

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

# CHIPS

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# Empangeni farmers get the know-how with development project

By Louis Pretorius

**Q**inisani Mzimela, a small-scale farmer from Lalaneni near Empangeni, embraced the opportunity to host this year's Empangeni Small Farmer Development Project, also known as the Clanso Farming and Agro-processing Project, planted on 24 May 2021. This small farmer development programme in KwaZulu-Natal is a team effort between Potatoes South Africa (PSA) and the Department of Agriculture, Cedara.

## Production issues in the area

The best time to produce potatoes in Empangeni is during winter, in order for the potatoes to be marketed towards the last quarter of the year. During this time, the markets are usually not overstocked. This was one of the key aspects that producers learned from the project.

They also learned that dryland production is not possible during dry winters in Empangeni, and therefore plantings need to be under irrigation under such circumstances. The region is frost-free and is suitable for planting during standard winters. However, the rise in temperatures later in the year is also suitable for good potato production.

The main cultivars planted for this project were Mondial,



*Qinisani Mzimela and Louis Pretorius of PSA.*

Panamera and Sababa. Other cultivars included Morgana, Allison, Electra, Sifra, El Mundo, Connect and Foxy. The aim of the project was to point out the different traits of the cultivars to the small farmers. The most important aspect for rural regions is resistance to blight. Yield and quality are also crucial.

## Marketing day

At harvesting, a market day will be arranged to educate producers on how to sort, grade and pack potatoes. More importantly will be the introduction of available marketing channels to successfully market potatoes. This will address the challenge of inconsistent market opportunities that affect small farmers at present. During the marketing



*Attie van den Berg of GWK Seed Potatoes and Qinisani Mzimela.*

day, the yield of each cultivar will be determined for comparison.

According to Qinisani, the following important aspects have been addressed in the project thus far:

- How to optimally fertilise a potato crop using soil sample results.
- The water requirements of the potato plant at different stages during the growth cycle and how to irrigate optimally by measuring the amount of irrigation water applied.
- Preventative weed control at planting.
- To alternate active ingredients of pesticides and fungicides to prevent build-up of resistance.
- The importance of crop rotation regarding potatoes.

The Clanso Farming and Agro-processing Project will be harvested in October 2021.🌱



*Spray rows were introduced to prevent plant damage during spraying of chemicals.*

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