

INTERNAL NEWSLETTER

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DG'S NOTE

Warm greetings, team agriculture

As we step into September, the beginning of spring in the Southern Hemisphere, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible work we have accomplished together in winter and share my gratitude for your unwavering dedication towards achieving the objectives of our strategy. We hosted two important events that had a considerable impact on the sector policy adjustments, namely, the Foot and mouth disease (FMD) Indaba and Pesticides Colloquium. I will later reflect on both.

These two events represent major milestones in broad-based consultations on matters affecting the productivity of our sector. All of us should be proud of and need to embrace continuing to post successful stories on the public mandate entrusted to us to sustain agriculture, which is the backbone of communities, the lifeline of economies, and the heart of sustainability. Each of us plays an important role in this mission, and your strides, which contribute to the sector's success, make us proud and embolden us to strive to achieve more.



DoA Director-General Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi

Pesticide Colloquium

In June 2025, Cabinet received a report on the recent food-borne illnesses in South Africa. Cabinet then resolved to ban Terbufos and further instructed the Department of Agriculture to lead a consultation process on the ban in line with the 2010 Pesticide Management Policy.

In addressing the broader 2010 Pesticides Management Policy of protecting plant health, human health and environmental health, the department in collaboration with the Department of Health and the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, as well as industry stakeholders, held a Pesticides Colloquium in Stellenbosch, Western Cape. The purpose was a multipronged examination of the pesticides challenge, reviewing pesticides management, strengthening stakeholders' coordination, emphasising correct labelling, as well as banning of some pesticides. For a way forward, an inter-departmental team inclusive of industry stakeholders will be established to commence the work of bringing normality to pesticides challenges in the country within the agreed timelines.

Rabies Month

Every year on 28 September, the entire world observes World Rabies Day, which calls upon all of us to dedicate special attention to raising awareness with family, relatives, friends and colleagues about this zoonotic disease. Its infection is lethal, and it is caused by a virus which affects the brain. The virus is shed in saliva and is spread by the bite of an infected animal, mostly dogs, cats and wild animals, and households are urged to vaccinate their pets to avoid potential fatalities. Rabies is a challenge in

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about 150 countries in Asia and Africa, and almost all human fatalities occur in developing countries with 44% occurring in Africa. The good news is that rabies is preventable through vaccination and prompt medical care after infection.

Rabies can be a nightmare for agriculture because of its potential to also infect livestock, among others. The World Health Organization (WHO) and its global partners, including DoA, aim to end rabies deaths through mass vaccination. About 29 million people worldwide receive rabies treatment yearly. The global cost of rabies is estimated to be around US\$8,6 billion per annum.

To underscore the serious nature of rabies, the department will embark on a national media campaign to reach all citizens and conscientise them



Department of Agriculture Director-General
Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi

about rabies to avoid unnecessary loss of life.

Arbor Month

This year, we celebrate Arbor Day and Arbor Week during the first week of September. Trees are the “lungs” of the world as they produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide. Trees also bind the soil and provide for resistance against soil erosion through mainly preventing water runoff. We also observe economic benefits from horticulture and forestry from trees. So, for September, please invest in planting a fruit tree in your back garden. The best time to plant a tree is yesterday, and the next best day is today. Healthy agricultural productivity guarantees food security and is the backbone of life. However, agricultural practice grapples with different threats that must be confronted head on if the sector’s sustainability is to be sustained continuously. Desertification through soil erosion, which creates dongas, veld fires, arid land arising from climate change, clearing of land, mining, etc., are some of the threats making land less productive and causes food insecurity.

Fortunately, we have an opportunity in the form of Arbor Month to restore biodiversity and ecosystems through planting of trees and restore the natural order. As an agricultural family, we should be biased and encourage the planting of fruit trees for food security and influence our families, relatives, friends and the public to do the same. With the positive influence, and commitment for each one of us to plant one tree each year, we can revegetate the South African environment and create an environmental jungle in five years and reap the benefits.

30% reciprocal tariffs by the United States of America on South Africa

In August, Minister Steenhuisen and Minister Tau held a press briefing to outline the five critical responses South Africa is implementing to address the SA-USA trade implications. The South African government is intervening with measures within its power to reverse the situation or obtain a fair negotiated deal.

South Africa has a five-pronged intervention strategy which involves (1) ongoing negotiations with the United States of America to obtain reduced

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tariffs—and I am part of the negotiating team, which also comprises members from the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation; (2) diversification of exports to alternative markets; (3) an economic response package to vulnerable companies and workers; (4) trade defense to protect domestic industry against import surges and dumping; and (5) demand side interventions to leverage on buying powers by local consumers, private sector and Government.

FMD Indaba

In July, DoA hosted the FMD Indaba in which provincial departments of agriculture and industry stakeholders participated. The FMD Indaba sought to obtain views on best practices to combat FMD to ensure avoidance of trade banning of red meat by trading partners. After rigorous debates on the subject, the recommended way forward proposals on future handling of FMD would be decided by Minister Steenhuisen. The minister has approved the report and the department and the stakeholders will craft a timebound implementation plan to ensure that we stem the tightening FMD controls and regain our pre-2019 FMD-free status.

Travel agent

In about a month or so, an unforeseen problem of many uncontrolled travel bookings invoices occurred and necessitated a meeting between the Executive Management of the department and the travel agency. The discussion ensued and we have since issued a temporary measures circular which is self-explanatory on how travel bookings will be handled in the interim. As we move forward in normalising the situation, I urge all of us to be prudent and ensure that travel is only limited to essential travel.

Senior management members raise their concerns with the director-general

by: Samuel Kgatla



Director-General of DoA Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi with Women SMS members of the department

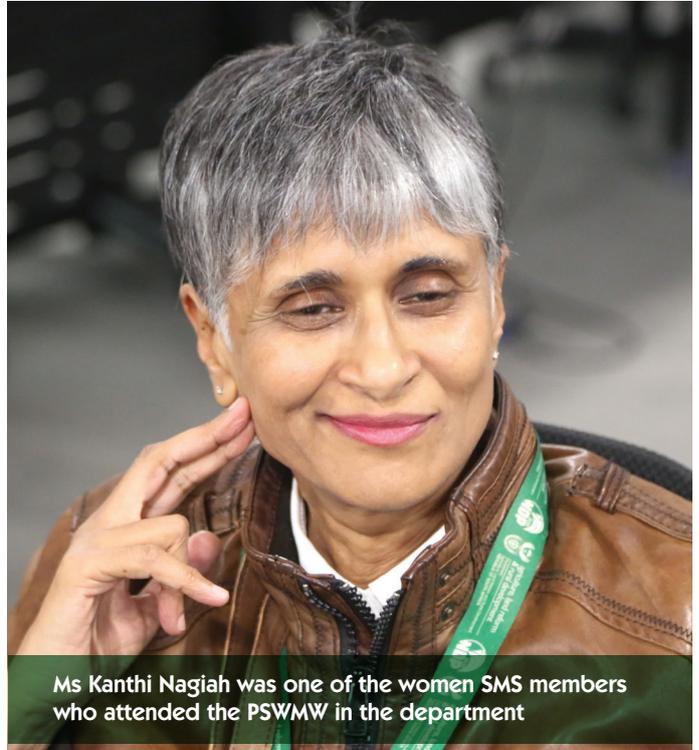
Issues affecting women members of the Senior Management Service (SMS) on a daily basis were raised during a crucial meeting with the director-general of the Department of Agriculture (DoA), Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi, held at the PPP Building on 27 August 2025. The meeting was in line with the commemoration of Public Service Women Management Week (PSWMW), held annually in the last week of August. The PSWMW provides a vital platform for evaluating progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Public Service. While more women today have access to opportunities across the spectrum, there are still many challenges that continue to hold them back. The 2025 PSWMW aligns with the broader Women's Month theme: "Building Resilient Economies for All".



Some of the women who attended the PSWMW in the department

The issues raised are compliant with the 8-Principle Action Plan for SMS members. The principles focus on aspects like transformation for non-sexism, creating an enabling environment for equity, establishing a policy environment, meeting equity targets, mainstreaming gender, empowerment, providing resources and ensuring accountability, monitoring and evaluation.

Currently, DoA has 35 female and 38 male SMS members. In his address, Ramasodi asked the women SMS members to share the most significant barriers that affect them within the department. Some of the issues raised by SMS members included rank consciousness, lack of respect, mistreatment by colleagues, women SMS members not supporting each other, recognition of good work, and others. Ramasodi thanked all the women SMS members in attendance and assured them that



Ms Kanthi Nagiah was one of the women SMS members who attended the PSWMW in the department



Ms Kgomotso Kgang from Human Resources Management & Development has encouraged women SMS members to leave a good legacy

everything will go well. "I had an opportunity to listen to all your stories. We need stability in the department, so that everything can function well. We really appreciate your good work, and we must learn to be accountable," he said.

Ms Kgomotso Kgang, Chief Director: Human Resource Management and Development indicated that the 8-Principle Action Plan for SMS members was practically designed to help women prosper in the workplace. She said that women must take their space and leave a good legacy.

"We must talk about the principles because they talk about us and transformation to empower us as women. We need to build talent and open doors for others," she said.

All government departments are expected to submit a comprehensive report detailing their progress in implementing the 8-Principle Action Plan.

Women's Month in South Africa and its importance in the Department of Agriculture



Some DoA women are happy to work for the department

Women's Month is celebrated every August annually and is a powerful tribute to the resilience, achievements and ongoing struggles of women across the country. It commemorates the historic 1956 march of over 20 000 women to the Union Buildings in Pretoria, protesting the Apartheid-era pass laws that restricted the movement of Black women.

THE 2025 THEME IS: "CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY TOWARDS WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT"

This year's theme marks both the sixty-eighth anniversary of the 1956 march and 30 years of democracy in South Africa. It is a moment to reflect on progress made and the work still needed to achieve gender equality.

KEY FOCUS AREAS IN 2025

Gender-Based Violence: Justice Minister Mamo-loko Kubayi emphasised that Women's Month has become a "celebration of survival" due to the ongoing crisis of gender-based violence.

Women in Leadership: The Department of Agriculture (DoA) continues to demonstrate its commitment to cultivating strong female leadership through its Executive Development Programme (EDP). Senior Management Service (SMS) members have actively participated in this transformative training, with the final sessions scheduled for September 2025.

This initiative reflects the department's strategic focus on:

- empowering women in leadership roles;
- fostering professional growth and executive readiness; and
- creating a pipeline of capable, confident women leaders.

By investing in programmes like the EDP, DoA sends a clear message: women's leadership is not just encouraged, it's essential. These efforts align with broader national goals of gender equity and inclusive governance, especially during Women's Month when the spotlight is on progress and potential.

WHY IT MATTERS

Women's Month is not just symbolic, it is a call to action to:

- honour the past and the women who paved the way;
- amplify voices that are often marginalised; and
- build systems that empower women economically, socially and politically.

Whether you are attending events, supporting women-owned businesses, or simply reflecting on the role of women in your life and community, this month is a chance to engage meaningfully.

You, me and the community united to eliminate rabies

by: Rony Moremi



Department of Agriculture's animal health technicians attending to a dog in Pampierstad during the Rabies Awareness campaign in North West

In most households, pets such as cats and dogs are part of the family. These furry companions, just like humans, need proper vaccinations against diseases such as rabies.

It is important to follow the vaccination schedule for pets to avoid being infected with rabies. The first rabies vaccine is given at 12 weeks (three months) of age, followed by a booster vaccination between one and 12 months later. Thereafter, a booster is required every three years. In high-risk areas, annual vaccination is strongly advised. Enquire with your local State or private Veterinarian, animal health technician or welfare organisation.

On 28 September, the world will commemorate World Rabies Day to create awareness about rabies. Rabies is a viral disease that causes inflammation of the brain in humans and other mammals. Although rabies is 99% fatal, it is also 100% preventable through vaccination and timely treatment. The disease can be transmitted through bites, scratches, or licks from infected animals such as dogs, cats, wildlife and livestock.

This year, World Rabies Day will be commemorated under the theme, "Act Now: You, Me, Community". This theme emphasises the importance of collective action in eliminating rabies. According to the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC), rabies claims a life every nine minutes, mostly in Africa and Asia.

According to the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No. 35 of 84), it is the responsibility of any owner or manager of land on which there are animals and any owner of animals to take all reasonable steps to prevent the infection of the animals with any animal disease or parasite.

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Section 11 of the Act prescribes the responsibilities of owners and managers of animals and land on which animals are kept regarding diseases.

Show love and protect your furry friends and family by preventing the spread of rabies by following proper vaccination schedules. By vaccinating pets against rabies, you will be protecting yourself and your furry companions because the rabies vaccine forms a protective barrier for your family. If you, me, and the community ensure that our pets are vaccinated, they will not get infected with rabies, even if they get bitten by a rabid animal, and therefore, they then cannot pass rabies on to your family.

For further information, contact your nearest animal health technician or private/state veterinarian. Link for provincial contacts: <https://www.nda.gov.za/index.php/component/content/article/451-provincial-veterinary-services-contacts>



An animal health technician vaccinating a dog during the Rabies campaign in Pampierstad



People of Pampierstad brought their dogs in numbers during last year's Rabies awareness



Animal health technicians and Veterinarians of North West during Rabies Awareness Campaign in Pampierstad

Now is the time—start your own food garden

by: **Mercia Smith**



Planting own vegetables can be an enjoyable pastime

It is really a good time to start your own food garden. According to the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC), it is expected that food inflation in South Africa will remain volatile in the coming months due to instability in global markets and ongoing trade uncertainties.

When examining year-on-year price differences, vegetables showed the most significant increase of 5,2%. Whether you have a sprawling backyard or a cozy balcony, with some thoughtful planning, you can create a flourishing vegetable garden.

August provides an excellent opportunity to begin your garden preparation. Starting early allows your vegetable beds to harness the warm, rising temperatures of spring. By the time spring fully blooms, your vegetable beds will be ready to burst into delicious veggies and bountiful harvests.

Across all the provinces, leafy greens like spinach, kale and lettuce are great choices to sow as they can handle cooler temperatures and shorter daylight hours. Root vegetables such as carrots and beetroot are also excellent options, as they prefer cooler soil.

For those in warmer provinces like KwaZulu-Natal, consider peppers, tomatoes and beans. In cooler regions like Western Cape, broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower are great veggie garden options.

Planning

Before you dig in, take a moment to plan out your vegetable garden. Assess your available space, the amount of sunlight it receives, and your gardening objectives.

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Seed selection

When selecting seeds, consider factors like flavour preferences, resistance to diseases and potential yield.

Caring for your garden

Even though keeping your vegetable garden healthy requires ongoing attention, the act of planting, nurturing and watching a plant grow can be incredibly satisfying, especially when you see the fruits (or vegetables!) of your labour. Stay vigilant for pests and diseases.

Turn your garden into a source of health, happiness, and considerable savings by growing vegetables. All it takes is a little planning and preparation. Successfully growing a vegetable garden can boost your confidence and self-esteem, proving your ability to nurture and care for something.



Growing herbs and vegetables in pots allows you to produce your own edibles in a small space, such as a sunny balcony or patio, using containers like pots.



Poke holes in the cap of an old plastic milk bottle to carefully water the vegetables.



Cut off the bottom of a clear plastic bottle (e.g., water or cool drink bottles) and place it over seedlings or young plants.

It will protect against cold temperatures, harsh winds and birds, allowing for early planting and acclimatisation.



Egg cartons can be effectively used to start seedlings indoors due to their convenience and biodegradability.

A day in the life of an entomologist

by: Mercia Smith



Dr Phumudzo Tshikhudo is an entomologist at DoA

Questions asked to Phumudzo Tshikhudo, entomologist, Directorate: Plant Health

I spoke with Dr Phumudzo Tshikhudo, an entomologist in the Directorate: Plant Health, Division: Pest Risk Analysis, about his job. He possesses a doctoral degree in Natural Science and is also registered as a Professional Natural Scientist (Ph.D.) (Pr.Sci.Nat).

A day in the life of an entomologist can be quite diverse, with activities ranging from fieldwork and specimen collection to laboratory research and data analysis. Entomologists may work in various settings, including universities, research institutions, government agencies and even in commercial agriculture. Their work can involve studying insect populations, their interactions with other organisms and the environment, and their roles in ecosystems.

In essence, an entomologist's day is a combination of outdoor exploration, laboratory analysis and knowledge sharing, all focused on the fascinating world of insects.

What are your main areas of research in entomology?

My main research areas are insect biology and ecology.

What are some of the biggest challenges facing entomologists today?

The effects of climate change and the proliferation of invasive species are currently the two largest problems facing entomologists. By altering temperatures, precipitation patterns, and the frequency of extreme weather events, climate change is affecting insect populations. These changes can disrupt insect life cycles, distribution, and interactions with their surroundings. At the same time, native ecosystems and agricultural systems are at risk from the growing number of invading insect species, which can displace native insects and result in substantial financial losses.

What are some of your favourite insects to study and why?

It's difficult to choose a favourite, but beetles, fruit flies and butterflies are some of the most interesting insects to examine.

What are some of the most interesting things you've learned about insects through your research?

Being incredibly diverse, and having acquired a wide range of adaptations to survive in a variety of situations are some of the most amazing things we have learnt about insects. With an estimated million identified species, insects account for more than half of all known animal species, and new species are always being found. It is evidence of their evolutionary success that they can flourish in a variety of environments, from rainforests to deserts.

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What is the role of insects in the ecosystem, and how do they impact things like agriculture or human health?

In addition to their important roles as pollinators, decomposers and food sources in ecosystems, insects also have an impact on agriculture and human health through crop damage, disease transmission and pest management. Human health is greatly impacted by insects, mostly because they can spread disease and cause allergies. They have the potential to transmit infections including Lyme disease, dengue fever and malaria, which can result in serious morbidity and death. Insects in homes can also cause asthma and other respiratory problems, and their bites and stings can cause allergic reactions.

What are some of the best ways to manage pest insects in and around homes?

Effective management of insects in and around our homes requires concentrating on removing attractants for insects, sealing their entryways, and using focused control techniques. Maintaining a clean home, storing food appropriately, and fixing any leaks or cracks are all part of this. Furthermore, as required, think about employing physical barriers, natural repellents, and professional pest control.

How can we protect beneficial insects like pollinators?

Reducing the use of pesticides, giving helpful insects (such as pollinators) food and shelter, and refraining from spraying flowering plants with pesticides during active foraging periods are all important ways to safeguard these insects. It might also be advantageous to create pollinator-friendly habitats with a variety of native plants.

What are some of the most effective methods for identifying insects?

Observation, collecting, and specialist tools are all necessary for accurate insect identification. Important techniques include taking pictures with digital cameras, using hand lenses to examine microscopic insects in detail, and utilising nets and traps to collect specimens for further analysis. Accurate identification depends on examining characteristics such as size, colour, antennae, wing type, body shape and habitat. Molecular techniques provide effective tools for insect identification, especially in situations when conventional techniques prove difficult. A popular method is DNA barcoding, which uses short DNA sequences such as the mitochondrial cytochrome c oxidase subunit I (COI) gene. PCR, DNA sequencing and bioinformatics analysis are other methods that are used. These techniques are particularly useful for detecting cryptic species that are hard to differentiate morphologically or between juvenile stages.

How does your research contribute to our understanding of the natural world or solve real-world problems?

In addition to solving many practical issues, my research makes a substantial contribution to our comprehension of the natural world. Entomologists study the biology of insects and how they interact with the environment to gain important knowledge about agriculture, ecosystems and even human health. Their work aids in the management of pests, crop protection, disease vector control, and our comprehension of the function of insects in pollination and biodiversity.

What are some commonly misunderstood things about insects?

Insects are the subject of many widespread misunderstandings. For instance, not all insects are harmful; many are essential to ecosystems. Bees and butterflies, for example, are essential pollinators that help many plants and crops reproduce. Ladybugs, which consume aphids that can damage plants, are biological pest controllers.

What are some of the most beneficial insects and why?

In their primary roles as pollinators, predators and parasitoids, beneficial insects are essential to ecosystems and human life. For many plants, including crops, pollinators like bees and butterflies are essential. Ground beetles, ladybugs and lacewings are examples of predatory insects that manage populations of economically important pests. On or inside other insects, parasitoid insects lay their eggs, which ultimately kill the host insect.

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How do you differentiate between a butterfly and a moth?

Moths and butterflies, both of which are members of the Lepidoptera order, can be differentiated by a number of important traits, including body form, activity duration, wing position and antennae shape. Generally speaking, butterflies have slender bodies, club-shaped antennae, vertical wings when at rest, and diurnal activity. In contrast, moths are usually nocturnal, have larger, furrier bodies, rest with their wings spread out or in a tent-like manner, and frequently have feathery or thread-like antennae.

Are there any insect species that are particularly difficult to study or manage?

Yes, a number of characteristics make certain insect species especially difficult to research and control. For instance, it is challenging to access and study tropical forest insects because they reside in highly endemic, diverse and complicated environments. Furthermore, it might be challenging to forecast the behaviour of some pests and control their effects due to their complicated and unpredictable responses to climate change.

What got you interested in becoming an entomologist?

One of the main motivations for becoming an entomologist is the curiosity with the complexity and diversity of insects. Many people get interested in insects at a young age, frequently as a result of collecting or studying them as children. A greater enthusiasm for learning about the biology, behaviour, and ecological responsibilities of insects may develop from this first inquiry.

What are some of the career paths available in entomology?

A wide variety of professional possibilities are available in entomology. Positions in academia, Government and the corporate sector are available to entomolo-

gists: Some are teachers or researchers, while others specialise in medical entomology, forensic science, or pest management. Insect farming, industrial entomology and biological control are other fields with opportunities.

What advice would you give to someone interested in pursuing a career in entomology?

The pursuit of a profession in entomology requires a strong background in biology and allied fields. Focus on courses in fields such as chemistry, molecular biology, ecology and genetics. By gaining hands-on experience through volunteer work, internships, or even high school entomology clubs, you can further develop your passion in entomology and gain important exposure to the profession.

How do you stay up to date on the latest research and developments in entomology?

It takes a diversified approach to stay up to date with the most recent advancements and research in entomology. This entails networking with other entomologists, attending conferences and workshops, and actively reading scientific literature. Access to fresh discoveries and ideas can also be substantially improved by using internet tools and resources.

What are some of the best resources for learning more about insects?

There is a plethora of excellent resources for learning about insects. You can look into internet resources such as Bugguide.net, which helps identify species and offers forums. The app iNaturalist is helpful for identification. The CABI Compendium is a comprehensive resource which compiles data and research on diseases, pests and species. Maps, pictures and diagnostic and decision-supporting tools like the Horizon Scanning Tool, Pest Risk Analysis Tool, and the recently added Invasive Species Discovery Tool, are all included in the CABI Compendium.

DoA updates officials on relocation



by: **Samuel Kgatla**

The Department of Agriculture (DoA) through the Directorate: Vetting, Screening and Special Investigations (D: VSSI) is pleased to inform its officials about the upcoming office relocation from from PPP Building 600 Lilian Ngoyi) to the Agriculture Place, Sefala, 140 Hamilton and Sancardia buildings. This relocation plan, which was presented to EXCO and the Relocation Committee, was approved by the director-general on 7 July 2025 with Commission House recommended as the new office accommodation to be procured.

The request for procurement on the new office accommodation was submitted to the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) on 22 July 2025. The Relocation Coordinating Team is in process of finalising the specifications for procurement of office relocation services from the RT8 contract from the National Treasury. It is anticipated that the final specifications will be submitted by 18 August 2025. The process of procurement might take three to six weeks from the sourcing of quotations to appoint a service provider.

Mr Dumile Msindo, Director: VSSI said that he was excited to inform the officials about the latest updates on the relocation. "As we move forward with this significant transition, we want to share the latest updates and plans to ensure everyone is on the same page. Our relocation is estimated to take place from October 2025 over a period of four months. I want to thank you all for your cooperation and enthusiasm as we make this significant transition. We look forward to creating a vibrant and productive workspace in our new home," he said.

Here's a brief timeline of key dates:

Packing begins: 13 October 2025

Moving period: 20 October 2025 to 19 March 2026.
The relocation programme will be submitted in due course with actual dates for moving.

Relocation instruction: Relocation instructions, guidelines and tips will be made available in the week before the packing begins.

Communication: As we progress through this relocation, we encourage open communication. Please feel free to reach out to DoArelocation@nda.gov.za to get in touch with project coordinators regarding any questions or concerns you may have.

Personal growth does not follow a set timeline

by: **Rony Moremi**



Dr Tshidi Manamela and Mr David Mabua assessing the quality of sweet potato at Roodeplaart

Inspired by the concept of cryopreservation during her master's studies, Dr Tshidi Manamela enrolled for a PhD at the University of the Witwatersrand to further her knowledge on the concept. Her research focus was on the morphological characterisation and cryopreservation of sweet potato accessions at the National Plant Genetic Resources Centre (NPGRC) of South Africa. Dr Manamela is a scientist within the Directorate: Genetic Resources, based at the NPGRC in Roodeplaart.

"My interest in pursuing a PhD was sparked during my MSc studies when I was introduced to the concept of cryopreservation. The NPGRC nominated me for the MSc in Management of Biological Diversity at the University of Uppsala in Sweden. This two-year programme involved both coursework and research. My research focused on the morphological characterisation and cryopreservation of sweet potato accessions at the NPGRC of South Africa," said Dr Manamela.

Among her functions at the NPGRC, are conservation of neglected and underutilised species (NUS) for food security and future breeding programmes, with more focus on vegetatively propagated crops such as cassava, sweet potato and taro. She says cryopreservation methods serve as complementary methods to field gene bank conservation. In this context, other functions include investigation, modification and standardisation of existing protocols for application to the NUS collection at the gene bank. "These crops are crucial for restoration and rehabilitation efforts, consequently playing a vital role in enhancing food security and promoting the importance of NUS," added Dr Manamela.

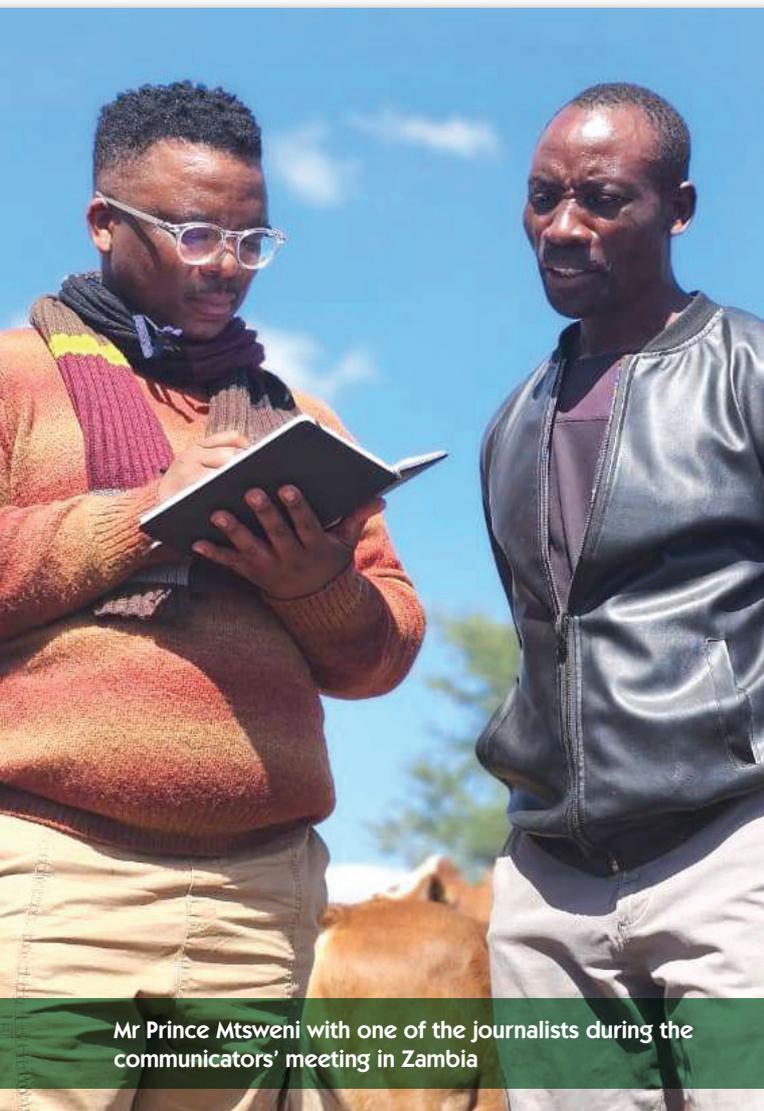
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She says that balancing a professional career and being a mother and wife is not easy, however, one has to find a balance. "Maintaining a balance among all these responsibilities was far from easy. There were moments when the stress led to writer's block, leaving me mentally drained and questioning whether I should give up on everything. It was during this challenging period that I recognised the value of establishing a research group composed of fellow scholars. Having a supportive network, even if it consists of just two or three people, provided a space where we could check in with one another and share experiences," said Dr Manamela, encouraging other staff members that are studying or planning to further their studies.

On the frontlines of change: My media training experience

by: **Prince Mtsweni**



Mr Prince Mtsweni with one of the journalists during the communicators' meeting in Zambia

Real change begins with people, people who step up, learn, and share stories that inspire others to act. This July, I had the opportunity to do just that. Traveling to Livingstone, Zambia, I joined fellow communicators and journalists from across Southern Africa in an experience that was both energising and eye-opening.

Before the trip, I did not fully appreciate how powerful storytelling can be in connecting people with real solutions. Seeing firsthand how communities combine traditional knowledge with modern techniques to restore their land was deeply inspiring. This realisation took root during the Media Training on Rangeland Management and Herding for Health (H4H), hosted by the Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for

Southern Africa (CCARDESA), in collaboration with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), Conservation International (CI), and the Peace Parks Foundation.

Importantly, South Africa's own Department of Agriculture, through its Directorate: Animal Production and Climate Change and Directorate: Disaster Risk Reduction, together with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), are part of this programme as implementing partners. Their involvement highlights South Africa's commitment to ensuring that local lessons contribute to regional solutions, while amplifying the voices of farmers, herders and communities in shaping sustainable land and climate action.

At its heart, the training aimed to build the capacity of media professionals and communication officers across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to effectively report on rangeland degradation, climate-smart livestock practices, and sustainable land-use strategies under the IKI Growing Greener Project. A key focus was ensuring that women, youth and communities have their voices heard in shaping Southern Africa's green future.

The three-day training brought together journalists and communication specialists from across the region. For me, it reinforced an important truth: effective communication can be the difference between an idea that stays hidden and one that inspires change. Through practical sessions on storytelling, interviewing and multimedia production, we strengthened our ability to deliver honest, evidence-based stories, especially about the critical roles that youth, women and Indigenous peoples play in sustainable development.

Some of the most memorable moments were out in the field. In Sikaunzwe, we saw how rotational herding is restoring land health and helping communities build resilience against droughts and floods. Near the Mwilima and Mwandu villages, we visited the Kasheshe Multipurpose Cooperative, which balances farming, community well-being and wildlife conservation in remarkable ways.

These experiences reminded me that empowering communicators within our department is not just valuable, it is essential. When we deeply understand and authentically share these stories, we open doors to better reporting, richer public conversations, and stronger development outcomes.

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Mr Prince Mtsweni was one of the communicators who attended the training workshop in Zambia

Looking ahead, continuous learning and professional growth are crucial, not just for individuals, but for entire teams. By sharpening our skills and committing to inclusive, truthful storytelling, we can do more than inform: we can inspire action, deepen understanding and strengthen the fabric of our communities. In doing so, we become catalysts for a greener, more equitable Southern Africa.

A special word of thanks goes to CCARDESA for championing the empowerment of communicators. They recognise that well-equipped communicators are the cornerstone of impactful storytelling. Their support ensures our stories are rooted in reality, honesty and depth, amplifying voices that deserve to be heard.

If the opportunity arises to participate in a training like this, I encourage my colleagues to seize it without hesitation. The knowledge gained, the networks built, and the perspectives broadened are invaluable. They have the power not only to transform your work, but also to reshape how you see the role of storytelling in driving meaningful change.

Knowledge Information and Records Management

Implications of document digitisation, the File Plan as a foundation, and the role of document digitisation in digital transformation

File Plan

In today's digital age, the shift from paper-based records to digital documents is transforming how the department manages information. Document digitisation offers numerous benefits, including improved accessibility, faster retrieval, reduced physical storage costs and enhanced security. However, it also brings new challenges/needs such as implementation of an electronic system to eliminate unnecessary perpetual digitisation of paper-based records and the automation of certain activities, if not all activities, and that requires proactive management strategies.

What is a File Plan?

One of the crucial tools for effective records management in the digital environment is the File Plan.

A File Plan acts as a structured framework or roadmap that categorises and indexes records according to their function, activity or subject. It facilitates consistent classification, simplifies retrieval, and ensures compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

What is the purpose of a File Plan

Implementing a robust File Plan as a foundation helps the department maintain control over records. It supports lifecycle management, from creation and active use to archiving and eventual disposal, ensuring that vital information is preserved while obsolete data is securely deleted.

SOME QUICK REFLECTIONS

Is there a law enacted for a File Plan?

The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act No. 43 of 1996), was assented to on 27 September, 1996, and came into effect on 1 January, 1997. The Act established the National Archives and Records Service and provides the legal framework for the proper management and care of government records, as well as the preservation and use of a national archival heritage. Therefore, Government documents must be managed within the legal framework and in compliance with this Act.

What is at the centre of a File Plan?

"A robust File Plan typically includes the classification scheme at its core. This is the core of the File Plan. It provides a logical and hierarchical structure for grouping records based on the business functions, activities, and subjects

of the organisation. This ensures that records relating to the same function (e.g., human resources, biosecurity, legal, etc.) are consistently filed together."

How about retention and disposal of files?

The retention and disposition schedules are also specified by the File Plan as per the National Archives and Records Management Act where periods of "retention" and manners of "disposal" is outlined. The "disposition" of the records include destruction (shredding, deletion) or transfer to an archive for long-term preservation.

Can a file receive any name that a user devises?

A File Plan dictates a standardised naming convention for files and folders to ensure consistency and easy retrieval. It also defines the metadata or information about the record, such as its date, author and subject that must be captured.

What about storage and locations for archiving records?

Storage locations and formats are specified by the File Plan indicating where records are stored, both physical and electronic. This includes filing cabinets, network drives, server storage as well as electronic document and records management systems. It also identifies the format of the records, that is why as Government it is important to follow the guidelines.

According to the Act, who is the custodian of records?

Each department must have a Records Manager who is the records custodian. This official is delegated and helps to control and ensure data security and accountability. However, at directorate level, everyone is responsible for the responsible handling of governmental documents and records.

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DOCUMENT DIGITISATION

Document digitisation is a cornerstone of digital transformation, acting as a promoter for modernising business processes and enhancing organisational agility. Converting paper-based records into digital formats should always be succeeded or preceded by implementation of an electronic process/system to replace the current paper generating process and provide a cut-off date that enables closing of all paper-based files and precise number/volume of records for proper digitisation planning according to the National Archives and Record Service of South Africa Act and supporting policies, manuals and File Plan for the organisation to unlock numerous strategic advantages.

Key roles include:

- **Improved accessibility:** Digital documents can be accessed instantly from anywhere, facilitating remote work and real-time collaboration.
- **Operational efficiency:** Automating workflows and streamlining document retrieval reduces manual efforts, accelerates decision making and minimises errors.
- **Enhanced data security:** Digital records can be protected with encryption, access controls and audit trails, ensuring sensitive information is safeguarded.
- **Regulatory compliance:** Electronic records management supports adherence to legal and industry standards, simplifying audits and reporting.
- **Cost reduction and sustainability:** Eliminating physical storage and reducing paper consumption lowers operational costs and supports environmentally friendly practices.
- **Data-driven insights:** Digital documents feed into analytics platforms, enabling better insights, forecasting and strategic planning.

In essence, document digitisation transforms traditional, paper-reliant processes into agile, intelligent and secure digital workflows—driving the broader goals of digital transformation across the department. In summary, as the department digitises records, developing and maintaining an effective File Plan is essential. It underpins good knowledge management practices, enhances operational efficiency and ensures that the organisation remains compliant and informed.



The record management of the department is looking good

Shaka runs for physical fitness and stress relief

by: Samuel Kgatla



Mr Shaka Poto from DoA participated in this year's Comrades Marathon

Physical fitness, stress relief and mental health is what motivated Mr Shaka Poto to start his journey in running in 2019. Shaka is one of the active runners who exercise for fitness, weight control, mental health and to keep themselves busy in the department. Shaka participates in fun runs and athletic races or marathons. He runs three times in a week, two 10-km short runs midweek and a long 20-km run on weekends to keep up the momentum. Shaka is one of the reliable IT technicians in the Directorate: Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Service Support.

He represented the department during this year's Comrades Marathon and he is intending to run more in the future. Poto was inspired by ultramarathon runner, Mr Tete Morena Dijana. Dijana is a South African who won the Comrades Marathon in 2022, 2023 and 2025. Regular physical activity such as running can significantly improve mental health, self-confidence, healthy ageing and quality of life. Shaka can attest to that as he is looking fit and healthy. There is more to running than just training your muscles and improving your stamina. It is also a mental sport, and maybe even more so than previously believed.

When quizzed about what he wears during the running, he mentioned that he prefers wearing running shorts, a vest and Asics Cumulus or Adidas Adizero SL running sneakers with compression socks. Once he puts on the abovementioned kit, he only focuses on running and nothing else. He started running alone but that has changed as he is now running with some of his fellow runners. "I run at 06:00 on training day and 05:30 on a race day. My average runs are 55 minutes for a 10-km midweek run and two hours for a 20-km run on weekends. I had a knee ligament injury, which prevented me from running my first Comrades Marathon in 2024," he said.

Lastly, Shaka encouraged those who want to run to just get friends who are runners, ask them questions about running, then they will become inspired and start running.