

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

CHIPS

VOL 35 NO 02 • MARCH / APRIL 2021

**BASELINE AND MARKET
DYNAMICS FOR THE
COMING SEASON**

Growing tomorrow's
producers, today

**OOS-VRYSTAATSE
DROËLANDKULTIVARPROEF
OP WARDEN 2019/2020**

Importation of French
fries takes a nosedive

Waarde van navorsing
oor blaarsiektebeheer

PSA invests in smallholder farmers

By Louis Pretorius

In the early 1990s, Potatoes South Africa (PSA) identified the need for smallholder farmers who have access to land, to expand food production in rural regions, mainly for food security, but also for them to reach the next level of potato production. A commercial farmer from Elliot suggested the use of basic potato implements to teach smallholder farmers to produce potatoes efficiently.

Basic implements for this purpose were built in Hankey and used for demonstration projects in many rural regions in the Eastern Cape, starting in Uitenhage and expanding into the potato production region of the north Eastern Cape.

The core purpose of the smallholder projects was to disseminate production and business information through demonstration trials in order to achieve food security, job creation, and entrepreneurship within the rural communities.

Starting with the basics

The main aim of these projects is to assist smallholder farmers with the basics required for successful potato production. These demonstration projects range between 0.1 and



Potatoes being planted at the Tsolo dryland project.

0.4 ha in size. PSA formed a partnership with the Departments of Agriculture within each region, ensuring effective selection of projects to reach as many smallholder farmers as possible.

At planting, all surrounding smallholder producers are invited to participate in the planting process. The projects are also regularly visited to assist the farmers in managing these projects.

The following actions form the main framework of each project:

- Soil preparation.
- How to select a suitable cultivar for the farmers' growing conditions.
- How to fertilise correctly using soil samples and practically demonstrating fertilisation on the land.
- The correct planting method for the seed size used.
- The correct use of pre-emergence herbicides for grass and broadleaf directly after planting.
- How to irrigate, as well as the water requirements of the potato plant.
- Providing a complete spraying programme for diseases and pests and supplying the chemicals needed.
- Train smallholder farmers to use spraying equipment correctly.
- Monitoring pests and diseases, and managing the project.

- Correct harvesting and marketing of potatoes.
- Using a branded bag for these projects.

Branching out, step by step

At this stage, most of the projects – a total of 19 – are situated in KwaZulu-Natal, OR Tambo (Mthatha), and Alfred Nzo (Bizana). For the first time in this financial year, three additional projects were also planted in Mpumalanga.

Three more projects will be planted in the Limpopo region this season. During the next financial year, another project will be planted in Maclear, with four more in Ugie. The projects achieved very high yields under dryland conditions and yields of 45 ton/ha or more are not uncommon in the OR Tambo and Alfred Nzo regions.

The projects were especially valuable this past year with the outbreak of Covid-19. They provided much-needed sustenance to isolated rural communities during lockdown levels 5 to 3. 🍌

For more information, contact the author at email louis@potatoes.co.za.



Progress and spraying of the Swayimane project, which is a dryland project.