

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

CHIPS

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**OOS-VRYSTAATSE STANDPROEF
ONDER AANVULLENDE
BESPROEIING IN REITZ**

**THE POTATO LEAF MINER:
ORIGIN OF THE FIRST FLY
INFESTATIONS OF THE SEASON**

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Potatoes bring rural communities back to life

By Masabatha Motsoeneng, Potatoes SA

In 2021, six communities in the Limpopo region were given the opportunity to participate in the Potatoes South Africa (PSA) small-grower development programme. The programme is aimed at sharing knowledge and skills regarding potato production, through the planting of a demonstration trial. The programme has been well received by communities in the region.

A trend observed over the years, is that of rural community members moving to cities in a bid to find employment and generate an income. However, due to the lack of employment opportunities and global economic pressures, people are now abandoning cities and returning to the rural areas, without any farming skills. The small-grower development programme is a great tool to reach out to these communities.

The Ga-Kibi demonstration trial
Ga-Kibi Village is situated 115 km outside of Polokwane in the

southeastern part of the Capricorn district of Limpopo. The farmers of this village focus predominantly on livestock production and basic crops consumed by households, such as spinach, beans, tomatoes, onions, and maize.

The local farmers said they were convinced that potatoes could only be produced by sub-commercial and commercial farmers who possess the necessary infrastructure and machinery. The PSA small-grower development programme, however, utilises simplified methods of planting which makes it possible for communities to plant potatoes with the aim of generating income and creating food security.

Information sessions

The Mondial potato variety was planted on 0.2 ha on 14 July 2021, and was harvested on 25 November 2021. Information sessions were held during the planting of the demonstration trial, crop monitoring and harvesting.



The demonstration trial at Ga-Kibi Village.

Information shared at planting included factors to consider when selecting a potato cultivar, the use and application of fertilisers, and understanding the use of crop protection products. Information shared during crop maintenance and monitoring included field scouting, identifying different types of pests and diseases, the use and application of top-dressing fertiliser, managing tuber moth, and record-keeping.

Information shared during harvesting included grading and classing potatoes according to size and quality, weighing the potatoes to be sold and/or rejected, packaging, keeping of sales records, and the types of markets available.

Partners in prosperity

In order to enhance the demonstration trial, PSA partnered with the Limpopo Department of Agriculture who provided technical support and crop protection products for



Farmers from Ga-Kibi Village planting Mondial potatoes.



Potatoes harvested from the demonstration trial.

and monitor the trial during the growing season.

The trial created casual work for the Ga-Kibi community members. Ma Kgoši said that the small farmers in the village did not plant potatoes before the demonstration trial was introduced. "Potatoes were viewed as a delicate and expensive crop that can only be successfully planted at a commercial level," she remarked. She says she now sees small patches of potatoes located at some of the households, with the families planning to sell the potatoes. She expressed her appreciation for the project, adding that a lot of information, material and skills were shared. The programme has brought joy and life to Ga-Kibi village. ©

the trial. Andrew Nekgotha and Enos Mahwai, both participants in the PSA enterprise development programme, used their tractors and implements for land preparation, and provided additional seed to expand the trial.

Ester Leboho, also known as Ma Kgoši (Queen Mother), contributed to the project by making her own land available for the planting of the trial, water, and water infrastructure. She also hired eight casual workers to maintain

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