generations to come. 🌱

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