

The Farmers' Chronicles

BLOG

10 October 2025



Building on Success: South Africa Leads the National Rollout of the Africa Phytosanitary Programme Durban, KwaZulu-Natal | 29 September to 3 October 2025

Every year, pests and diseases cause significant losses for African farmers, affecting both crops and livelihoods. With climate change and expanding trade adding pressure to agriculture, protecting plant health has become increasingly vital. South Africa is taking proactive steps to safeguard crops, strengthen food security, and support the livelihoods of farmers across the country. The national Department of Agriculture, working closely with international and regional partners, including the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), led the National Train-the-Trainer Workshop for the Africa Phytosanitary Programme (APP) in Durban during September - October.

South Africa became the first African country to implement the APP at a national level, bringing together scientists, inspectors, provincial officials, and industry stakeholders. The workshop focused on building skills and enhancing capacity for effective pest surveillance, detection, and management.

Opening the workshop, Ms Julie Mokwele, Scientific Manager: Early Warning Systems, emphasised the importance of the initiative. She said; "This workshop represents our collective commitment to protecting Africa's agriculture, safeguarding food systems, and ensuring safe trade." Her remarks highlighted that plant health is the basis of sustainable agriculture, and if left unmanaged, pests and diseases could threaten productivity, food security, and rural livelihoods across the continent. This Durban workshop built on Phase 2 of the APP Train-the-Trainer programme, which was held earlier in Mpumalanga from 23 to 27 June 2025. Nine African countries participated, including Algeria, Cape Verde, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Liberia, Malawi, Senegal, South Africa, and Tunisia.

Each country was tasked with organising national workshops to extend the training locally. South Africa was the first to deliver on this commitment, exhibiting strong leadership and a clear vision for the APP rollout. The workshop brought together experts from provincial departments of agriculture, inspection services,



agriculture

Department:
Agriculture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



A NATION
THAT WORKS FOR ALL



Building on Success: South Africa Leads the National Rollout of the Africa Phytosanitary Programme

Durban, KwaZulu-Natal | 29 September to 3 October 2025

the Border Management Authority, Fruit Fly Africa, and other key stakeholders. Participants focused on refining skills and sharing knowledge to ensure rapid and precise detection, surveillance, and response to pest threats. As part of the training, delegates received tablets equipped with specialised software to support digital pest surveillance and data management. These tools allow inspectors to collect and analyse data efficiently and share real-time updates, enabling faster responses to emerging threats. Field visits provided practical learning opportunities, including a visit to a banana farm in Ramsgate on the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal. There, delegates observed demonstrations on identifying and managing Panama Disease Tropical Race 4 (TR4), a serious banana disease not yet present in South Africa.

They also gained hands-on experience with other pests, including Banana bunchy top virus (BBTV), Fruit Fly, Macadamia Felted Coccid, and Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer. These exercises are vital for early detection, protecting crops, and supporting the APP's mission of building capacity, safeguarding trade, and securing Africa's food future. The Africa Phytosanitary Programme is a collaborative initiative launched by the IPPC Secretariat, in partnership with the FAO and the African Union Commission on Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment. Its mission is to help African countries strengthen resilience against pests and diseases that threaten agriculture, trade, and the environment.

The programme trains plant health practitioners who in turn train their peers within their respective countries. It also leverages technology to improve monitoring, reporting, and cross-border communication, which enhances both food security and trade safety.

Strengthening phytosanitary systems benefits farmers by providing early warning systems, rapid responses to outbreaks, and safer access to both local and international markets. Effective plant health management improves agricultural resilience, supports sustainable practices, and protects rural livelihoods. Workshops like these equip plant health professionals with the skills needed to prevent, detect, and respond to pest threats, directly benefiting farmers and communities across the country.

The success of the Durban workshop highlights the importance of collaboration between national governments such as South Africa's Department of Agriculture, regional bodies like the African Union's Inter-African Phytosanitary Council, and international organisations, including FAO, IPPC, and supporting donors. These partnerships create a continent-wide network of trained professionals ready to tackle emerging plant health challenges.

Looking onward, the National Plant Protection Organization of South Africa (NPPOZA) is committed to expanding APP training nationwide. The focus will be on bolstering capacity in pest surveillance, encouraging technology adoption, and improving coordination between national and provincial teams. South Africa's leadership in the national rollout sets a strong example for the continent. Stronger skills, improved surveillance, and closer cooperation will contribute to healthier crops, safer harvests, and more resilient food systems for everyone.

-Prince Mtsweni-



Building on Success: South Africa Leads the National Rollout of the Africa Phytosanitary Programme Durban, KwaZulu-Natal | 29 September to 3 October 2025

For further information or inquiries on phytosanitary matters, please contact the National Department of Agriculture at:

✉ PhytoMatters@nda.gov.za Tel: (012) 319 6104

The department welcomes questions, feedback, and collaboration to help protect crops, strengthen food systems, and support farmers across South Africa.

