

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

KwaZulu-Natal small growers enjoy information packed farmers' day

By Rendani Murovhi, Potatoes SA

In its quest to fulfil its transformation goals geared towards increasing potato production among producers of colour, and to create awareness regarding potato production technologies, food security and rural transformation, Potatoes SA has partnered with various provincial agricultural departments to ensure the smooth implementation of its small-grower programme (SGP).

After a successful production cycle completed in four projects planted in September 2022 in Mooi River, Applebosch, Swayimane and Ixopo (Magaula Village) in Kwazulu-Natal (KZN), the month of February 2023 marked the planned harvesting season for these small-grower projects. In order to promote technology transfer, share growers' milestones and showcase cultivar performance, a farmers' information day was held to showcase all four projects.

A great presentation line-up

Growers gathered on 8 February 2023 at Highflats Farm of Mbhekiseni Duma in Magaula Village. The theme of the



Mr Mkhithi, deputy director of KZN-DARD, gave a departmental overview and explained the partnerships they have entered into.

event was "Promotion of sustainable potato production to improve food security". The event welcomed a variety of attendees including local potato and vegetable producers, community members, Willie Jacobs and Nomvula Xaba of Potatoes SA, Etienne Groenewald of Wesgro, the research team from Cedara, and various officials of the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (KZN-DARD).

The programme consisted of presentations and practical demonstrations regarding potato production, cultivar evaluations and seed exhibitions. Willie Jacobs, CEO of Potatoes SA, gave an overview of the organisation, its core businesses, and the importance of ensuring sustainable potato production in the country.

Potatoes SA transformation manager, Nomvula Xaba, unpacked the criteria required for the organisation's various transformation programmes which include its enterprise development programme (EDP), small-grower programme (SGP), mentorship/training and bursary scheme. During her presentation, she discussed the importance of transformation and explained that the SGP is a progressive project aimed not only at addressing food security



An aerial view of the farmers' information day at Magaula Village. (Photograph: DARD)

at household level, but also creating awareness of potato production techniques in order to increase the number of farmers with the potential to achieve commercial status.

Practical demonstration

Literature has proven that learning through practical demonstrations while participating not only accommodates a wide variety of beneficiaries and age groups, but increases farmers' acceptance and adoption of innovation and change. Taslos Magubane and the research team from Cedara conducted a

Table 1: KwaZulu-Natal small-grower project outcomes.

Cultivars	Magaula/Ixopo	Mooi River	Swayimani
Sababa	35t/ha	63t/ha	22t/ha
Mondial	56t/ha	38t/ha	44t/ha
Panamera	26t/ha	41t/ha	25t/ha
Electra	52t/ha	48t/ha	58t/ha
Project challenges			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excessive rainfall resulting in growth cracks. Blackleg occurrence on Sababa, Panamera and Mondial resulting in reduced yield in three projects. Common scab detected in Magaula Village crop. 			

practical demonstration illustrating potato harvesting, grading, sprayer calibration and a sensory test involving different potato dishes. Wesgro provided information on seed quality, certification and varieties for various uses.

Farmer’s testimony

The host, Mbhekiseni Duma, emphasised that being part of the SGP not only assisted in correcting his own production techniques, but impacted the overall spirit of co-operation, unity and participation in Magaula Village. He said: “My greatest wish is that this community will increase its scale of production so as to be able to harness profit and become part of the EDP in the near future.”

Impact driven partnership

The deputy director of KZN-DARD, Mr Mkhithi, commended the partnership and the involvement of the various potato industry stakeholders who



Willie Jacobs, CEO of Potatoes SA, and Nomvula Xaba, transformation manager at Potatoes SA, gave presentations at the information day.

are working tirelessly to achieve the ultimate goal of developing potatoes as a commodity in the province.

He further mentioned that, without a doubt, the multiple stakeholder approach adopted by Potatoes SA, which utilises the expertise of research establishments such as Cedara, as well as extension and advisory services, is one that can be replicated across

South Africa to ensure sustainability of these programmes.

Key improvement areas

Despite the challenges faced by most of these rural farming communities, which include availability of and access to mechanisation, water infrastructure and sufficient productive land, there certainly is light at the end of the tunnel. Traditional authorities, municipalities and KZN-DARD now acknowledges the role potato production can play in addressing underlying issues of job creation and food security.

KZN-DARD has pledged to develop a provincial database of potato growers which can be used to identify potential EDP and SGP participants, and to help with structuring funding models aimed at developing the commodity in the province. The department also hopes to strengthen its existing partnership and support Potatoes SA with its transformation goals.

The department recognises that there is a need for enhancing farm-based potato research aimed at cost-effective rotational systems that will improve soil health, alternative production inputs, pest and disease management, and climate adaptable production systems for both the SGP and EDP. 🍅

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



Attendees during the farmers’ day sessions.



Mbhekiseni Duma (left) and local farmers during testimonials and a question and answer session.