

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

CHIPS

VOL 36 NO 2 • MARCH / APRIL 2022

**LIMPOPO-KULTIVARPROEF
ONDER BESPROEIING
OP DENDRON IN 2021**

**DIE AARTAPPELBLAARMYNER:
BEHEEROPSIES
TEEN DIE PAPIES**

**Kultivarprestasie op
varsproduktemarkte**

**A diversified approach
for greater liquidity**

**#PassThePotato:
Giving back is good business**

PSA small grower development programme introduces young farmers to potato production

By Masabatha Motsoeneng, Potatoes SA

Potatoes SA's (PSA) small grower development programme has equipped young developing farmers in Gemarke Village in the Limpopo region, with much needed technical and business skills associated with producing potatoes. The community was given the opportunity to gain practical skills related to the basic principles of growing potatoes, as well as evaluating the key components of potato production.

A helping hand

PSA encouraged the community members of Gemarke to grow potatoes with limited resources after they were exposed to the planting of a demonstration trial. The youth in this community voiced their concerns over the high unemployment rate, and seized the opportunity to participate in the PSA small grower development programme.

Cynthia Mokgobu is a zealous 29-year-old developing farmer in Gemarke. She currently produces spinach, baby marrows, cabbage

Table 1: Demonstration trial information.

	Mondial	Valor
Planting date	26 March	26 March 2021
Harvesting date	6 August 2021	6 August 2021
Generation	G4	G3
Size of the trial	0.1 ha	0.1 ha
Fertilisers programme	At planting: 100 kg 3:2:4 Vegetative stage: 50 kg LAN	At planting: 100 kg 3:2:4 Vegetative stage: 50 kg LAN
Crop protection programme	Cypermethrin – cut worm and tuber moth Acephate – tuber moth and aphids Lufenuron – tuber moth Mancozeb – early and late blight Procymidone – early and late blight	
Challenges (e.g. pests, diseases, climate)	White fly Tuber moth Frost damage, fast recovery rate	Whitefly Tuber moth Frost damage, slow recovery rate
Yield achieved	57 t/ha	47 t/ha

and tomatoes. She welcomed the PSA demonstration trial, as they were now able to gain practical experience in potato production.

As the host farmer, Cynthia contributed to the project by providing water for irrigation purposes, an irrigation system and by taking responsibility for monitoring the crop throughout

the season. This journey was made possible through the assistance of the Limpopo Department of Agriculture, which provided some of the chemicals used and encouraged community participation.

Planting and harvesting

The trial was planted on 26 March 2021 and 40 community members attended the information session. Most of the community members who attended the information session have access to a small piece of land, some water and are planting on a small scale for food security and income generation.

The demonstration trial was planted during March, as climate conditions are conducive during this period. However, there is a risk of frost damage which was mitigated by planting a cultivar with moderate tolerance for frost.

During scouting of the trial, the community members were taught how to identify pests, diseases and



Young developing females who farm at Gemarke Village were shown how to scout a planting prior to applying top-dressing fertilisers.



Community members of Gemark Village harvesting the demonstration trial.

nutrient deficiencies. Pests such as aphids, white fly and tuber moth were observed, and recommended crop protection products supplied to the host farmer were effective to control the pests. The Department of Agriculture provided the host farmer with a tensiometer which is used to schedule irrigation. It also assisted the farmer in applying the

amount of water required by the potatoes at different stages.


The trial was planted under drip irrigation which benefited the farmers, as water was saved. The system irrigated only where the potatoes are actually planted, the operating cost of the system is low, and the presence of weeds was reduced.

Harvesting took place on 6 August 2021 but due to the country being in lockdown level 4 at that stage, only a few community members attended the harvesting. The few that were present were able to observe how to manually harvest and grade the potatoes according to size.

The way forward

The community was excited to be part of the programme. During the June/July 2021 season, the host farmer planted 0.3 ha on her own. She has shown great interest in participating in the enterprise development programme and is currently in the process of acquiring

a bigger portion of land with a centre pivot through the local tribal authority. Through the experience she gained during the programme, she is now able to share potato production information with other small-scale farmers from neighbouring villages.

Julia Mofia, a community member in Gemark, says that the training was very informative: "It made me realise that there is still room for small-scale farmers." She added that it used to be a challenge to access proper production inputs due to a lack of information. Now, however, she is happy as organisations such as PSA are reaching out to communities, sharing information that will allow these small-scale farmers to one day become commercial producers. 

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