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WOMEN'S MONTH



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FROM THE MINISTER'S DESK

Let us advocate for equal access to finance and resources—so that every woman can farm with dignity and success. Let us invest in training and innovation—so that our daughters inherit not just the land, but the knowledge to thrive on it. Let us promote climate-smart agriculture, so that our fields remain fertile and productive for generations to come.

Over the past years, important strides have been made in developing ways to quantify and encourage the participation of women in the mainstream economy of the agricultural sector. This year, our country places inclusive economic growth at the centre of its national agenda. South Africa, as Chair of the Empowerment of Women Working Group (EWWG), aims to build upon Brazil's initiatives and further contextualise these priorities during its presidency. Assuming this chairship also coincides with the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the United Nations (UN) Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995—this is now a significant moment as the world reviews the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2025.

Empowering women in agriculture leads to increased food production and food security, better education and health outcomes for children, reduction in poverty in rural communities and greater gender equality.

The Department of Agriculture (DoA) has introduced some mechanisms to empower women, youth and persons with disabilities, which include policies and programmes that are intentional in supporting them:

The Agriculture and Agro-Processing Master Plan (AAMP) as the sectoral growth strategy that sets out a series of immediate and medium-term actions needed to enable an inclusive growth

WOMEN ARE NOT JUST THE BACKBONE OF AGRICULTURE, BUT THE BEATING HEART OF THE SECTOR

Across our country, and indeed, the world, women have always played a crucial role in agriculture. They plant the seeds, they nurture the soil, they feed families. They are the ones keeping markets alive, yet too often their contributions go unrecognised and unsupported. From this Women's Month and beyond, let us change that narrative.

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and job creation in the agriculture and rural economies.

Norms and Standards for Designated Groups—seeks to influence key departmental programmes to mainstream women, youth, and persons with disabilities according to set targets of 50% for women, 40% for youth and 10% for persons with disabilities.

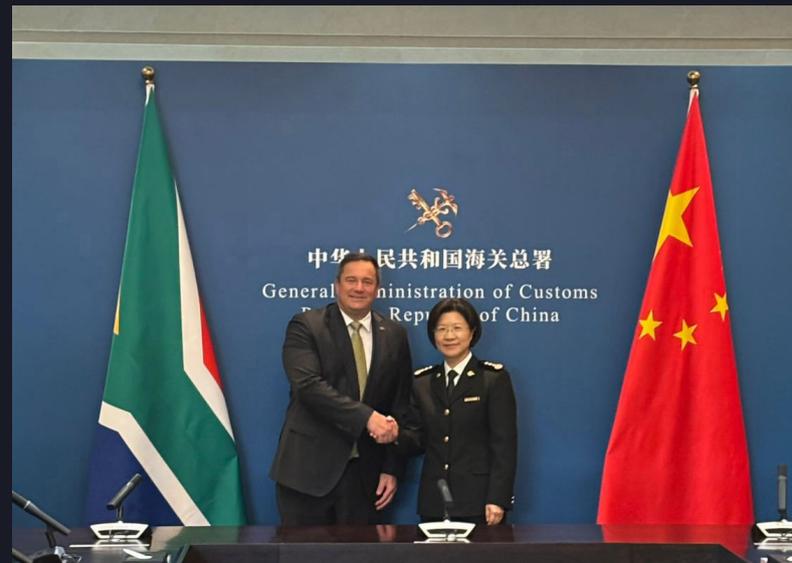
The Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme (CASP)—provides post settlement support to the targeted beneficiaries of land reform and to other producers who have acquired land through private means and are, for example, engaged in value-adding enterprises.

Blended Finance—financial scheme that entails a hybrid of grants and loans, with low interest rate incurred, provided to producers with an annual turnover of 10 million.

AgriBEE Fund—supports Black-owned farming and agribusiness enterprises that were previously excluded from participating in the mainstream economic activities with the view of enhancing the transformation agenda in the sector.

Farmer Production Support Units (FPSUs)—entails the provision of support to smallholder farmers, including youth, to maximise agricultural production, maintain their supply contracts, create jobs, enhance food security, stimulate agro-industrialisation, and help to grow the country's economy.

We should always remember—women farm, they feed, and most importantly, fuel the nation. Let us walk together, hand in hand, to build a future where every woman farmer is respected, resourced, and rewarded.



Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen met with Minister Sun Meijun from the General Administration of Chinese Customs (GACC) discussing the market expansion of South Africa's stone fruits, including plums, peaches, nectarines, apricots and prunes.



Minister John Steenhuisen and Deputy Minister Nokuzola Capa, at the Foot and mouth Disease Indaba.

NOKWANDWA SHOWS THAT AGRO-PROCESSING IS THE FUTURE FOR UPCOMING FARMERS



Ms Nokwanda Mchunu is helping the community of Maphumulo with her processed meat products



Ms Nokwanda Mchunu with two of her workers processing the wors at her Pink Print Farm in Maphumulo.

Samuel Kgatla

From humble beginnings in a home garage to a meat processing factory—this is the story of a passionate young meat processor, Ms Nokwanda Mchunu from Maphumulo, KwaZulu-Natal. The Department of Agriculture (DoA) visited her as one of the young successful farmers supported by Government. She is the founder of Pink Print Farm Produce, which processes meat products like beef patties, sausages, wors, russians, viennas and burgers. Her inspiration came from a desire to contribute to food security, especially for her community of Maphumulo. This Women's Month, DoA is paying special tribute to the young female farmers contributing to food security and rural development across the country.

Mchunu is currently supplying the local community, Save Rite and Cold Storage stores with high-quality, locally-sourced meat products. Her factory started in 2018 and has employed six permanent and two temporary workers. She is also a graduate from Cedara College of Agriculture and completed an Agriculture Management certificate in 2017. DoA assisted Nokwanda with Food Safety Training to enable her to comply with labelling and meat safety standards.

Mchunu was funded by DoA through the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) for the expansion of the processing factory. CASP assisted her with meat processing machines, infrastructure, refrigerators, a canteen, office container, toilets and change and store rooms. Her hard work was noticed and recognised when she won the Recognition Award in the Agro-processing Category of the former Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and won the Presidential SMME and Cooperatives Award from the Department of Small Business Development for Rural Based

SMME of the Year, both in 2022. She is planning to win more awards in the future because of her passion and determination in the agro-processing sector.

Mchunu's factory was negatively affected by the severe floods that hit Kwa-Zulu-Natal in 2022. The floods damaged her infrastructure, however, the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) came on board and helped her with their drought relief programme and repaired everything. As part of commemorating Women's Month, Nokwanda encouraged young people to consider joining the agro-processing sector. "There are a lot of opportunities for young people in agro-processing. It is a sector with the potential to create more jobs in the country. Young people must stand up and have the courage to create employment. It is not easy, but it is doable," said Nokwanda.

She also sells steak, wors and chicken served with pap to the customers who come in numbers to her lovely sitting place.

USE WHAT YOU HAVE, HELP WILL FIND YOU ALONG THE WAY

Rony Moremi



Matome has currently planted spinach on the farm while preparation for debushing more hectares on the farm is underway.

they receive help from government and other institutions but are unable to sustain their farming projects. Young people should utilise the land available to them to start farming,” she said.

When the Department of Agriculture officials visited the farm, the construction of a pack shed with an office, ablution facilities, storeroom for fertilisers and chemicals used on the farm was almost complete. She also received a 940 000-litre reservoir, a 10-ha centre pivot and drilled two boreholes through the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) from the Department of Agriculture.

Matlhatsi Selokane from the Department of Agriculture said: “Young farmers/producers have demonstrated key attributes of being a farmer such as commitment, passion and resilience to succeed against all odds in the sector. Most importantly, youth must know that the Department of Agriculture is committed to giving them a “hand up and not a handout”. Those who work hard are worthy of being supported and thus help will find them along the way. I would also attribute their success to their networking skills and ability to reinvest in their operations.”

Matome is a living testimony of what a dream combined with passion and support can do for ensuring food security in rural communities. Matome has the following message for youth, “Never give up in farming. Since it is difficult for us as first generation farmers and it is difficult for us to buy commercial farms, we must take every opportunity that we have to use communal land and develop our rural areas.”



The pack shed that Matome received from the Department of Agriculture Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP).

When Matome Mokgobu resigned from her internship in 2016, all she had was a dream, her father’s old tractor, a small piece of land in the backyard, and a burning passion for farming. “Just start with what you have, do not wait for help, help will find you along the way,” enthused Matome. She is the founder of Mosibudi Trading Enterprise based in Gemarke Village in Senwabarwana, Limpopo.

Currently, Matome is farming with potatoes, spinach, and butternut on 19 hectares (ha) of communal land. In 2021, she was one of the farmers sponsored by Potato SA for their small grower programme where she planted potatoes on a quarter of a hectare, which was prosperous. After seeing her potential with the successful harvest of potatoes, Potato SA and the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development supported her again in 2022 and she was able to plant one hectare of potatoes and employ nine people. She hired a further 15 people to help with harvesting. She was also able to secure a market to export the potatoes to Mozambique. This year, she was selected to take part in the Potato SA Enterprise Development Programme and will again be supported with planting 10 ha of potatoes.

“We are first generation farmers; we do not always have resources, but we must work hard and utilise the communal land available to us. Youth must avoid white elephant projects where

BABALAZ SAUCE: TURNING LOCAL FLAVOUR INTO NATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Matsepo Malatswane



Nomasonto Mahlangu-Moncho proudly displays her award-winning Babalaz Chilli Sauce, a true taste of the Northern Cape.

In Kuruman, Northern Cape, at the iconic Moffat Mission, something spicy is brewing. Local entrepreneur Nomasonto Mahlangu-Moncho is making waves with her fiery creation: Babalaz Sauce, the only agro-processed chilli sauce produced in this province.

Made from homegrown vegetables and bursting with authentic flavour, the Babalaz brand has become a favourite across local markets and is now gearing up for national expansion. What began as a small-scale operation, rooted in traditional recipes and a love for local ingredients, has grown into a proudly South African product that resonates with consumers seeking quality, authenticity and a taste of home.

The growing demand for her sauce reflects not only its bold and unique flavour, but also the values behind the brand's sustainability, community upliftment and women-led innovation. As Nomasonto prepares to scale up production and enter major retail spaces, her journey stands as a powerful example of how rural entrepreneurship, when nurtured and supported, can drive meaningful economic transformation and inspire a new generation of agro-processors.

Her hard work and innovation were recently recognised when she was awarded Best Female Agro-Processor in Northern Cape. Not only did she win in her category, but she also took home the Overall Winner's Cup in the provincial competition.

Operating under her own company, Teen Nest of Technology South Africa, Nomasonto produces three heat levels of chilli sauce: Mild, Hot and Extra Hot, all made from scratch in a true farm-to-bottle story. Beyond sauces, she's mentoring the youth of Kuruman and selling other farm products such as chickens, eggs and vegetables, further contributing to local food security and skills development.

Her success is backed by key partnerships. The Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), now merged into the Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEFDA), helped formalise her business and build its operational capacity. Additionally, the Sanlam Foundation provided vital support in the form of funding, business training and mentorship, helping her overcome early challenges and expanding her reach.

Through her dedication and innovation, Nomasonto has emerged not only as a thriving entrepreneur, but also as a powerful role model for women's empowerment in rural agro-processing. Her journey reflects the growing impact of women in agriculture, particularly in under-resourced areas, and serves as an inspiration to aspiring female entrepreneurs determined to uplift their communities.

Major retailers such as Shoprite and BigSave have expressed interest in long-term supply contracts with Babalaz Sauce. For Nomasonto, this is a life-changing opportunity and the only things standing in her way now are compliance certification and the acquisition of a refrigerated delivery vehicle to meet distribution requirements.

What's Next?

Plans are underway to expand production to a larger kitchen facility in Kathu, just a few kilometres from her current location. She also aims to involve more local women farmers, especially those who can supply the fresh vegetables used in her sauces.

"I've come this far with hard work and support. Now I want to bring other women along with me," says Nomasonto.

From humble beginnings in Kuruman to becoming a provincial award-winner and a supplier of one of South Africa's most exciting new chilli sauces, Nomasonto Mahlangu-Moncho proves that rural innovation and female leadership can go hand in hand.

Her story is one of resilience, community spirit and turning up the heat one bottle at a time.



YOUNG, ENTHUSIASTIC AND READY TO FEED THE NATION



Mogoshadi proudly showing off a fresh bunch of spinach which she supplies to the local market.



Workers pruning cabbage leaves.

“Youth must not look down on farming and look for jobs in cushy offices, they should consider farming to feed the nation, they must be smart and be involved in agriculture,”

Rony Moremi

The roaring sound of a tractor welcomed us as we arrived at Shadtonez Temong Farm in Koekoek, Blouberg Municipality, Limpopo. The tractor was preparing the soil for planting potatoes.

Mogoshadi Ramafalo is the owner of the 50 ha Shadtonez Temong Farm where she practices mixed farming. She produces cabbage, beetroot, butternut, tomato and potatoes. She sells her produce to the local market, local supermarkets in Senwabarwana Spar, Boxer, Goseame Fresh Produce, Klientech multi services, Freshling Fresh Market, and to local street hawkers.

Matlhatsi Seloane and Kelvin Selomo from the Department of Agriculture could not hide their admiration at the improvement on the farm since their last visit. “We met under the tree when we visited this farm in 2022, there is so much improvement here, I cannot believe my eyes,” exclaimed Matlhatsi. Matlhatsi was impressed by the 950 000-litre reservoir, a pack shed with ablution facilities, an office, two storage rooms for inputs such as fertilisers and chemicals used on the farm and a 10-hectare towable centre pivot irrigating young, fresh, cabbage seedlings. The pack shed, centre pivot and reservoir were provided through

the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme (CASAP) of the Department of Agriculture.

Mogoshadi is a beneficiary of the Graduate Placement Programme by the Department of Agriculture. She has a National Diploma in Animal Science and Bachelor of Science and Master of Science of Agricultural Economics degrees. The department introduced the Graduate Placement Programme in 2018. It is a structured programme designed to offer agriculture graduates practical work experience and career development opportunities. Graduates are placed on a farm for two years to expose them to on-the-job training, mentorship, and formal learning to help them transition into the professional world and build a foundation for their careers. The objective of placing them on farms is to help them to pursue their entrepreneurial ambitions in the sector after completing the Graduate Placement Programme.

“Youth must not look down on farming and look for jobs in cushy offices, they should consider farming to feed the nation, they must be smart and be involved in agriculture,” said Mogoshadi, revving the tractor to turn the soil in preparation for planting potatoes.



Cont from pg 9.



Mogoshadi also produces cabbage that she supplies to the local market in Senwabarwana.



Mogoshadi Ramafalo on a tractor.



Young graduates working at Mogoshadi's farm preparing fertiliser for the cabbage.

PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES FEED SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

Samuel Kgatla



Ms Jane Rametse of Itireleng Society for the Blind project is showing that disability does not mean inability in farming.

Six people from the Society for the Blind have proved that “disability” does not mean “inability”, and they are growing fresh vegetables, shining the light of inspiration and hope in Bochabela Township, Free State. They have started a vegetable garden called Itireleng Society for the Blind at Marang Primary School to feed their community and schools in the area. This was after realising that there was a shortage of vegetables in the area and to keep themselves busy. The project consists of a group of persons with visual impairments (three men and three women) who decided that subsistence farming was the way to go to make sure there is enough food for everyone in the community.

The garden inspires confidence in the community and is one of the thriving projects led by passionate Ms Jane Rametse, who has been involved since 2010. Currently, they have planted spinach, carrot, onion, raab and they also practice crop rotation to improve soil health. They have signed a lease agreement with the school to continue operating on the land. They provide the school’s feeding scheme with their freshly harvested vegetables. Every Friday is a busy day for the project—they sell their vegetables to teachers and people in the community. They have six committee members to manage the garden, take their proceeds to the Society for the Blind, and share them equally among themselves.

The Free State Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) came on board and assisted them with drilling of a borehole, shade nets, production inputs and garden

tools in 2020. This has helped them as they struggled with water before and DARD additionally helped them with a two-week long training programme on food storage, manufacturing and packaging. They mentioned that the training has assisted them, however, they are still pleading for special training for people with disabilities. They have been working closely with an agricultural advisor, Mr Tsietsingwe Maphalla, who has been helpful to them.

Some of the challenges they currently face include muddy soil and a small piece of land. They said that they need their own transport to deliver their produce and a larger piece of land because they consider to also plant tomatoes. They use the Society for the Blind’s transport and sometimes it is not immediately available when needed.

Jane said that they are getting continued support from both the school and the community, and she thanked them for it. “Our soil is muddy and we need some soil to till in. Our land is too small, and we cannot supply retail stores because there are some requirements to be met. We are willing to grow big and show that people with disabilities can make a difference in communities,” she said.



Members of the Itireleng Society for the Blind project in Bloemfontein holding the vegetables from their garden.



Itireleng Society for the Blind project employees at Bochabela Township in Free State.

CELEBRATING WOMEN OF SUSBTANCE'S ACHIEVEMENTS



One of the women employed at the Sideca farm planting seedlings.



Some of Siphesihle Kwetana's awards.



Farm owner Siphesihle Kwetana on her farm showcasing some of her plants.

Innocent Mhlanga

Malala Yousafzai once said, "There are two powers in the world; one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a third power stronger than both, that of women". Over the years, more and more powerful women have been produced in South Africa in every sphere of Government and in leadership.

Apart from being young and vibrant, Siphesihle Kwetana, the proud owner of Siphe Development and Capacitation Agency (SIDECA), has proved that determination, hard work and dedication can create jobs, feed the world and contribute to the economic development of the country.

Siphe Development and Capacitation Agency (SIDECA) is a 100% Black owned and managed consulting company which is based in Eastern Cape, currently operating on 25 ha of land situated at Kaplan Village in the Ncise location near the Mthatha Dam.

The farming enterprise specialises in agricultural research work, project management, crop testing, feasibility studies, agricultural inputs, farmer training and mentoring and incubation; learnership, fertiliser, potting soil, fungicides and herbicides. In addition, they specialise in production and marketing of agro-processing products such as pork products and poultry products. They produce fresh vegetables and seedlings through their Naproc Nursery as well.

The SIDECA farm has a total land area of 25 ha: 5 ha is fenced arable land with 4 ha under irrigation, while 15 ha is awaiting fencing and irrigation installation. In its capacity as an agribusiness consulting firm, it has established professional experience in agriculture to ascertain profitable farming practices through its in-house agronomic and business management expertise.

The farm has managed to secure formal contracts to supply their produce to Pick n Pay, Spars, Food Lovers Markets and Boxer stores, and also has agreements with some informal markets within and near the village. It employs 17 permanent workers and 15 seasonal workers, of which 95% are from the surrounding communities and they are looking forward to expand the farm, since it will create more jobs for the area and surroundings. "Though we are trying our best under the terrible circumstances to keep the fire burning, it has been very difficult and has made us put in more effort and dedication to fulfill our passion for farming. The recent floods have also not made things easier, as it has set us a few steps back," says Siphesihle.

Siphesihle continues, "As SIDECA enterprise, we were severely affected by the heavy rains and floods as it destroyed our crucial infrastructure, livelihoods and other agricultural production and the extent of the damage stretched to 750 broiler chickens that were lost; 70 pigs and 40 piglets perished; the poultry structure's roof was blown away; the piggery structure was lost; 100 trays of cabbage seedlings in the nurseery were destroyed and our main water pump was damaged beyond repair. The effects of this disaster are not limited to infrastructure or financial losses, they strike at the heart of the community's livelihood and wellbeing."

Siphesihle humbly appeals to the government in its entirety, private sector, NGOs and all stakeholders to assist them in restoring SIDECA farm to full functionality by capacitating them into rebuilding the damaged poultry and piggery structures, replacing lost livestock and seedling trays, restoring of water pipes and lastly, repairing training infrastructure and replacing learning tools.