

The Farmers' Chronicles

BLOG

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Breaking Barriers: Deputy Minister Capa Celebrates the Women Powering Limpopo's Citrus Industry

Under the warm Limpopo sun, vast orchards gleam like fields of gold. Row upon row of citrus trees, bursting with juicy oranges, lemons, and sweet naartjies, fill the air with a fresh, tangy fragrance. Nestled within the Sekhukhune District Municipality, this vibrant heartland of South Africa's citrus belt thrives because of the dedication and hard work of its people. On 5 August 2025, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Ms Nokuzola Capa, visited Naranja Packers in Burgersfort, Limpopo, a flagship facility within the Sekhukhune District.

Her visit celebrated the vital role women play in propelling Limpopo's citrus industry, a cornerstone of the rural economy and a driver of national agricultural success. Limpopo produces 40% of South Africa's citrus, making it a global market leader. The sector employs over 100,000 farm workers, ranging from seasonal labourers to highly skilled agricultural professionals. These workers support countless rural households, creating critical livelihoods in areas where economic opportunities are often scarce.

What makes this sector unique is its ability to blend opportunities for unskilled workers with clear pathways for career development in agricultural sciences, quality control, and farm management. In recent years, the industry has seen steady growth, reinforcing Limpopo's position as one of Africa's most important citrus production hubs. At Naranja Packers, fresh fruit undergoes stringent sorting, grading, and packing to meet high health and export standards.

The packhouse embodies the professionalism and quality that South Africa's agricultural exports are known for worldwide. Deputy Minister Capa's visit highlighted the indispensable contributions of women employees, whose speed, skill, and dedication are essential to the packhouse's success. Equally important is the teamwork among all staff members, men, and women alike, demonstrating a united commitment to excellence.



agriculture

Department:
Agriculture
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A NATION
THAT WORKS FOR ALL



Deputy Minister Capa

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For many women at Naranja Packers, this work means more than earning a salary; it opens the door to independence, education for their children, and a better quality of life in rural communities where opportunities can often be limited. One female worker shared that working in the citrus industry has helped her gain valuable skills and knowledge. She revealed that before joining the sector, she did not know that there were specific names for various citrus fruit or that each requires careful handling, a lesson she now embraces with pride.

Deputy Minister Capa engaged personally with workers, affirming that empowering women in agriculture uplifts entire communities. During this Women's Month, she emphasised the importance of equitable wages, training, and leadership opportunities as foundations for a thriving sector. "Empowering women in agriculture is empowering our nation," she said. "Your work contributes not only to economic growth but also to hope and dignity for future generations."

The success of Naranja Packers creates a multiplier effect throughout Sekhukhune. Packed fruit supports local transport businesses, small traders, and strengthens market access for farmers across Limpopo. Women are developing valuable skills, from machinery operation to team leadership and quality assurance, that lay the foundation for entrepreneurship and leadership within the agricultural value chain. The Department of Agriculture remains committed to nurturing these pathways through focused programmes, mentorship, and investments in rural agricultural activities.

-Prince Mtsweni-

Deputy Minister Capa's visit during Women's Month is a testament to the resilience and dedication of women in agriculture. It reflects the department's unwavering commitment to inclusive growth and strengthening South Africa's agricultural sector at all levels. "The future of Limpopo's citrus industry depends on inclusivity," Deputy Minister Capa said. "We must continue to break down barriers so that women can fully participate and lead in agriculture."

This Women's Month, as we celebrate the determination and resilience of women in Sekhukhune's citrus sector, it is vital for all stakeholders, including policymakers, businesses, and consumers to play an active role in supporting women-led agricultural initiatives. Readers are urged to advocate for policies that promote gender equality and expand training opportunities in agriculture.

Equally important is supporting local farmers' markets and women-led agribusinesses, which help empower women and grow the sector. Considering careers, partnerships, or investments in the flourishing citrus industry can also open new avenues for economic growth and inclusion. By embracing these actions collectively, we help build a stronger, more inclusive agricultural economy that uplifts communities and secures a brighter future for all.

As Deputy Minister Capa departed Burgersfort, the fresh scent of citrus lingered, a symbol of promise and hope. Thanks to visionary leadership and united community efforts, the next generation of women agricultural leaders stands ready to build on Limpopo's legacy and drive rural economies forward.



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