



Intensifying interest in potato production in Clewer and Kriel

By Rachichi Marokane, Potatoes SA

At the heart of the district development model lies a commodity mapping approach driven by a feasibility benchmark. Mpumalanga is one of South Africa's provinces with such a diverse geographical zone, that potato production is possible in most areas.

The beginning of September 2022 saw four communities in the province planting potatoes as part of Potatoes SA's Small-Grower Development Programme. Two varieties, namely Mondial and Sifra, were planted. Further demonstrations of chemical and fertiliser applications were also conducted.

By collaborating with the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land

and Environmental Affairs (DARDLEA), extension officers were able to perform a vital role in assisting farmers with land preparation as well as the provision of implements and tractors. This collaboration ensured that projects were ready to be planted.

Kriel planting

Lucky Nkosi, who was the host farmer for the Kriel project in Mpumalanga, hopes that this planting will assist

him in gaining the necessary knowledge and skills required for the commercial production of potatoes. His goal is to join the Enterprise Development Programme (EPD) of Potatoes SA. With over 80 ha of land available for crop production, Lucky aims to continue developing water and irrigation infrastructure.

Kriel is highly concentrated with coal mining activities that provide feedstocks to electricity-generating

plants. As such, rehabilitation programmes that are often implemented by mines will align well with potato planting programmes such as this.

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Some of the concerns, however, remain the availability of water infrastructure, with the residents being highly dependent on the local municipality for water supply. Nevertheless, the community and the local extension officers saw this planting demonstration as an initial

spark of interest in the commercial production of potatoes.

Clewer planting

“I’ve always looked forward to diversifying with a potato crop to maintain cashflow,” said Bonke Fakude, the host farmer in Clewer, which is located approximately 40 km from the project. The low level of potato production in the area is mostly due to a lack of knowledge on potato production, availability of land, and access to inputs and cultivation implements.

Phumudzo Netshivhera, a DARDLEA extension officer, highlighted the importance of expanding and diversifying small-scale potato production. With a 20-sow piggery unit, Bonke saw the practical initiative as something that would lead to increased farming activities in the area. However, the relatively low level of attendance on the planting day indicated that more work needs to be

done to cultivate interest in potato farming in Clewer.

Stimulating participation

Of utmost importance in terms of advancing potato production in these areas would be the increase in hectares planted and the number of farmers involved. With the EDP targeting farmers who plant in a relatively higher area, such an opportunity exists for the programme. The Small-Grower Development Programme, on the other hand, has the potential to increase the number of potato producers in these areas.

As such, Potatoes SA looks forward to exploring more areas across Mpumalanga where these projects can be implemented to archive its transformation goals. 🌱

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