

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

CHIPS

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**SIRKEL-N-LANDGOED:
GESONDE MOERE VIR
VOLHOUBARE AARTAPPELPRODUKSIE**

**SATELLITE-DERIVED CROP
GROWTH INDICES FOR
MANAGEMENT OF POTATO CROPS**

Alternatiewe kragbronne
vir jou plaas

KZN small growers
hold farmers' day

Limpopo-kultivarproef
op Dendron, 2022

Tapping into enterprise development under dryland production conditions

By Rachichi Marokane, national transformation co-ordinator, Potatoes SA

The Eastern Free State is renowned for its efficient production of potatoes under dryland conditions. Compared to farmers who produce under irrigation, dryland producers are able to eliminate the adverse impacts of load shedding from their enterprise's budgets.

One of the key barriers to dryland production is that you must produce at a higher scale of at least 40 ha per annum compared to irrigation. Developing potato producers in this arena are limited mainly in respect of land.

Dryland production

Mavuso Qenehelo Vincent became a participant in Potatoes SA's Enterprise Development Programme (EDP) in 2022. He is a member of the MCV Agriacomologitic Co-operative that comprises of five co-operative members.

Production activities are conducted on a 90 ha portion of land leased in Phuthaditjhaba in the Free State. The enterprise focusses mainly on 10 ha of potato production under dryland conditions. Following an application

process, the applicant received a seed grant from Potatoes SA for planting in mid-November 2022.

The farm rents all the required machinery from the Makgolokong Farmer Production Support Unit (FPSU) located approximately 30 km from the farm. Through the FPSU, the co-operative also enjoys access to a sorting and washing facility, allowing them to target the in-land fresh produce markets.

Overcoming challenges

Initially, the co-operative aimed to plant in the first week of November. However, due to excessive rainfall in the area, planting was postponed. As often advised by their assigned mentor, Gert Bester, who is also chairperson of the Potatoes SA



Mentors from the commercial potato production industry assist Mavuso (centre) with information such as ideal planting times, potato diseases and fertiliser application.

national council, planting at precise moisture content levels is vital to production success. Avoiding tuber rot, leaching of fertilisers and fungicides has also been emphasised at length.

Although the impact of load shedding is not the main concern among dryland producers, the increase in fuel prices of almost 34% in 2022 had a major impact on operational costs during planting. Yet these producers still have high hopes and they are anticipating better prices in April 2023 when they commence with harvesting. With around 30 to 35 t/ha projected for this dryland field in which rows are spaced 1.6 m apart, the aim is now to expand production to 40 ha in the coming four years, as part of the EDP. 🍅



Mavuso is a member of the MCV Agriacomologitic Co-operative which produces potatoes on 10 ha under dryland conditions.

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