



CONSOLIDATED REPORTS-March 2022- March 2025

FINAL REPORT



Rural
Self-Help
Development
Association



DENMARK
LESOTHO
NETWORK

BACKGROUND

Objectives of the intervention

The long-standing partnership between RSDA and Denmark Lesotho Network has consistently supported smallholder farmers and their organisations in Lesotho, most recently through the Lesotho Agriculture and Food Forum (LAFF) platform, elevating farmers voices and providing a mechanism for advocacy and engagement with national government. RSDA is now well positioned to expand their support to farmers, and this intervention seeks to build the resilience of farmers to the climate change. Impacts which they are increasingly experiencing.

The target group (smallholder farmers) as well as the thematic area (agriculture) are heavily impacted by the increasing variability in climate patterns in Lesotho. 60-80% of the population in Lesotho depend on the outputs of, predominantly rain-fed, subsistence farming. The nature of their agriculture practices leave them vulnerable to the increasingly erratic variations in seasonal weather patterns such as increased incidence of drought, late onset of rain, early onset of frost amongst others.

This intervention targets 5000 farmers by leveraging their own structures of farmers groups and organisations to support the uptake of farming practices which are more resilient to climate variability as well strengthen the parts of the system (value chains, markets, enabling policies) which ensure their farming operations can deliver strong financial returns.

The key intervention components are outlined in the diagram below.

Impact:

Agriculture practices and systems that reduce vulnerability to climate by creating sustainable production and increased income for small holder farmers.

Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) Practices through regenerative farming

Increased adaptive capacity of smallholder farmers through use of CSA practices -CSA production protocol, training, demonstrations, and use of ICT for extension and weather information
(Capacity building and strategic services)

Labelling of Green Products

product labelling for green (and climate friendly) products promoted and ensuring inclusion of small producers.
(Capacity building and strategic services)

Multistakeholder Platforms

Multi-stakeholder (farming community, private, public) Platforms to enable CSA production practices, labelling of green (climate friendly) products and advocate for enabling environment facilitated.
(Capacity building and advocacy)

BACKGROUND



Rural Self-Help Development Association (RSDA) is a leading agricultural advisory services agency that supports farmers in Lesotho by providing services, capacity building and advocacy support for sustainable climate smart agriculture, value addition and marketing of farmer's products. RSDA enhances livelihoods and builds climate resilient Basotho communities by helping people to help themselves, working collaboratively and in partnership with other stakeholders.

RSDA cherish partnership with GEF SGP and MPP as well as with Demark Lesotho Network funded by Danish CISU.

RSDA initiated collaboration with GEF SGP and the UN's Mountain Partnership Products label and Slow Food International in 2021. The project intervention adapts Mountain Partnership Products (MPP) and Slow Food Narrative Labelling which will tell a story describing the **product**, its **producer** and the **production** process. MPP and Slow Food are cooperating with IFOAM to apply **Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)** approach for organic certification of selected smallholder farmer products.

This development birthed the "Climate Proofing for Small Holder Farmers of Lesotho" initiated in 2022, implemented in partnership with Denmark Lesotho Network, funded by CISU promotes product labelling for green (and climate friendly) products produced by small producers.

Mountain Partnership is a United Nations voluntary alliance of partners dedicated to improving the lives of mountain peoples and protecting mountain environments around the world. Their label, **MPP Label**, is a narrative label which tells the story of each product, enabling the consumers to make informed purchases by learning about product's origins and cultivation, processing and preservation methods, nutritional value and role in cultures.

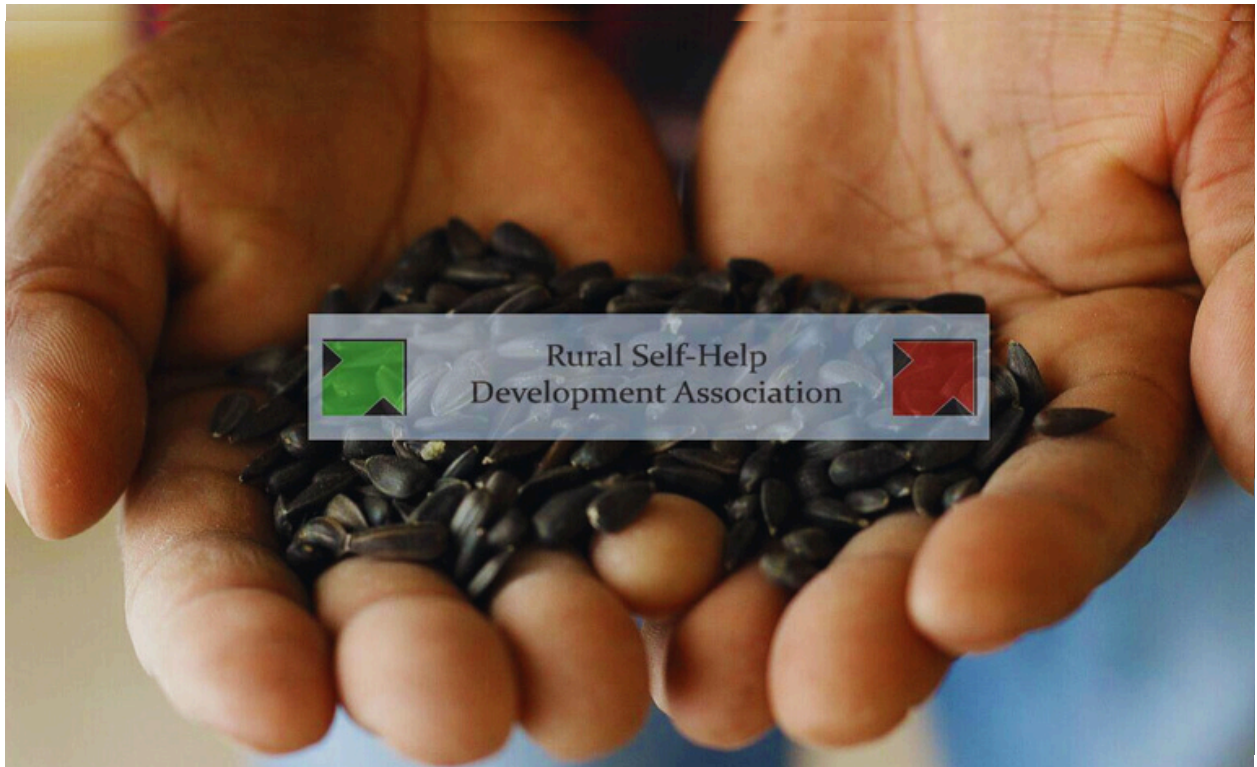
Slow Food is a global, grassroots organization, founded to prevent the disappearance of local food cultures and traditions, counteract the rise of fast life and combat people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from and how our food choices affect the world around us. The **Slow Food** Narrative provides additional information regarding varieties and breeds, cultivations and processing methods, areas of origin, animal welfare, and advice on storage and use.

The PGS and the Narrative labels are the backbone of the initiative which is aimed at making the market work for the smallholder farmers, making them resilient to climate change while producing their good, clean, and fair food.

BACKGROUND

This document has been developed to consolidate the climate proofing for smallholder farmers of Lesotho the project reports and reflects what has been achieved for the period of 2022-2024 and to provide a comprehensive overview of RSDA activities, events, achievements and lessons learnt.

The report highlights significant activities such as the successful launch of the Climate Proofing for smallholder farmers of Lesotho Project, district farmer leaders meetings, stakeholder engagements and dialogues, and learning journeys that facilitated experience sharing and peer learning among farmers. It also reflects RSDA's participation in national celebrations, the aggregation and marketing of farmers' produce, These reports showcase RSDA's commitment to empowering smallholder farmers and promoting climate-resilient agriculture.





CLIMATE PROOFING OF SMALLHOLDER FARMERS LAUNCH VENUE: COOP COLLEGE MASERU DATE: 10 MARCH 2022

The Rural Self-help Development Association (RSDA) successfully launched the Climate Proofing for Smallholder Farmers initiative on the 10th March 2022. The event was attended by over 500 participants, including farmers, stakeholders, and international partners, celebrating the continued commitment to agricultural development in Lesotho.

Welcome Remarks

The event commenced with welcome remarks from RSDA Board Member, Mr. Matsepe, who expressed his delight at the presence of visitors from Denmark, the key funders of the project. He emphasized the significance of the longstanding relationship between Denmark Lesotho Network and RSDA in supporting agricultural activities and improving farmers' livelihoods.

Farmers Forum Representation

A farmer representing the 10 districts, who is also a member of the district forum Mrs Mamalefetsane Phakoe, delivered a speech highlighting RSDA's impact over the years. She acknowledged RSDA's role in enhancing agricultural productivity through training programs in ICT and marketing skills. The aggregation model introduced by RSDA has helped farmers meet market demands effectively. She also expressed gratitude for RSDA's provision of office equipment, including laptops, printers, and smartphones, which have empowered farmers in data collection, consolidating reports and overall operations. The farmer proudly noted that, with RSDA's support, they are recognized as champions in their districts.

Slow Food

Representatives from Slow Food attended the event and encouraged farmers to embrace clean and fair food. Miss Ska Moteane advocated for the appreciation of traditional Basotho dishes, such as sorghum, which is both nutritious and culturally significant.

Denmark Lesotho Network Acknowledgment

Speaking on behalf of the Denmark Lesotho Network, Anders Hedegaard from Denmark introduced himself and reaffirmed the over 20-year partnership between Denmark and RSDA. He recounted how Danish volunteers initially came to Lesotho, which led to their interest in assisting smallholder farmers through agricultural funding. He emphasized Denmark's belief in equal rights and opportunities for all, regardless of status, and highlighted the essential role of farmers in strengthening Lesotho's economy.

Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition

A representative from the Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. Molepe Kaeane acknowledged the need for data collection across all district resource centers to facilitate commodity aggregation for the market. The ministry pledged continued efforts to improve seed distribution and provide farmers further training.

The event concluded with a vibrant celebration featuring Basotho dances and a communal meal. As a gesture of appreciation, gifts were presented to the Danish partners, symbolizing the strong and enduring partnership between Denmark and Lesotho in empowering small holder farmers.

The launch of the Climate Proofing for Smallholder Farmers initiative marked another milestone in RSDA's efforts to enhance agricultural resilience and sustainability, ensuring a brighter future for smallholder farmers in Lesotho.

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 500



**STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION
VENUE: MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,
MASERU
DATE: 15 MARCH 2022**

ATTENDEES: RSDA, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, SLOW FOOD

Consultation Meeting with Marketing Department in the Ministry of Agriculture Lesotho. This was a formal consultation meeting about Narrative Labelling. We met with the officials responsible for Marketing and presented to them what Narrative Labelling will entail and they indicated that they will support the process in their various marketing platforms.

Though our focus on Narrative Labelling in this project, is on; Grass-fed Red Meat and Dairy, Sorghum and Beans, they wish this could be extended to other products produced in Lesotho.

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Identifying possible legislative bottlenecks
- Building a shared vision amongst stakeholders
- Building the PGS concept into discussions



STAKEHOLDER MEETING VENUE: VICTORY HALL, MASERU DATE: 16 MARCH 2022

ATTENDEES:

INSTITUTION	NO OF PEOPLE
Rural Self Help Development Association	4
Slow Food	2
Ministry of Agriculture & Food Security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dept of Agric Research • Dept of Field Services • Dept of Livestock Services 	6
Ministry of Small Business	1
Food & Agricultural Organization	1
Lesotho National Dairy Board	2

- Formal consultation Meeting with the Lesotho Government Ministries to introduce Slow Food & Narrative Labelling.
- As part of Narrative labelling processes, we met with various government ministries, to introduce the process and identify relevant stakeholders to be involved in the Narrative Labelling.
- It was agreed that the ministries will identify and share the details of the stakeholders with RSDA in order to extend the invitation for their participation in the process.

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Multi-stakeholders consultation
- Needs, incentives, and capacities of PGS stakeholders
- Identify possible legislature issues
- Shared vision amongst stakeholders
- Building the PGS concept into discussions

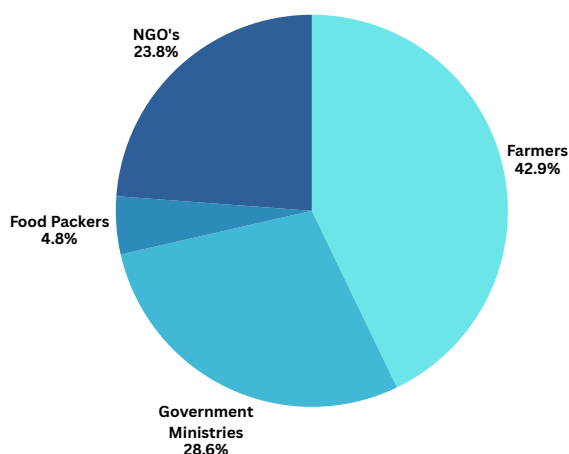


BEANS & SORGHUM MULTI-STAKEHOLDER MEETING VENUE: VICTORY HALL, MASERU DATE: 27 APRIL 2022

This meeting was held as the process building towards Narrative Labelling of the Mountain Partnership Product Label & Slow Food and the focus of the meeting was on Sorghum and Beans.

Slow Food gave a presentation on the narrative labelling that paved way for discussions and engagements. After the presentations delegates now clearly understood the importance of the Narrative Labelling and their involvement towards achieving the Label of the earmarked products in Lesotho.

Farmers voiced their concern about the unavailability of seeds, specifically beans during cultivation period, and it was indicated it is due to the fact that this type of beans is not subsidised and does not usually form part of government farmer's incentive programme.



TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 21

On the other hand it was revealed that the local seeds company is able to produce 5 tons of seeds, regardless the price is bit higher as compared to other types of beans.

Farmers also voiced their concern about the price they get from buyers and it was explained that this is due to the fact that these beans are competing with other beans coming from outside the country which affects the pricing of the beans. Another point raised was that farmers themselves are selling these beans with different pricing and there is a need for farmers to come together and agree on the common pricing.

It was also indicated that farmers are failing to reach the demand of the beans to the packers. The government school feeding scheme indicated that they need more beans from farmers of which they are failing to get.

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Multi-stakeholders consultation
- Needs, incentives, and capacities of PGS stakeholders
- Major bottlenecks preventing smallholder farmer market access, such as issues of logistics and infrastructure
- Shared vision amongst stakeholders
- Building the PGS concept into discussions

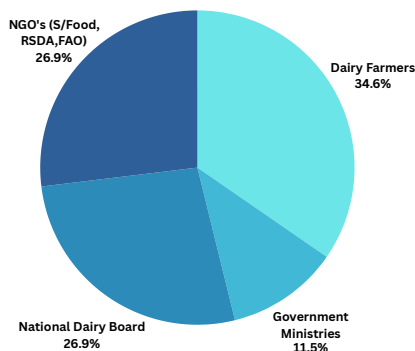


DAIRY MULTI-STAKEHOLDER MEETING VENUE: VICTORY HALL, MASERU DATE: 24 MAY 2022

This was a multi-stakeholder meeting for dairy products. The meeting was attended by dairy farmers/producers, processors, Lesotho National Dairy Board (LNDB), LENAFU – Lesotho National Farmers Union, Ministry of Trade etc. After the Narrative Labelling presentation, there was a question raised about ownership of the Lesotho dairy flavour as most of the inputs are sourced from outside while Lesotho while Lesotho produces the end product which is milk. The consensus agreed that yes the Lesotho producers can claim ownership of the flavour citing the following reasons:

- Milk is made of 85 – 90% water which is Lesotho water
- Other farmers indicated that they produce and feed their cows 100% locally
- The cows are raised and cared for in Lesotho

Another raised was whether a new supply chain will be created for this. The answer was that we are using the same existing supply chain.



TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 26

LNDB indicated that they see opportunities in this process and we need to find ways on how we differentiate our products from the rest. It was also indicated that the number of dairy processors have increased from 1 to 10.

LENAFU was encouraged to play an active role in the process.

Each institution was asked to submit one representative to form part of the Lesotho Dairy Products Protocol Committee.

It was agreed that the producer visit will be held on the 1st week of November 2022 after the National Elections (happening in Oct) with the intention of inviting the new administration of the relevant ministries.

The Ministry of Trade encouraged farmers to draft their concerns into a project for government budgeting as it was indicated that it is only dairy products that does not have budgeting from government coffers.

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Multi-stakeholders consultation
- Needs, incentives, and capacities of PGS stakeholders
- Major bottlenecks preventing smallholder farmer market access, such as issues of logistics and infrastructure
- Shared vision amongst stakeholders
- Building the PGS concept into discussions



SORGHUM - DIALOGUE, EAT-IN & HARVEST CEREMONY

VENUE: PHAMONG VILLAGE, MOHALE'SHOEK

DATE: 23 JUNE 2022

The Sorghum Harvest Ceremony, organized by Slow Food and partners, was held on Thursday 23rd June 2022 at Ha Khoai village, Mohale's Hoek. This event was to celebrate the beginning of the sorghum harvest season of this important Basotho food, to re-ignite people's interest in practicing the culture of letsema (community voluntarily working together for one common purpose), and encouraging seed saving and of course tasting of the first crop of the season.

The event documented the sorghum harvesting process from start to finish.

The event was attended by the honorable minister of Agriculture and Food Security, International organizations, farmers and Lesotho Government Ministries.

RSDA and Slow Food presented on the Narrative Labels for Mountain Partnership Product Label and Slow Food and indicated the importance of implementing Participatory Guarantee Systems - PGS for the small-holder farmers.

Farmers also gave their presentations on some of the problems they face on day to day operations and indicated where they need support the most. They also told of their success highlights.

Since this event had all stakeholders on one platform, they were all properly briefed and understood how the systems are going to work and benefit farmers.

Representatives from the different organizations and Lesotho Government voiced their support for the project.

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Multi-stakeholders consultation
- Needs, incentives, and capacities of PGS stakeholders
- Major bottlenecks preventing smallholder farmer market access, such as issues of logistics and infrastructure
- Shared vision amongst stakeholders
- Building the PGS concept into discussions

SLOW FOOD LESOTHO SORGHUM HARVESTING EVENT ATTENDEES

Invitees	Organisation	No of Participants
PARTNERS		
	Moroka Pula Productions (Film Crew)	5
	Slow Food South Africa	3
	Basali Basali (Photographer)	1
	Rural Self Help Development Association	15
MEDIA		
	Agric Info	4
	The Post Newspaper	1
	News day Newspaper	1
	Tribute Newspaper	1
FARMERS		
	Majantja Temong Farmer Association	15
	Mohale'sHoek Farmers Forum	15
	Quthing District Farmers Forum	6
	Mafeteng District Farmers Forum	6
	Leribe District Farmers Forum	4
PRIVATE SECTOR		
	AgriLuxe Marketing	1
CHEFS/COOKS		
	Slow Food Cook's Alliance - Lesotho	5
INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION		
	Country Prep WFP	2
	Country Prep FAO	2
	Country Prep UNDP	4
LESOTHO GOVERNMENT		
	DAOs Ministry of Agriculture - Mohale's hoek	4
	Agric-Nutrition Ministry of Agriculture	1
	Department of Agricultural Research	4
	Ministry of Trade	2
	Hon Minister Minister of Agriculture & Food Security	3
	Administrator DA- Mohales' Hoek	4
	Principal Chief Mohale's Hoek	2
	Total	111

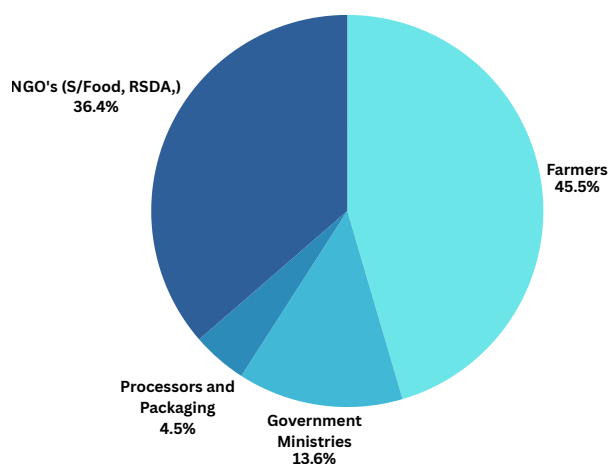


DRY BEANS MULTI-STAKEHOLDER MEETING VENUE: VICTORY HALL, MASERU DATE: 17 AUG 2022

The meeting was facilitated by RSDA to engage stakeholders in the Basotho Dry Beans value chain and introduce them to:

- Slow Food & Cooks Alliance
- Ark of Taste Presentation
- Mountain Partnership Product Label
- Slow Food Narrative Labels
- Process to getting the labels - PGS Implementation. Why organic?
- Introducing the event - Dry Beans Dialogue, Eat-In & #EatBeans campaign to be held on 08th Sept 2024

Questions were allowed after the presentations.



TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 22

Farmers voiced out some of their concerns e.g. market access, and issues of logistics and infrastructure. They also discussed their organic farming status and they made it clear that they are transforming to organic and willing to implement the PGS.

These discussions led to the development of 'shared vision' amongst the stakeholders.

It is important that major stakeholders in the value chain are properly consulted in all the steps for the PGS to operate smoothly. Stakeholders working together is what will make a PGS initiative happen, because it builds mutual trust and trust in PGS itself.

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Multi-stakeholders consultation
- Needs, incentives, and capacities of PGS stakeholders
- Major bottlenecks preventing smallholder farmer market access, such as issues of logistics and infrastructure
- Shared vision amongst stakeholders
- Building the PGS concept into discussions



STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION - LERIBE HOSPITALITY & COOKS (BEANS DIALOGUE & EAT-IN PREPARATION) VENUE: MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE OFFICES, LERIBE DATE: 11 AUG 2022

This meeting was to engage the hospitality industry of Leribe district to work together with farmers in order to promote the district's local produce. It was also to ask for their collaboration in the upcoming multi-stakeholder dialogue, eat-in and campaign around Basotho dry beans.

The meeting agenda was as follows:

- Purpose of the day & Introductions - Mme Lineo (RSDA) & Ministry of Agriculture Nutrition
- Introduction to Slow Food & Cooks Alliance - Ska Moteane
- Ark of Taste Presentation - Ska Moteane
- Mountain Partnership Product Label - Ska Moteane
- Slow Food Narrative Labels - Ska Moteane
- Process to getting the labels - PGS Implementation
- Introducing the event - Dry Beans Dialogue, Eat-In & #EatBeans campaign to be held on 08th Sept 2024

The meeting was attended by RSDA, Slow Food, Ministry of Agriculture Nutrition and cooks from the district.

This introductory meeting allowed for questions around the presentations and they were answered on the spot.

It was also to show them the advantages and benefits of supporting their local farmers.

The cooks also voiced out some of the challenges they meet when working with small-holder farmers - e.g. easy access to products, product quality, high prices and products not always meeting their expectations.

The cooks gave their commitment to collaborate on this project and committed to be part of the beans multi-stakeholder dialogue and eat-in.

It is important that major stakeholders in the value chain are properly consulted in all the steps for the PGS to operate smoothly. Stakeholders working together is what will make a PGS initiative happen, because it builds mutual trust and trust in PGS itself.

PGS CRITICAL POINTS

COVERED:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Multi-stakeholders consultation
- Needs, incentives, and capacities of PGS stakeholders
- Shared vision amongst stakeholders
- Building the PGS concept into discussions



DRY BEANS DIALOGUE & EAT-IN EVENT

VENUE: DISTRICT AGRICULTURAL OFFICES, LERIBE

DATE: 08 SEPT 2022

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 338

The event was facilitated by RSDA to engage stakeholders in the Basotho Dry Beans value chain into a dialogue and the program was as follows:

- Welcome by District Agricultural Officer - Leribe
- Purpose of the day – RSDA, Leribe Farmers Forum, UNDP GEF SGP, FAO
- Address by Minister of Agriculture and Food Security-Hon Keketso Sello, MP

DIALOGUE SESSIONS

- Panel Discussions - Moderated by Lesotho Council of NGOs
- Session 1: Panel discussion - Farming Operations – Agro- dealers – seed growers,
- Session 2: Mechanization & farmers, Ministry of Agriculture & Food Security (Dept. of Agricultural Research & Crops).
- Session 3: Marketing – Food packers, school feeding-NMAs, MAFS (Marketing) World Food Program and Correctional services.
- Session 4: Consumers – Ministry of Agriculture & Food Security (Dept. of Nutrition) and Slow Food Cooks Alliance
- Session 5: Resolutions and call -to- action
- Session 6: Reassuring Call -to -Action by Minister of Agriculture and Food Security-Hon Keketso Sello, MP
- **FOOD TASTING, MUSIC & DANCE**
- Food Tasting – Leribe Farmers table
- Food Tasting – Leribe Nutrition Table
- Food Tasting from Slow Food Cook’s Alliance table

This successful event attended by over 300 people from:

- Lesotho government ministries
- International Organizations - UNDP, FAO, WFP etc.
- Farmers, Processors, Packers, Seed growers
- Media - Print & Lesotho Television
- Lesotho Council of NGO's
- Slow Food, RSDA

RSDA kicked off the day by explaining the purpose of the day - To establish a shared vision among dry beans stakeholders, identify any challenges that may come up and mostly to get the government's support in the process.

The Minister of Agriculture & Food Security was in attendance and pledged his ministry's support and cooperation in the project.

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Multi-stakeholders consultation
- Needs, incentives, and capacities of PGS stakeholders
- Major bottlenecks preventing smallholder farmer market access, such as issues of logistics and infrastructure
- Shared vision amongst stakeholders
- Building the PGS concept into discussions

PGS TRAINING WORKSHOP - TERRA MADRE SALONE DEL GUSTO

**VENUE: PARCO
DORA, TURIN ITALY**

**DATE: 22 - 26 SEPT
2022**



Slow Food International together with FAO Mountain Partnership and IFOAM-Organics International, organized workshops during Terra Madre 2022 with the theme Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS). Ska Moteane from Slow Food in Lesotho and a Lesotho farmer 'Matebello Kheola attended the training workshops.

Meeting 1: Introducing PGS as an alternative certification model for community certification. This meeting was open to all those who were interested in starting a PGS and in getting feedback on the PGS already in place through testimonies of:

- the delegates of the Enhancing agri-food value chains to increase the resilience of mountain communities project, in collaboration with FAO-MP and the UNDP
- the members of the Slow Food Coffee Coalition who use PGS to certify good, clean and fair coffee
- representatives of the Krakow Earth Market who are working on a PGS pilot scheme with their producers.

Workshop 1: This was a closed workshop with all of the delegates that are currently using PGS to some extent in their communities.

Meeting 2: HOW CAN SUSTAINABILITY BE CERTIFIED?

This meeting was to further look into the topic of guarantee systems together.



Ska Moteane (L) and Matebello Kheola (R) at Terra Madre. They're integral members of the Lesotho MPP work. Photo: Valeria Barchiesi, MPS

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

Training and understanding how the PGS works through live testimonies and case studies



STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION - DAIRY FARMERS MEETING

VENUE: MOKHOTLONG DISTRICT

DATE: 01 DEC 2022

The meeting was facilitated by RSDA to consult with dairy farmers and the following were discussed:

- Opening Remarks purpose of the workshop by RSDA chairperson
- Introductions of individual delegates
- Mountain Partnership Products & Slow Food plans
- Slow Food Cooks Alliance
- Narrative Labels
- Road to PGS Implementation
- Event Introduction - Dairy & Grass-fed dialogue and Eat-In to be held in February 2023

The meeting was attended by 13 dairy farmers, RSDA and Slow Food.

Presentations were done and questions welcomed.

A shared vision of implementing the PGS was developed through this meeting

It is important that major stakeholders in the value chain are properly consulted in all the steps for the PGS to operate smoothly. Stakeholders working together is what will make a PGS initiative happen, because it builds mutual trust and trust in PGS itself.



PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Multi-stakeholders consultation
- Needs, incentives, and capacities of PGS stakeholders
- Major bottlenecks preventing smallholder farmer market access, such as issues of logistics and infrastructure
- Shared vision amongst stakeholders
- Building the PGS concept into discussions



DAIRY MULTI-STAKEHOLDER MEETING VENUE: VICTORY HALL, MASERU DATE: 27 JANUARY 2023

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the Grassfed red meat and Dairy in Mokhotlong event on the 9th February 2023. The aim is to have registration of dairy and red meat products with Mountain Partnership, have slow food label on the products. Elaborate more on PGS certification.

Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)- local organic certification for farmers and consumers. There will be protocols where farmers will agree on how to produce and pledge that it will be as they agreed. After that process, the inspection will be done to see if all PGS standards have been followed, then there will be a certification of that product. There is a Memorandum of understanding between Slow Food, Mountain Partnership and IFOAM, guiding on PGS.

It is decided to host an event on Grassfed Red meat and Dairy in Mokhotlong to showcase all the products produced in Mokhotlong. Liphamola dairy will be the host of the event.

Director Marketing outlined that it is the responsibility of Ministry of Agriculture to make sure that Lesotho produce enough food for all the people living within this country, therefore, this can only be achieved if all stakeholders work together with farmers to improve Lesotho standard of living in the agriculture sector.

In the past Lesotho was exporting several products to South Africa such as asparagus, canned beans and wool and mohair which is doing very well till present.

At the moment Lesotho spend over ten billion for buying food which can also be produced within the country and the disadvantage of that is, if South Africa encounter crisis, Lesotho suffers since it does not produce sufficient food.

The director appealed to Lesotho National Dairy Board that it should work very hard to make sure they increase production of milk in the country.



TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 23

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Farmers are learning about PGS and could now understand better about organic products certification.
- Organically produced products are very expensive in the markets since they are more clean and healthier. They are also labelled.



DISTRICT FARMERS FORUM MEETING VENUE: CARITAS LESOTHO DATE: 28 FEBRUARY 2023

The objective of the meeting was to share with farmer leaders their progress in their District and activities they are currently doing. Also, to give update of the partnership between RSDA and Mountain partnership.

Discussion on Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)- local organic certification for farmers and consumers. There will be protocols where farmers will agree on how to produce and pledge that it will be as they agreed. After that process, the inspection will be done to see if all PGS standards have been followed, then there will be a certification of that product. There is a Memorandum of understanding between Slow Food, Mountain Partnership and IFOAM, guiding on PGS.

Farmers were briefed on how PGS work, for instance there are six elements of it, shared vision, this is practiced by people with the same vision so that they agree on every step that they are taking. The second element is Trust, PGS require trustworthy people. Furthermore, horizontally even if people can form more structures but they are more or likely the same. Thirdly, transparency, the group should be loyal to each other. Participation, everyone has to take part in every activity that is to be done by the team.

Lastly, this is the learning process, meaning that people keep learning from each other, things cannot be done in one year at least for them to qualify they have to practice it for three years.

RSDA is going to continue buying beans from farmers and about 300 thousand is budgeted to buy farmers products. Furthermore, the aggregation model seemed to be the best model to be used because it makes work easier than buying from individuals. The Forum committee will be responsible for beans delivered to their aggregation points, then RSDA officers will liaise with the committee in inspection and verification of the records.

On the 6th March 2023, RSDA together with a team of farmers, chefs, cooks, entrepreneurs, are to attend the workshop (indigenous & heritage foods in the hospitality industry) in Pretoria, Prue Leigh where they will exhibit some of Lesotho's indigenous and heritage crops. Slow-Food movement is a community committed to building a Good, Clean and Fair food system in Lesotho. The Slow Food Cooks' Alliance is a network uniting cooks across the country to support local producers, influence policy and awaken eaters to the rich food cultures and biodiversity of our planet. This network of cooks works together to defend food biodiversity across the world.

RSDA social media strategy is a document outlining RSDA's social media goals, the tactics to be used to achieve them and the metrics to be used to track and measure our progress in social media.

- Facebook @rsdalesotho-Videos, Pictures and detailed content
- Twitter @rsdalesotho -News, blog posts, and GIFs
- Instagram @rsdalesotho -High-res photos, quotes, Stories
- YouTube @rsdalesotho- Videos
- LinkedIn @rsdalesotho-Jobs, company news, and professional content



SUPPLY MECHANISM TO SOUTH AFRICA VENUE: DURHAM LINK MASERU DATE: 27 MARCH 2023

The objective of the meeting was to have the farmer leaders meet Siphwe from a company called African Marmalade for the supply and Aggregation Mechanisms of indigenous products to South Africa. This meeting entailed farmers understanding what African Marmalade wants from them, in what quantities and state.

After RSDA's visit to South Africa, Siphwe asked RSDA if farmers could supply 300 metric tons of sugar beans and 600 metric tons of red sorghum.

RSDA is working on organic certification and it has found partners who are going to help in this process and this partners are mountain partnership initiative and slow food. Hopefully by the end of this year certification process will be done.

RSDA is going to recruit 10 pollinators for each district for PGS. This will be for the testing phase.

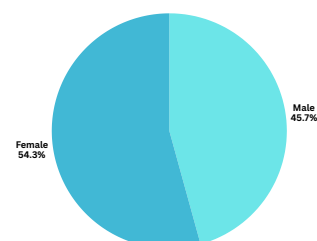
RSDA is working for the certification of the following commodities which are honey, beans, sorghum, grass-fed milk and dairy, and horticultural products.

RSDA has highlighted to the minister of agriculture and food security that the major challenge of farmers is access of seed.

Siphwe is a small holder farmer operating on a 4 and half hectares of land whereby she produces different kinds of organic vegetables. She is the sole owner of African marmalade which is an organic farming business engaged in African indigenous crops.

There is a niche market in South Africa for indigenous commodities therefore farmers need to work hand in hand with absolute trust and commitment to deliver the orders to the buyers according to the required specifications. In addition these farmers need to merge their farming with the technology that is growing rapidly.

Siphwe has a 10-year contract to supply organic vegetables, thus she needs all the help she can get from the farmers furthermore she indicated that the transport cost will be covered by the buyer not the seller. Farmers also learned that indigenous vegetables are more nutritious and sold at the better price than any other common vegetables.





DISTRICTS FORUM AGGREGATION MECHANISMS VENUE: ALL DISTRICTS DATE: APRIL 2023

The main objective was to find out in the districts on aggregation mechanisms (regional & local) since African Marmalade provided a list of products that has a market in South Africa and wanted to give RSDA farmers in Lesotho the opportunity to supply the required products.

Farmers were to select 5 farmers (marketing farmers) representing 5 top products each district they produce in large scales. There are two assignments for each district: to fill a forum profile and draw up a seasonal product calendar of products locally produced for supply frequency was to be submitted end of April 2023.

Updates:

- Organic Certification- Slow Food Narrative label, Mountain Partnership label-PCGS, Market Linkage-Slow Food Cook Alliance; Slow Communities, African Marmalade. Thola-US, MIS.

- Align on production supply frequency(seasonality). Template

- Agree on key products also based on list provided by African Marmalade.

- Structure for trading, forum is for mobilizing, shared vision, networking, collective action and trust building.

There is a market of organic products from South Africa that need to be supplied with Lesotho products. RSDA meet an aggregator who is going to buy these products but currently she is working on permit. She is good marketing and also a farmer working on a piece of land (four hector).

Now that farmers are transitioning from subsistence farming to commercial farming, they need to be familiar to the use of smart phones because information is disseminated through WhatsApp platforms. Furthermore, business is operated by social media.

Farmers should be clear on which model they are going to use in business for instance, there is wool and mohair grower association, Lesotho National Dairy Board or Maloti fresh produce. It was agreed that due to the fact that there were only few representatives from Bokaota farmers Association they should go back and select another day for their meeting where they will nominate forum committee and select the model they are going to use.



STAKEHOLDER - DAIRY FARMERS & HOSPITALITY (COOKS) MEETING

VENUE: MOKHOTLONG DISTRICT

DATE: 19 JAN 2023

The meeting was facilitated by RSDA to bring together dairy farmers and cooks to explore ways for them to work together.

- Opening Remarks purpose of the workshop by RSDA
- Introductions of individual delegates
- Introduction to Slow Food
- Mountain Partnership Products & Slow Food plans
- Introducing Slow Food Cooks Alliance & inviting cooks to join
- Narrative Labels
- Road to PGS Implementation
- Event Introduction & Preparations - Dairy & Grass-fed dialogue and Eat-In to be held on 09th February 2023

The meeting was also to highlight the advantages and benefits of farmers and cooks working together.

Once presentations were done, questions were asked and discussions followed.

The cooks also voiced out some of the challenges they meet when working with small-holder farmers - e.g. easy access to products, product quality, high prices and products not always meeting their expectations.

Farmers committed to improving on product quality and delivery. They gave the cooks an annual calendar of what they produce seasonally.

Cooks also highlighted some of the items not on the producer calendar that they require frequently and farmers promised to work on producing those as well.

The cooks gave their commitment to fully collaborate on this project and committed to be part of the beans multi-stakeholder dialogue and eat-in. They also promised to implement Slow Food and Ark of Taste products in their menus.

It is important that major stakeholders in the value chain are properly consulted in all the steps for the PGS to operate smoothly. Stakeholders working together is what will make a PGS initiative happen, because it builds mutual trust and trust in PGS itself.

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Multi-stakeholders consultation
- Needs, incentives, and capacities of PGS stakeholders
- Major bottlenecks preventing smallholder farmer market access, such as issues of logistics and infrastructure
- Shared vision amongst stakeholders
- Building the PGS concept into discussions



PGS LEARNING TRIP
VENUE: SOUTH AFRICA - GAUTENG PROVINCE
DATE: 20 - 22 JAN 2023

The trip was organized by RSDA for the project staff and Slow Food. This was a visit to PGS South Africa Farms, to see how they work and learn from them.

The Itinerary was as follows:

21 JANUARY 2023 9AM - 11AM

FARM: AFRICAN MARMALADE
 HOST: SIPHWE SITHOLE
 ADDRESS: 29 BODLEY RD, CENTURION
 PHONE: +27 722321174

21 JANUARY 2023 12 - 1PM (LUNCH)

LOCATION: JACKSON'S REAL FOOD MARKET
 ADDRESS: 300 BRYANSTON DR, BRYANSTON, SANDTON
 +27 11 463 1598

21 JANUARY 2023 2PM - 4PM

FARM: FUTURE SEED ORGANICS
 HOST: SIMBA MUBAIWA
 ADDRESS: 48 NEPTUNE AVE, CROWTHORNE, MIDRAND
 PHONE: +27 824966214

22 JANUARY 2023 9AM - 11AM

FARM: GREEN LIFE SANCTUARY
 HOST: WAYNE ADAMS
 ADDRESS: PLOT 1, AVALONIA AH, TARLTON
 PHONE: +27 82 774 1615

22 JANUARY 2023 12PM - 1PM (LUNCH)

LOCATION: FRESH EARTH EATERY
 BLAIRGOWRIE DELTA CENTRAL
 +27 11 646 4404

22 JANUARY 2023 2PM - 4PM

FARM: STRAIGHT FROM THE GROUND
 HOST: EMILIA
 ADDRESS: 20 MALBAROUGH AVENUE
 CRAIGHALL PARK
 PHONE: +27 82 360 3847



PGS training workshop in session at African Marmalade farm, Pretoria



Organic Market tour

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Training and understanding how the PGS works through live testimonies, farm tours and seeing the PGS certified produce in Organic Markets



DAIRY & GRASS-FED MEAT DIALOGUE & EAT-IN EVENT VENUE: MOKHOTLONG DISTRICT DATE: 09 FEB 2023

The event was facilitated by RSDA to engage stakeholders in the grass-fed dairy and grass-fed red meat value chain into a dialogue and the program was as follows:

- Welcome by District Agricultural Office - Mokhotlong
- Purpose of the day – RSDA, Mokhotlong Farmers Forum, UNDP GEF SGP, FAO

DIALOGUE SESSIONS

- Session 1: Panel discussion - Grassfed Dairy value chain
- Session 2: Panel Discussion - Grassfed Red Meat Value Chain
- Session 3: Hospitality, Cooks and Consumers – MAFS-Nutrition & Slow Food Cooks Alliance
- Speech by Denmark Lesotho Network (DLN)
- Reassuring by Hon. Minister of Agriculture, Nutrition and Food Security- Hon Thabo Mofosi, MP
- FOOD TASTING, MUSIC & DANCE

Food Tasting – Mokhotlong Farmers Tables
Food Tasting – Mokhotlong Hospitality Tables
Food Tasting – Ministry of Agriculture & Food Security Nutrition Dept.
Browse through the Farmers Real Food Market

This successful event attended by over 500 people from:

- Lesotho government ministries
- International Organizations - UNDP, FAO, WFP etc.
- Farmers, Processors, Packers, Seed growers
- Media - Print & Lesotho Television
- Lesotho Council of NGO's
- Slow Food, RSDA

RSDA kicked off the day by explaining the purpose of the day - To establish a shared vision among dairy and red meat stakeholders, identify any challenges that may come up and mostly to get the government's support in the process.

The Minister of Agriculture & Food Security was in attendance and pledged his ministry's support and cooperation in the project.

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Multi-stakeholders consultation
- Needs, incentives, and capacities of PGS stakeholders
- Major bottlenecks preventing smallholder farmer market access, such as issues of logistics and infrastructure
- Shared vision amongst stakeholders
- Building the PGS concept into discussions

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 549



SORGHUM FARMERS MEET WITH PROCESSORS VENUE: MOHALE'SHOEK DISTRICT DATE: 15 FEB 2023

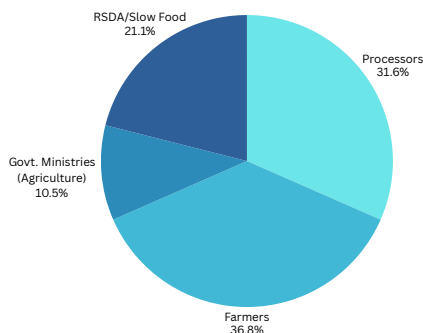
The district agricultural officer Mrs. Malerato Lekhooa welcomed everyone and explained that Majantja Temong sorghum farmers asked for her office to convene a meeting with Sorghum Processors through the assistance of RSDA.

The aim was to link sorghum farmers as producers with the different processors to understand how they can effectively work together.

Processors are the market for producers.

She also introduced Slow Food – through the Cooks Alliance they use sorghum in all varieties – whole and processed. She also mentioned that Slow Food can also help in establishing market.

Ska Moteane from Slow Food gave a presentation on Slow Food, Cooks Alliance, Ark of Taste, Mountain Partnership Product Label, Slow Food Narrative Labels and the PGS process. GOOD, CLEAN & FAIR.



TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 19

The sorghum farmers explained to the processors how they farm and the quantities they are ready to supply.

Processors were happy to be invited to the meeting and showed willingness to work directly with the farmers. Issues of price, product quality, easy accessibility of product were raised. Both parties agreed to meet each other half way and find ways to make resolve any obstacles.

Both farmers and processors understood and appreciated how the PGS organic certification will benefit them both.

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Multi-stakeholders consultation
- Needs, incentives, and capacities of PGS stakeholders
- Major bottlenecks preventing smallholder farmer market access, such as issues of logistics and infrastructure
- Shared vision amongst stakeholders
- Building the PGS concept into discussions

INDIGENOUS & HERITAGE FOOD WORKSHOP

PRUE LEIGH COLLEGE

CENTURION, PRETORIA

06TH MARCH 2023



The workshop was on the diverse indigenous and heritage food of Southern Africa. This workshop was attended by RSDA's small-scale farmers, RSDA project staff and Slow Food Chefs. The workshop explored how chefs, farmers and everyone in the value chain can work together to promote and encourage local, healthy indigenous and heritage foods.



PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Understanding and exploring organic food markets
- Building stakeholder relationships that will lead to the successful implementation of PGS organic certification in Lesotho



WORKSHOP INVITATION

📅 Mon 6th March, 2023

🕒 9.00 am - 1.00 pm

📍 Prue Leith School
262 Rhino Street,
Centurion, Pretoria

Agenda :

Indigenous & heritage foods in the hospitality industry.
Introduction to and launch of a new culinary competition
Meet and greet indigenous foods producers.

Information :
074 553 6953
info@harvestingheritage.org.za



**STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION: SUPPLY OF LOCAL & REGIONAL
MARKETS
VENUE: BEREA DISTRICT
DATE: 13 - 28 APRIL 2023**

This was a multi-stakeholder meeting for dairy products. The main objective was to find out in the districts on aggregation mechanisms (regional & local) since African Marmalade Farm provided a list of products that have a market in South Africa and wanted to give RSDA farmers in Lesotho the opportunity to supply the required products.

Farmers were to select 5 farmers (marketing farmers) representing 5 top products each district they produce in large scales.

These meetings were also to:

- Update farmers on where we are on
- PGS Organic Certification
- Slow Food Narrative label, Mountain Partnership label
- PGS, Market Linkage
- Slow Food Cook Alliance: Slow Communities,

10 districts were visited, workshops and updates were given in all these areas.

DISTRICT VISITS		
Number of Participants	District	Date
35	Butha Buthe	13.04.2023
19	Quthing	17.04.2023
59	Mafeteng	17.04.2023
32	Berea	18.04.2023
77	Thaba Tseka	19.04.2023
27	Leribe	19.04.2023
24	Maseru	21.04.2023
29	Qacha's Nek	25.04.2023
26	Mokhotlong	26.04.2023
46	Mohale's Hoek	28.04.2023

PGS CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Stakeholder engagements
- Market demand and opportunities: level of consumer awareness and willingness to pay more for PGS-certified organic products
- Needs, incentives, and capacities of PGS stakeholders





NEXT STEPS

PGS Critical Steps 1 (Situational Analysis) & Step 2 (Stakeholders Share the Vision) have been completed.

As of May 2023, we are now moving on to Step 3 which is:

AGREEING AND DOCUMENTING HOW THE PGS WILL WORK

The core components we will be focusing on are as follows:

- Internationally Recognized Standards: Organic Agriculture Production Standards and Summary Standard
- Rules or norms that include a description of mechanisms to ensure compliance (a manual of procedures)
- Documented management system that outlines the roles and responsibilities of key persons (and agencies). Includes a description on how certificates are approved and issued.
- Documented list of non-compliance and sanctions for each level of non-compliance, agreed to by the producers.

- Pledge developed by the producers (farmers) and signed or agreed to in a transparent way.
- Certificate (usually an individual certificate but could also be a group certificate depending on the situation).
- Seal or logo to be used on certified products (PGS initiative logo or national organic logo), available once certificates issued.

STEPS 4, 5, 6 & 7 will follow once we are done with this phase



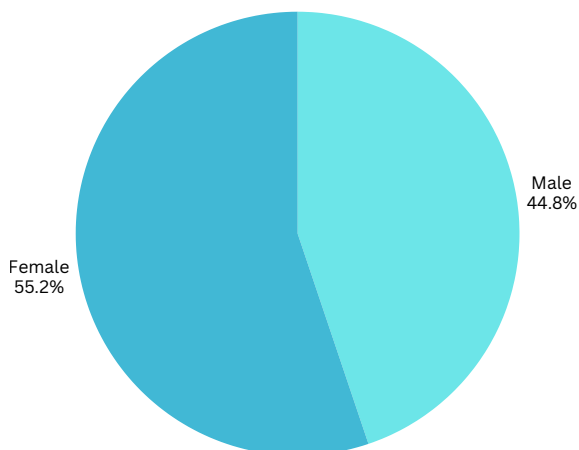
TRAINING AGGREGATORS ON EXPORT READINESS VENUE: LESOTHO DURHAM LINK DATE: 10-11 MAY 2023

The training was intended to equip potential exporters with skills and knowledge on export trade requirements and procedures as well as to enhance their opportunities to access market outside the country. RSDA sourced an expert to train 30 participants from all the ten districts in Lesotho. (Districts Farmers Forums)



CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Identifying players in the value chain – farmers were to understand the players in value chain for example: input suppliers, farmer, grader, packers, store/wholesaler, transporter, retailer and consumers.
- Identify export partners - it involves identifying people whom they are going to work with in exporting the products. These people may include: export councils, foreign trade representatives(DTI), freight forwarders, chamber of commerce, agent or distributor, export consultants and foreign embassies.
- Choosing right incoterms for their business - incoterms are selling terms that the buyer and the seller of goods both agree to during an international transaction.



TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 30



GOOI GOOI SILC APP TRAINING VENUE: LESOTHO DURHAM LINK DATE: 29-30 MAY 2023

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 25 FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

Gooi Gooi is a mobile application that is designed to manage SILC(Savings and Internal Lending Communities) groups much easier. Since SILC groups are popular in Lesotho, Gooi Gooi app offers a solution that help manage finances better. It offers SILC groups to go digital and make meetings and financial management quicker.

RSDA believes that technology plays a key role in empowering communities to improve their financial management, so it sees the Gooi Gooi App as an opportunity to use to assist smallholder farmers. the training took 2 Days for 20 of the district farmers forums members and 5 RSDA staff members.

GOOI GOOI MOBILE APP TRAINING

**MAMORATUOA NTS'EKHE,
BEREA BUSINESS FORUM**

"As a Private Service Provider of SILC groups in the communities, I am very thrilled and impressed with the Gooi Gooi App. The App is going to make my work very easy, no more manual recordings. I am really out of words when it comes to the Application, it is going to change our lives forever as SILC groups. There is transparency, accuracy, trust and every member is able to track their records in every sitting. It saves time, user-friendly and we are going to make more money since more farmers are going to join when they realize how amazing the app works. The training team were very patient to an extend that everyone came out with all the understanding of how the App works. RSDA always strengthens us with numerous trainings and I am proud to say I am what I am because of their monitoring."

"INDEED WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO RSDA & GOOI GOOI FOR ORGANIZING THIS WONDERFUL TRAINING FOR US, IT IS VERY HELPFUL AND EASY TO USE."

Rural
Self-Help
Development
Association

GOOI GOOI MOBILE APP TRAINING

**MATSELELI NTHATI MATETE,
MOHALE'S HOEK-MOHLAKENG**

Most important aspect learned from the Gooi Gooi App workshop is how to transit from the manual recording transactions to a mobile way which is the and safe. The App assists Savings and Internal Community (SILC) groups to save the stokvel and calculate transactions electronically and records.

is the work of calculating share-outs very easy the app automatically does all the work. We further how to download the App, install, register , login. rules made such as loan duration and interests ions.

learned about share-out process. The App makes y at the end of each sitting to verify the opening s and closing balances."

"EARNED ALL THE 14 STEPS TAKEN WHEN INDUCTING THE SILC MEETING, WHICH IS MUCH EASIER THAN THE MANUAL WAY. THERE IS TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST SINCE EVERYONE CAN VISUALLY SEE THEIR RECORDS ON THEIR MOBILE APP."

Rural
Self-Help
Development
Association

CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- The App allows every member to have ownership and access to their records at their convenient time.
- The App very user-friendly and important to the end users.
- It makes the work of calculating share-outs very easy since it automatically does all the work.
- participants learned how to download the App, install, register , login. Other rules made such as loan duration and interests calculations.



CONSOLIDATED REPORT ON BEAN AGGREGATION VENUE: THABATSEKA, LERIBE & MOKHOTLONG DATE: MAY-JUNE 2023

The primary objective of the trips was to aggregate and purchase farmers' beans from the Leribe, Mokhotlong, and Thaba-Tseka districts while enhancing farmer engagement and awareness regarding aggregation processes.

Key Points

Leribe District

- **Aggregation Process:** RSDA staff collaborated with Leribe Farmers Forum and a truck owner at F.M.U Storage to aggregate beans. Quantities delivered were lower than previous years.
- **Inspection & Verification:** Beans were inspected using a probe, receipts were issued for 69 bags (17 bags from forum members and 52 from an individual farmer).
- **Farmer Engagement:** Some farmers were unaware of the aggregation initiative due to communication gaps.
- **Logistics:** Beans were delivered to Mafeteng store for fumigation before sale to prevent pest infestation.
- **Forum Development:** The Leribe forum implemented a fee structure for aggregation services, setting an example for sustainable resource mobilization.

Mokhotlong District

- **Production Challenges:** Limited arable land and excessive rain resulted in low bean yields. Livestock production (wool and mohair) thrives in the area.
- **Storage Constraints:** Without a dedicated storage facility, the forum rented space in town and proposed charging aggregation fees.
- **Aggregation & Participation:** Aggregated beans primarily belonged to one farmer, with low participation due to scattered farmers and communication challenges.
- **Market Concerns:** Farmers sought clarity on future purchases and market opportunities beyond RSDA, including African Marmalade and other buyers.
- **Forum Dynamics:** New members often join with expectations of incentives, leaving when they realize forums focus on agricultural discussions.

Thaba-Tseka District

- **Farmer Awareness:** Most farmers in Sehong-hong were unaware of RSDA or the Thaba-Tseka Farmers Forum. An informative session improved their understanding and willingness to join.
- **Production & Varieties:** Farmers produced diverse bean varieties, including rare black beans, though excessive rain hampered yields. Farmers preserved open-pollinated seeds for future planting.



CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- **Aggregation Achievements:** A total of 2,724 kg of beans was aggregated across the three districts. Farmers demonstrated increasing interest in aggregation centers and forums.
- **Increased Awareness:** Informative sessions enhanced farmer understanding of RSDA and the benefits of joining forums.
- **Sustainability Practices:** Leribe farmers introduced aggregation fees, illustrating a sustainable approach to resource mobilization.
- **Production Insights:** Farmers expressed willingness to maximize production despite challenges such as excessive rain and inadequate communication.

Aggregation Outcome: RSDA purchased 2,595 kg of beans. However, some farmers did not participate due to price concerns or unclean beans.



FARMER LEADERS QUARTERLY MEETING VENUE: LESOTHO DURHAM LINK DATE: 07 AUGUST 2023

The objective of the meeting was to gather information from farmers so as to be able to assist RSDA with strategic planning. How it can assist them. Moreover, the other objective was to update farmers on the current state in the process of PGS, market opportunities and Gooi Gooi mobile App. Current Status of farmers' forums (Group work per district Leaders' group.)

- The Participants were divided into groups which were a group consisting of farmer leaders whereas the other groups were formed by the secretary and PRO of the forums. All leaders answered the questions below

1. Which is your District? Describe altitude etc.
2. What are you doing currently in your District Forums? What are your activities?
3. For whom? Who are your members and how many?
4. How do you keep together? What is your mode of operation?
5. When did you come together/ form your network/forum? Year
6. What is your desired situation? future
7. What are your strengths & weaknesses?
8. Which are the opportunities and barriers in your district?
9. What are the critical issues that you have to resolve for you to keep and work together and reach your bright future?
10. Is agriculture a fallback activity because there is no other activity possible?
11. If you could, what economic activity will you or people in your area pursue?
12. Do people get rich working in agriculture?
13. Are youth interested in agriculture?

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 30

Chef Ska from Slow Food indicated that slow food is global movement of people who encourage indigenous practices of farming from farm to fork. Slow food uses narrative label to sell their products. Story tells how the commodity is produced, place, country and nutritional value of such commodity. She further explained what participatory guarantee system (PGS) is, iterated what mountain partnership does. MPP is a label for countries of people that live in the mountains, so to get MPP label farmers have to obtain a slow food label first. Then develop PGS protocols. Registration of forums have already been started on Slow food therefore, the name of the communities should be aligned with the primary objective the community.

CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Aggregation of beans is successfully completed in the 3 districts namely Leribe, Thaba-Tseka, Botha Bothe and Mokhotlong, The districts sold 3639.7kg, 2595kg, 2368.75 kg and 103.5 kg respectively.
- RSDA is going to bring Thola which is the company from US to help farmer with global gap. Thola will be here in Lesotho on first week of October 2023 to set up demonstration plots for global gap.
- Use of the Gooi Gooi Mobile Silc Application



FARMER LEADERS QUARTERLY MEETING VENUE: LESOTHO DURHAM LINK DATE: 14 NOVEMBER 2023

The primary objective was to provide updates on key projects and initiatives, including the Climate Proofing Project and organic certification processes, and to assess the current status of district farmer forums. The meeting aimed to strengthen collaboration, enhance operational strategies, and develop a forward-looking action plan. RSDA also introduced visitor from Thola Company- Dancan Angwenyi. RSDA was visited by the founder of the Thola company- Nneile Nkholise from USA in early November 2023.

Thola specializes in compliance standards-quality assurance compliance & bio-safety on Global-Gap. Dancan came to know more and make assessment about the Lesotho farms and how farmers operate in the fields, using the software (data collection) that captures data from the farms. The importance of the APP is to enhance traceability in the production.

Strategic service is implemented by RSDA to empower farmers.

Thola representative Dancan Angwenyi assessed grain and dairy farms in Berea, Leribe, Butha-Buthe, and Mokhotlong.

DLN project is ending in 2024, so all activities should have been completed by then.

It was expected that each Forum in the lowlands should recruit about 750 targeted farmers and mountainous ones 250 members to acquire 5000 farmers memberships. As of today, membership is 4430 and in the **WhatsApp groups** there are 976 participants in all the ten district Forums.

CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Progress on Climate Proofing Project (2023-2024).
- Thola Company Updates on Management Information System (MIS)
- Organic Certification under IFOAM Standards
- Adoption of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) for certification.
- District Farmers' Forums Updates
- WhatsApp groups for communication and market access.
- Legal Registration of Forums
- Market Readiness

Highlights from District Farmer Forums

- **Leribe Farmers Forum:** Achieved company registration; active in Slow Food initiatives and WhatsApp communication.
- **Berea Business Forum:** Focused on mechanization and collaboration with local partners for hydroponics and solar farming.
- **Thaba Tseka Farmers Forum:** Launched a constitution with high-level government support and aggregated beans awaiting market.
- **Mohale's Hoek Farmers Forum:** Registered as an association; plans to increase bean and sorghum production.
- **Other Districts:** Progress varied, with some forums facing membership and operational challenges but showing innovation in using WhatsApp for coordination and knowledge sharing.

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 30

CHICK THE HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO

THE LAUNCH OF THABA-TSEKA FARMERS' FORUM AND FINAL RECIPE 2023 COOKING COMPETITION

**28 OCTOBER 2023
THABA TSEKA**

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 500



28th October 2023, over 150 attendees gathered in Thaba-Tseka for the launch of the Thaba-Tseka Farmers' Forum and the Final Recipe 2023 Cooking Competition. The event aimed to raise awareness about the importance of supporting local produce, bridging the gap between farmers and consumers, and promoting the consumption of fresh, nutritious, and in-season produce.

Held at the Lesotho College of Education (LCE), the event also showcased the collaboration between the Rural Self-Help Development Association (RSDA), the Slow Food Cooks Alliance, Paray Chefs Academy, and the Thaba-Tseka Farmers' Forum.

The Final Recipe 2023 Cooking Competition featured four teams competing across four categories: general cooks, small businesses, chefs, and culinary schools. Each team prepared dishes using a "mystery basket" filled with locally sourced produce. The competition was a lively and engaging event, with participants showcasing creative ways to prepare local ingredients.

The dishes were presented to the judges, and the winners were announced at the end of the competition. Over 500 attendees, including farmers, chefs, and consumers, enjoyed the live competition and gained insights into innovative cooking techniques. Prizes were awarded to the top competitors in each category, including trophies, medals, aprons, and certificates.



The Right Honourable Prime Minister, Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane, addressed the gathering with a strong message of encouragement for farmers to produce more and emphasized the importance of consuming local products. He pledged government support for purchasing surplus beans from Thaba-Tseka farmers and stressed the need for farmers to unite and increase production to meet both local and international market demands. The Prime Minister officially launched the Thaba-Tseka Farmers' Forum.

CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Promotion of Local Produce
- Collaborative Partnerships between farmers and cooks.
- Official Launch of the Thaba-Tseka Farmers' Forum
- The Final Recipe 2023 Cooking Competition
- Exhibition and Farmers Market
- The Prime Minister, Hon. Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane was in attendance





FARMER LEADERS QUARTERLY MEETING VENUE: LESOTHO DURHAM LINK DATE: 07 FEBRUARY 2024

The objective of the meeting was to do a refresher training on virtual meetings and also to get farmers' views about the climate-proofing projects this entails the success they had per district in the project life span. Moreover, the meeting was also aimed at introducing the DLN team to the farmers and outline the activities planned for 2024.

CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Use of WhatsApp groups platform
- How virtual conferencing works, why is it important, and what different software makes virtual meetings possible,
- Written activities farmers needed assistance on, eg refresher Governance training assisted by RSDA

Key Points covered:

Virtual Meeting Refresher Training:

- Farmers were introduced to and practiced using virtual meeting platforms including Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, and WhatsApp.
- Practical sessions focused on:
 - Scheduling, setting up, and joining meetings.
 - Screen sharing, muting/unmuting microphones, and raising hands.
 - Adding members to WhatsApp video and voice meetings.
- Topics included the importance of virtual conferencing, functionality of various software, and navigating the platforms.

District-Level Discussion on Climate-Proofing Projects:

- Farmers grouped by districts to discuss and complete a questionnaire evaluating the impact of climate-proofing projects.
- District representatives presented their findings, and detailed responses are attached to this report.

3. RSDA Activities for 2024:

- Farmers were informed about upcoming activities, focusing on governance training, PGS (Participatory Guarantee Systems) standards, and narrative labeling.
- Farmers were asked to identify areas where they needed support within these categories.

DISTRICTS FARMERS FORUM LOGOS



TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 30

DIALOGUE ON POULTRY CRISIS IN LESOTHO VICTORY HALL MASERU 07 FEBRUARY 2024

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO](#)



TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES:53

Lesotho Council of NGOs (**LCN**) is an umbrella body for Lesotho NGOs, whose objective is to provide supportive services to the NGO community in Lesotho. It is established to stimulate, promote and build capacity within Lesotho NGO's so that they are stable, democratic, transparent, skilled, empowered, sustainable and responsive to their beneficiaries' needs and those of the voiceless and marginalised.

Working in collaboration with Rural Self-Help Association (**RSDA**), existing to eradicate extreme hunger and improve the lives of rural Basotho by supporting sustainable agriculture, facilitating self-help and enabling farming communities to become sustainable. RSDA supports smallholder farmers to be able to stand together, speak as one voice and advocate for their needs and economic empowerment.

The two organisations held a Dialogue Forum on Poultry Crisis in Lesotho. The invitees included the NGOs, Farmers Representatives from the ten districts, Poultry Traders, Representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (The Ministry), among others.



- Aware of the government of Lesotho conditional uplifting of the ban on poultry products where live birds were still not allowed to be imported into the country.
- Having debated and gotten expert advice on the Avian Influenza situation in RSA.
- Informed by the dictates of The World Organisation for Animal Health
- Having been closely following reports on list of free Compartments for exportation of live poultry and their products in South Africa and influenced by the 01 st February 2024 Report

Therefore, we resolved as follows:

Immediate Action/ Short term

- Uplift the ban totally on the safe compartments.
- To avoid smuggling in of poultry products which could cause worse harm.
- Least farmers miss the window period of up to end of February for sale of point of lay pullets in RSA.

CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- The extension Officers be tasked to develop a data base of all players in the agricultural industry.
- Farmers be trained to implement NSDP II strategic direction which aims to transform Lesotho from consumer-based economy to a producer and exportdriven economy.
- The country to embark on production, storage, and sale of its own animal feed.
- Ministry to open channels of communication, to work with the sector to address issues on the poultry crisis
- closely monitor Sustainable Transformation of Enterprises in the Poultry Sector (STEPS) Project for effective implementation.
- Development of poultry industry value chain
- The country should develop a robust plan towards assisting farmers acquire Parent Stock for economic development and sustainability.



**GOVERNANCE TRAINING FOR FARMERS' FORUMS
VENUE: (LERIBE, BOTHA-BOTHE, MOKHOTLONG, MASERU,
MAFETENG, MOHALES HOEK, QUTHING, QACHA'S NEK, THABA-
TSEKA, AND BEREA)
FEBRUARY-MARCH 2024**

- Objectives of the Training
- Enhance farmers' understanding of governance in their respective forums.
- Rejuvenate forums on internal governance to improve governing procedures.
- Empower participants to take an active role in running meetings, elections, and forum operations.
- Encourage effective use of social media for communication and marketing.

- Points Covered

- Modules Delivered:

- Understanding Membership and Responsibilities: Participants explored their roles and motivations for joining forums, aiming to align personal goals with the forum's vision.
- Introduction to Governance: A comprehensive overview of governance principles, emphasizing transparency and accountability.
- Terms of Reference for Forums: Participants learned how forums evolved and received guides on terms of reference.
- How to Run a Meeting: Role-plays highlighted gaps in meeting procedures, followed by sharing best practices.
- How to Run Elections: Various election methods, from open elections to secret ballots, were introduced.
- Using WhatsApp for Collaboration: Participants were guided on using WhatsApp for sharing issues, updates, and marketing opportunities.

Participants gained a clear understanding of:

- Good governance and its importance in forum operations.
- Effective meeting and election practices.
- Using social media for enhanced communication and marketing.

The training revitalized interest in forum activities, especially in governance. The need for further governance modules and follow-ups was identified.

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 156



PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY TRAINING FOR RSDA STAFF 05 APRIL 2024

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE TRAINING SESSION ON PHOTO TAKING & VIDEOS](#)



The Rural Self-Help Development Association (RSDA) successfully conducted a 5-day photography and video-taking workshop aimed at equipping staff with essential media skills to support the organization's visibility and storytelling efforts.

Throughout the training, staff learned fundamental photography concepts, including how to take high-quality pictures, different types of shots, and techniques for capturing effective videos. The sessions covered both theory and practical demonstrations, fostering a strong understanding of framing, lighting, and storytelling through visual media.

During the workshop, staff were trained on key photography and videography skills including how to take good quality pictures, different types of shots (portrait, landscape, action, etc.), and how to record short, effective videos. Trainers emphasized the importance of visual storytelling, lighting, composition, and purpose-driven photography in development work.

A key highlight of the workshop was the field practicals, where each staff member actively participated by taking photos and recording videos in real-world settings. These were later presented to the group for feedback and discussion, helping participants to learn from one another.



- The workshop was highly engaging and received with enthusiasm. By the end of the training, all staff expressed increased confidence in using cameras and mobile devices to capture impactful visuals that reflect RSDA's work and impact in communities.
- This training marks an important step in strengthening RSDA's communications capacity and ensuring that project activities are well documented and visually represented.



Key Outcomes of the Training:

- Staff can now take high-quality photos suitable for organizational use.
- Participants are confident in using cameras and mobile phones to capture short video clips.
- Staff are well-equipped to take field photos for social media, storytelling, and marketing purposes.
- The training increased overall awareness of how visual media can enhance RSDA's outreach and visibility.



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE WORLD DISCO SOUP DAY](#)

BOTHA-BOTHE LAUNCH AND WORLD DISCO SOUP DAY VENUE: PITSO GROUND DATE: 26 APRIL 2024

The event combined a global initiative of the world disco soup day, which raises awareness of food waste and promote sustainability through community cooking. With the launch of Botha Bothe Farmers Forum, aimed at supporting local with structured governance and increasing stakeholder Engagement. Together this activities fostered a community driven development, highlighted sustainable practices and emphases collective responsibility for food security.

World Disco Soup Day Activities:

- Surplus vegetables and ingredients were collected, cleaned, and prepared into soup under the supervision of chefs.
- Meals were cooked by youth and elders while enjoying music and entertainment.
- A march from Red A Store to the Pitso ground raised awareness about food waste.
- The event fostered community engagement with participants from various backgrounds.

Botha-Bothe Farmers Forum Launch:

- Hon Minister of Agriculture Food Security and Nutrition officially launched Botha Bothe Farmers Forum constitution, marking a new chapter in structured governance.
- The forum chairperson emphasized the importance of combating livestock theft, urging the government to declare it a pandemic.
- The RSDA managing director encouraged farmers to work collaboratively, eat what they produce, and reduce food waste.
- A representative from Pick n Pay provided insights on selecting cuts of beef for various uses.

- A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE (NCCC) ADVISED FARMERS TO ADOPT CLIMATE-RESILIENT PRACTICES.
- THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE COMMENDED THE INITIATIVE, ANNOUNCING THE AVAILABILITY OF WINTER CROPPING RESOURCES AND A MOVE TOWARD DIGITAL AGRICULTURAL SERVICES.

CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Hon Minister of Agriculture Food Security and Nutrition officially launched Botha Bothe Farmers Forum constitution,
- The MP for Qalo highlighted the importance of digitizing agriculture and improving farmer access to technology.
- Farmers and stakeholders expressed enthusiasm about the potential for collaborative marketing and aggregation.



OUTCOMES

- Increased Awareness
- Enhanced Governance
- Strengthened Collaboration
- Community Spirit

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 158

PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEED SYSTEM (PGS) DEVELOPMENT IN LESOTHO- APRIL-MAY 2024

Objectives of the Training :The meeting invited organic farmers, farmer associations, NGO's, Government, organic Consumers, traders including Agro Dealers. RSDA had these meetings in all the ten districts of Lesotho.

RSDA's efforts to develop organic standards involved partnerships with organisations which have been promoting smallholder farmers over the years.

These are Mountain Partnership Products Initiative, an organization dedicated to supporting farmers from mountainous countries, as well as working with the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), a prominent governing body for organic agriculture movement.

Furthermore, RSDA has formed a partnership with Slow Food, an international organization advocating for the consumption of high-quality, clean, and ethically produced food; essentially the antithesis of fast food

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 207



The meetings were productive, with engaged stakeholders who actively participated by asking questions that helped clarify specific topics. The interaction between the facilitators and the participants prompted the facilitators to go back and research more about PGS certification and how it will work.

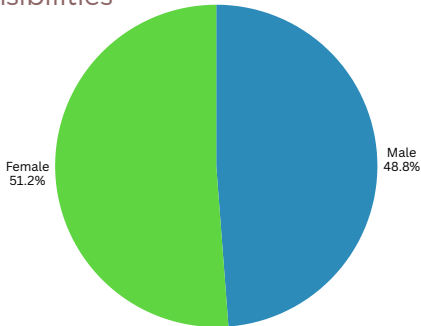
RSDA remains committed to advancing organic agriculture in Lesotho through the PGS initiative. Future sessions will focus on refining implementation strategies and broadening stakeholder involvement.

Participants per district

Districts	Maseru	Berea	Leribe	Butha-Buthe	Mokhotlong	Thaba-Tseka	Qacha's Nek	Quthing	Mohale's Hoek	Mafeteng	Total
Target	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	200
Actual number	15	15	26	22	26	26	21	24	13	19	207
Male	7	7	12	12	12	13	12	10	4	12	101
Female	8	8	14	10	14	13	9	14	9	7	106

CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- Introduce Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) concept
- Present the East African Organic Product Standards (EAOPS) as a framework suitable for Lesotho's smallholder farmers.
- Discussion of the PGS structures, roles and responsibilities



COMPLIANCE AND MARKET READINESS MASERU

27 JUNE 2024
LESOTHO DURHAM LINK



Objective of the Meeting:

To discuss compliance and market readiness requirements for farmers in collaboration with Thola Company, launching of RSDA Local Compliance Launch.

To introduce Nneile, a managing director of Thola Company based in San Francisco, USA, and originating from Mazenod, introducing the Thola data collection tool, explaining Thola data collection and its functionality in achieving RSDA local compliance.

Overview of Thola's Compliance Framework:

- Emphasized the three pillars of agricultural and food safety compliance:
 - Biosecurity: Focused on organic farming, regenerative agriculture, and proper food packaging.
 - Energy & Water: Sustainable resource management.
 - People: Building resilience and increasing customer care.
- Micro-learning via text & WhatsApp: There is going to be a self-paced compliance education delivered via WhatsApp in a simple and engaging format, using multiple languages to help farmers gain knowledge about compliance regulations and its applications. Farmers will be given lessons and questions on various compliance topics.

- Participants showed strong engagement and a keen interest in market readiness and compliance topics.
- Modules were well-received and aligned with farmers' needs.



Thola Application:

- A web-based farm management app for data collection and remote monitoring.
- Features onboarding forms for horticulture, grains, livestock, and poultry.
- Captures farm data on operations, biosecurity, growth, and performance.
- Allows farmers to pledge compliance, request audits, and gain local and international market access upon certification.



TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 51



STUDY TOUR TO SOUTH AFRICA-24TH-26TH JULY 2024

The Lesotho vegetable farmers study tour was organized by Seahlolo Newspaper and under the sponsorship of many organizations, RSDA being one of the main contributors. In partnership with Food For Mzansi, the inaugural study tour is hosted in South Africa to bring together Lesotho farmers to explore best practices for producing organic and competitive quality produce.

- It is a two-day study tour and the goal is to enhance local production and bolster self-sufficiency in Lesotho. This tour has been meticulously designed to enhance farmer's understanding of fresh produce market access, quality assurance, and yield improvement.
- RSDA through Denmark Lesotho Network sponsored 10 progressive horticultural farmers from the 10 District Forums an opportunity to explore the Lesotho Vegetable Farmers study tour.

Key Objectives:

- **Market Access:** Farmers will explore Johannesburg's fresh produce markets to understand the strategies and logistics that enable local farmers to successfully access and compete in these bustling markets. By learning from the market dynamics and consumer preferences, the aim is to better position products and expand the market reach.
- **Quality Assurance:** Quality is paramount in the fresh produce industry. The tour will include visits to facilities that prioritize quality control, allowing farmers to see firsthand the practices and technologies that ensure high standards of freshness and safety. This knowledge will be instrumental in improving the quality of farmers produce and meeting market demands.
- **Yield Improvement:** Maximizing yield while maintaining sustainability is a key goal for any farmer. Farmers will engage with experts and visit innovative farms to discover cutting-edge techniques and technologies that can enhance crop yield and overall farm productivity.

This study tour was more than just a visit; it is an opportunity to forge connections, share experiences, and gain practical knowledge that will empower Lesotho farmers to drive positive change in their farming practices. Together, They will explore new possibilities and bring back valuable insights to contribute to the growth and success of Lesotho's agricultural sector;- accomplishing RSDA's mandate of supporting & empowering smallholder Farmers in Lesotho.

RSDA, farmers & Seahlolo newspaper looked forward to a productive and enlightening experience in Johannesburg, Eat Your Greens in Midrand, Johannesburg market by RSA group, Gauteng Farmers day in Vanderbijlpark as well as grains and beekeeping farmer in Pretoria. The tours has paved the way for new opportunities and advancements in Lesotho commercial farmers.

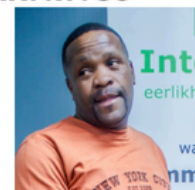
OPPORTUNITIES & LEARNINGS



"Training people who works for a long time at your farm is very important, since knowledge helps produce good quality products to meet the customer's requirements". Manthabiseng Koro-Quthing



"I was happy and shocked to hear that even Basotho products can be sold at Johannesburg Fresh produce Market. Even at Eat Your Greens, I was impressed of how much the farm practices good hygiene to avoid contaminating farmers products". Mokone Nkhaloli- Mafeteng



"I learnt that the system used at Eat Your Greens of planting different types of crops (crop rotation all seasons) increases profits in production". Matlabe Makepe- Thaba Tseka



"The study tour was beneficial to me as I have learned where to improve in my vegetable production and sales". Liphapang Tjeoane-Maseru



"Take home for me was to encourage our farmers to produce more quality products for good health and better rewards (money). We certainly don't have to rely on GQL but do what it takes to bring ourselves forward as farmers". Mameatebele Kotoane- Berea



"Learnt that even when the soil structure is very terrible like the one on this farm (TBG farm), massive production can be produced, their yield is high and great". Lindiwe Mekoane- Mohale's Hoek



"I am grateful to been given the opportunity to participate in the study tour". Bokang Sepetla - Mokhotlong



"I am so grateful for the opportunity & experience that RSDA gave us as farmers to explore this study tour organized by Seahlolo". Mopeli Molapo- Leribe



"Learnt that having to produce variety of products in one stop shop improves cash flow as well as customers finding all vegetables in one shop". Lebohang Koele- Qacha's Nek



"South African farmers' success lies in their collaborative efforts to meet market demands. After visiting the JHB market, I saw an opportunity to export potatoes, especially because I am confident in the superior quality of Lesotho's soil". Molefi Sepetla- Botha Bothe



LEARNING JOURNEY (COOKOFF) WORKSHOP 16 AUG 2024 VENUE: LESOTHO DURHAM LINK

This event was a collaboration between Slow Food and Rural Self-Help Development Association. The intention was to implement a Slow Food Cooks Alliance workshop & cook-off in Maseru district involving: Cooks from the alliance coming from each district of the country Launch a call for nominating for Ark Of Taste products in each district A training on Slow Food, Cooks Alliance & Actions For Cooks strengthening the capacities of cooks to promote good, clean and fair food in their local context. A cook-off session with cooks using Ark Of Taste products from Lesotho The event was held at Durham Link in Maseru district on Friday 16th August 2024. It was livestreamed on Facebook on both Slow Food in Lesotho and RSDA pages.

Mrs Nthabeleng Sefako Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office FNCO -FNCO is a department in the Office of the Prime Minister. Its role is to coordinate all food and nutrition programmes nationally, regionally and globally. This national nutrition campaign was launched June 2024 in Maseru district. This will be followed by district launches in the form of nutrition campaigns where each district will choose its own theme. These themes will be drawn from the main issues that were raised by the people and other stakeholders in the advocacy and social behavior change communication strategy. The campaign mascot's introduction Thaba-Tseka district The main goal for this campaign is to tackle under-nutrition, over-nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies which are a summary of the biggest challenges Lesotho is facing in terms of nutrition.

Participants were divided into 3 groups. Each group was given the same ingredients and were tasked to come up with a dish within one hour. This was a fun, interactive exercise that was enjoyed by all. Participants asked for more exercises like this during cooks workshops.

Mrs. Mabatebang Napo Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security & Nutrition Department of Nutrition-

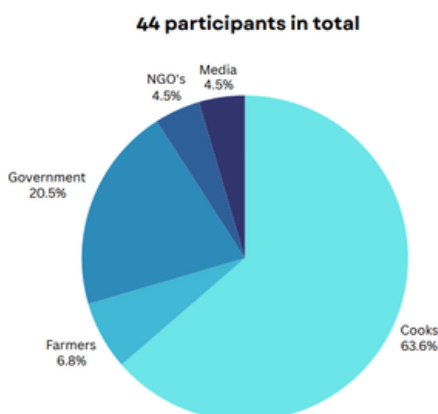
The importance of eating healthy food is to protect against malnutrition in all forms and non-communicable diseases. What you cook and eat matters. Food that nourishes the body should be prioritized. It was recommended that meal planning should be practiced in kitchens. In conclusion - practical advice on maintaining healthy diets is to eat plenty of fruit and vegetables; Eat healthy diets - avoid sugar and saturated fats; Avoid processed foods; Avoid smoking; Eat food high in fiber and exercise regularly.

Mrs. Maletsie Molapo Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security & Nutrition Department of Research-

Statistics of food waste in Lesotho in the year 2023 were shared with the participants. Household food waste per year takes place mostly in the rural areas. The food that is mostly discarded being beans, vegetables, milk and seasonal fruit. Food insecurity statistics showed that majority of severely food insecure population is in the rural area.

Mahlao Maema Coordinator Slow Food Cooks Alliance Lesotho-

This presentation was basically giving tips to cooks on reducing food waste based on Slow Food's 3 principles: GOOD, CLEAN & FAIR FOOD WASTE REDUCTION – THE GOOD WAY Call-to-action for Cooks/Chefs to buy from local farmers. This helps strengthen the local economy. #EatLocal Buying from our farmers doesn't only aid in reducing their post-harvest losses but knowing where and how the food you eat has been produced your food is critical to your health. #KnowWhereYourFoodComesFrom We need to remember that imperfect veggies or fruits still have nutritional value and can be used creatively in our home kitchens and restaurant menus. Eg. smoothies with overripe fruits, stirfries or soups



22 Phato 2024

"Re choatla mafiso a tlala, re tlatsa lisiu"

Salate ea linaoa le meroho

Linaoa tsa Maluti, lebeta, lioaoa tse tséhla, le tse ts'oeu

4 bean salad with vegetables



CELEBRATING LESOTHO FOOD MONTH IN THABA TSEKA , 200 YEARS LESOTHO 22 AUGUST 2024

- The Thaba-Tseka market day, under the theme "Breaking Pots of Hunger," aimed to:
 - Promote local food security initiatives.
 - Celebrate agricultural practices.
 - Strengthen the relationship between farmers and the community.
 - Raise awareness about the importance of locally-produced food.
 - Highlight RSDA's role in connecting farmers with markets and cooks to tackle food insecurity.

KEY ISSUES:

- Demonstration Field Planting: The event commenced with the ceremonial planting of crops in a demo field to symbolize growth, unity, and resilience in addressing food insecurity.
- March to the Pitso Ground: Participants, dressed in Basotho traditional attire, marched to the pitso ground as a demonstration of solidarity and pride in local culture and agricultural practices.
- Speeches and Presentations:
 - Hon. Thabo Mofosi, Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Nutrition: Addressed the importance of supporting small-scale farmers and ensuring food security.
 - RSDA Presentation: Emphasized how the farmers' fora and initiatives to connect farmers with cooks contribute to reducing hunger.
 - Chef Skamotho Moteane: Highlighted the importance of collaboration between cooks and farmers to produce good, clean, and fair food.
 - Mrs. Phalatse, District Agricultural Officer (DAO): Expressed gratitude to attendees and encouraged farmers to produce more food to strengthen the country's agricultural sector.

RSDA's Contribution: RSDA's stall sold locally-grown beans, symbolizing sustainable crops for combating hunger. A bean salad was offered to demonstrate the versatility of beans in various dishes.

Market Visibility Constraints: Despite the success of the event, challenges were faced in attracting enough customers to fully support the farmers' stalls.

OUTCOMES

- Successful engagement with local farmers and the community on food security issues.
- Increased awareness of the importance of supporting small-scale farmers and local food production.
- Strengthened relationships between farmers and cooks, paving the way for better collaboration in addressing food insecurity.
- Positive feedback from government and stakeholders on the event's impact and execution.

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 150





HOMECOMING EVENT AND FARMERS LEADERS MEETING VENUE: THABA BOSIU CULTURAL VILLAGE DATE: 3RD OCTOBER 2024

Homecoming Celebration with DLN

The homecoming celebration recognized the longstanding partnership between RSDA and DLN. The event highlighted 200 years of Basotho agricultural heritage and reaffirmed the shared commitment to sustainable development.

Highlights:

- Presentation of Basotho gifts to DLN partners, symbolizing Lesotho's rich cultural traditions.
- Reciprocal gifts from DLN to RSDA, showcasing mutual respect and appreciation.
- Inspiring speeches were shared by the consulate of DLN, RSDA board members, Farmers Forums, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition-DPS DPE, Member of the Senate and other stakeholders.
- A renewed commitment to strengthening the partnership and exploring future opportunities for agricultural growth.

The homecoming celebration reinforced the enduring bond with DLN, serving as a powerful reminder of the potential of collaboration and shared values in driving positive change for communities in Lesotho.



Farmer Leaders Meeting

The forum brought together leaders from farmer forums across Lesotho to discuss opportunities under the CRS project. The project aims to support school feeding programs by engaging aggregators to supply eggs and green leafy vegetables to schools in Mokhotlong, Thaba-Tseka, and Semonkong (Maseru district). Also to emphasize scaling poultry production under the STEPS project to boost local industry capacity.

- Focus on Poultry Production (STEPS Project):

The project targets seven districts: Botha-Bothe, Leribe, Berea, Maseru, Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, and Quthing.

- Farmers with 10-500 Chickens: Supported by RSDA using the SILC methodology. Farmers will receive training and grants to improve livelihoods. Target: 28,500 farmers by 2028.
- Farmers with 500+ Chickens: Assisted by Venture 37 with soft loans and grants to enhance production. Target: 1,500 farmers by 2028.

Models of Aggregation Discussed:

1. **Independent Aggregation by Farmer Forums:** Forums apply directly to the CRS project as aggregators, managing logistics and operations independently.
2. **RSDA as Lead Aggregator:** RSDA manages logistics, compliance, and market coordination, reducing operational burdens for smaller forums.
3. **Direct Forum Application:** Forums apply independently, handling all administrative and logistical responsibilities.



MEETING ON PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEMS (PGS) STANDARDS

VENUE: LESOTHO DURHAM LINK

DATE: 31 OCTOBER 2024

The Rural Self-Help Development Association (RSDA) convened a strategic meeting to introduce Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) standards to key stakeholders from all 10 districts of Lesotho. Facilitated by Mr. Samuel from the Kenya Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN), the event focused on equipping participants with knowledge about PGS standards and the structures necessary for their implementation in Lesotho.

Objectives of the Meeting

- To familiarize participants with the PGS standards and their benefits.
 - To discuss structural requirements for implementing PGS in Lesotho's districts.
 - To explore collaborative roles for government, NGOs, farmers, and retail stakeholders in adopting PGS.
 - To gather feedback and identify actionable steps for integrating PGS into Lesotho's agricultural practices.
-
- Farmer Leaders: Expressed strong interest in PGS and shared their organic farming experiences and market access challenges.
 - Stakeholders: Stressed the importance of government and NGO support for implementation.

The RSDA meeting successfully introduced PGS standards and galvanized support from farmer leaders and stakeholders. With guidance from KOAN and the collaborative efforts of government, NGOs, and retailers, Lesotho is poised to implement a cost-effective, locally driven organic certification system. These initiatives aim to empower farmers, enhance market access, and promote sustainable agricultural growth aligned with national food security goals.

CRITICAL POINTS COVERED:

- certification for organic produce.
- Structural Requirements for PGS
- Government Collaboration
- Roles of NGOs, Farmers, and Retailers



TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 36



**DISTRICT FORUM MEETING ON SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM
 VENUE: (LERIBE, BOTHA-BOTHE, MOKHOTLONG, MASERU, MAFETENG,
 MOHALES HOEK, QUTHING, QACHA'S NEK, THABA-TSEKA, AND BEREA)
 OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2024**

Objective of the Meetings

The primary objectives of the meeting were to:

- Inform farmers about two key agricultural initiatives
- Assess farmers' readiness to participate in the projects
- Establish appropriate aggregation models and sites for each district
- Discuss support mechanisms for poultry farmers.

Projects Discussed

1. CRS School Feeding Project
2. STEPS Poultry Sector Strengthening Project

Models of Aggregation Farmers Forums to select

- Independent Aggregation by Farmer Forums: Forums apply directly to the CRS project as aggregators, managing logistics and operations independently.
- RSDA as Lead Aggregator: RSDA manages logistics, compliance, and market coordination, reducing operational burdens for smaller forums.
- Direct Forum Application: Forums apply independently, handling all administrative and logistical responsibilities.



Districts Response

Leribe

- Wants to work with RSDA as an aggregator
- Products available
- Aggregation points still under deliberation

Mokhotlong

- 53 schools to be fed
- RSDA to be main aggregator
- 20 vegetable farmers with 30 acres
- Will utilize egg circles in Mokhotlong and Mapholaneng

Berea

- Chose RSDA as intermediary
- Will provide eggs and green vegetables
- Subcommittee working on aggregation points

Mohale's Hoek

- RSDA to help aggregate products
- Current egg production: 36 trays every two weeks
- Projected egg production by January: 334 trays every two weeks

Quthing

- Agreed to produce vegetables and eggs
- Will use RSDA as intermediary
- Chose Green Coronet cabbage for production

Thaba-Tseka

- Acknowledged limitations in independent operation
- Resolved to work with RSDA
- Identified three aggregation points:
 1. Thaba-Tseka Town
 2. Sehong Hong
 3. Mantsonyane

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 235

STRENGTHENING FARMERS AND COOKS COLLABORATION

VENUE: FTC THABA TSEKA

DATE: 14 NOVEMBER 2024

The meeting convened members of the Thaba-Tseka Farmers Forum and Thaba-Tseka Cooks under the Negroni Project, a Slow Food initiative. It aimed to foster collaboration between farmers and cooks, with a focus on sustainable food systems, biodiversity promotion, and boosting the local food and tourism sectors. The event was supported by the Ministries of Tourism and Agriculture, and the Rural Self-Help Development Association (RSDA) emphasized the importance of such engagements for enhancing community livelihoods.

Highlights

- **Slow Food Movement:** Participants were introduced to the Slow Food Movement's mission to promote sustainable, local, and inclusive food systems. The session connected Thaba-Tseka's unique food culture with Slow Food principles.
- **Slow Food Cooks Alliance:** A detailed presentation showcased the Alliance's efforts to link chefs with local farmers, preserve traditional recipes, and enhance biodiversity. Attendees acknowledged its potential to improve livelihoods and the culinary arts in the region.
- **RSDA assisted Thaba Tseka farmers forum to create a seasonal calendar showcasing crop and livestock availability.** For this reason cooks were encouraged to align their menus with this calendar to promote consistency and sustainability.
- **The Ark of Taste: The Importance of Local Biodiversity:** A presentation on the Ark of Taste, a Slow Food initiative to preserve endangered local food products, encouraged participants to document and safeguard Thaba-Tseka's agricultural biodiversity. Farmers were urged to prioritize indigenous crops and heirloom seeds. implementing a Good, Clean, and Fair Food Approach



Outcomes and Next Steps

- **Ministry of Tourism and Agriculture:** Stressed the importance of farmer-cook collaborations for enhancing local food systems and tourism.
- **RSDA:** Underscored the cultural and economic value of these interactions, advocating for stronger partnerships. RSDA also urged the cooks to be part of the forum.
- **Participant Engagement:** Cooks gained insights into seasonal production, while farmers learned strategies to improve their market appeal.

Seasonal Calendar in Thaba Tseka





Rural Self-Help Development Association

Mokhatlo oa Ba Ithusang Ho Itšebeletsa Metseng



FARMERS FORUM MEETING VENUE: LESOTHO DURHAM LINK DATE: 24 JANUARY 2025

Objectives

To get updates from the district's forums.

STEPS Project Activities: To inform and engage leaders on key activities under the STEPS Project, including aggregation of poultry products.

Pollinators' Recruitment: To present roles and responsibilities of Pollinators in supporting farmers.

District Visits: To introduce the project staff to the forums.

The Forum leaders were introduced to the activities of the STEPS project by Project Coordinator, Mr. Ntlai, who provided an overview of key project details, including the project funders, duration, budget, partners, and the four main activities. He also highlighted the primary responsibilities of RSDA within the project, which include:

- Conducting poultry vaccination campaigns.
- Advocating for the formulation of poultry feeds using locally sourced Lesotho produce.
- Promoting recognition of Lesotho poultry.
- Establishing strong connections with cooks across all districts.

The leaders were introduced to the Pollinators' Terms of Reference and their key responsibilities in the recruitment of Pollinators. Additionally, the main activities of the Pollinators were outlined as follows:

- Farmer Onboarding
- Monitoring
- Facilitate trainings
- Link farmers to the Forums
- Assist on Technical support
- Facilitate Aggregation
- Keep a close eye on social media (WhatsApp groups).



Districts	Achievements	Challenges
Leribe Farmer's Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They forum already have a plan for Poultry production) and they also want to package indigenous chicken. • They have registered a company. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of capital • Lack of market for eggs production as the biggest business in Leribe occupy the all the market opportunity. • Aggregation point has not started (eggs and meat)
Berea Farmer's Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum have about 42 registered farmers' • 9855 registered in the agriculture districts as poultry producers. • Secured an aggregation point which they agreed to use as a market centre from 1st of February, and 14 farmers are interest in the centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum registration is still faced with problems. • Faced with financial problems.
Maseru (MADAUA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On going search on aggregation point, and have three potential places in <u>Morija</u>, Industrial Area and Ha Ntšie. • Have market for broilers with vendors and acknowledge RSDA with its assistance when it come to market linkage. • As of now the forum have 41 broilers farmers and 18 layers farmers with the capacity ranging from 100-500 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They high market potential but low production. • No proper slaughter facility for their poultry • Lack of standards for their produce • Lack of technical assistance on production.
Mafeteng Farmer's Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To hire a place for production • 38 Farmers who are producing poultry (indigenous, layers and broilers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of capital • Most members are still reluctant to operate as business, they lack entrepreneurship spirit.

WAYFORWARD

- The DLN project is scheduled to conclude in March 2025, and it was agreed to hold a meeting in February to discuss the project's closure.
- RSDA has purchased tents for each forum, which will serve as marketing spaces.
- Training on STEPS will begin once the curriculum is finalized, expected to be ready by February. However, the STEPS project has not yet started its implementation because the baseline has not been approved.
- District Forum Leaders were asked to assist in securing office spaces in their respective districts, which will also be shared with Forum staff.
- Additionally, RSDA plans to recruit 100 pollinators, with support from the forums, who will be provided with smartphones.

Districts Forum updates:

Districts	Achievements	Challenges
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 farmers have registered under forum while 50 have shown interest. 	
Mohale's Hoek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 members have registered under Forum. • Aggregation point is identified and under negotiations. • They have 70 farmers who produce indigenous, 15 dual purpose, 60 layers producers and 8 broilers producers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No spacing for building place for production.
Botha Bothe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The forum has about 288 members but they had not registered. • The Forum is registered legally. • The have a bank account. • The have 30 members who are interested to join STEPS project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of market as the production is very high.
Quthing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were able to find the aggregation place at DA office. • The forum has 70 members and only 50 registered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of market as the production is increasing

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 38



**COMPANY REGISTRATION MEETING
VENUE: FARMERS TRAINING HALL
MOKHOTLONG
DATE: 31 JANUARY 2025**



The objective of the meeting was to assist the Mokhotlong Farmers Forum in registering a company since they only had an association, which was registered last year under associations. The meeting aimed to clarify the differences between a company and an association, outlining the pros and cons of each. Additionally, the meeting sought to establish a framework for company governance by selecting directors and discussing long-term representation strategies.

Understanding the Forum and Vision

Participants were reminded of the importance of the forum in providing a platform for farmers to discuss challenges and opportunities.

The forum's transition from an association to a legally registered company was emphasized, particularly for collective product sales and market access.

The significance of company registration was highlighted, especially for engaging in trade beyond local boundaries and tapping into RSDA-supported niche markets for organic products.

RSDA's role in filling gaps where government support is lacking was discussed.

Association vs. Company

The differences between an association and a company were thoroughly explained, with a focus on governance, legal status, and financial benefits. The importance of company registration was highlighted, including the ability to open bank accounts, access grants, and establish partnerships.

It was noted that the association's constitution empowers them to engage with the government, apply for funding, and collaborate with organizations.

Farmers were encouraged to leverage their legally registered association to acquire assets and form partnerships with local businesses and mines.

Strategies for raising funds, such as organizing a gala dinner and launch event, were proposed.

Aggregation and direct selling of farmers' products were discussed as a key benefit of company formation.

Outcomes

- A date must be set for a more detailed training session on company registration.
- Forum members are to submit the filled forms by Friday the 07th



TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 16



Rural Self-Help Development Association



Mokhatlo oa Ba Ithusang Ho Itšebeletsa Metseng

FARMERS FORUM MEETING VENUE: VICTORY HALL MASERU DATE: 10 MARCH 2025

This report provides a detailed account of the meeting convened by the Rural Self-Help Development Association (RSDA). The meeting aimed to discuss key interventions related to the sustainability of Farmers Forums, the Sustainable Transformation of Enterprises in the Poultry Sector (STEPS), marketing interventions and the recruitment of Pollinators. It also served as a platform to prepare for upcoming training sessions and outline strategic plans for the continued development of the agricultural sector.

The meeting brought together various stakeholder, including RSDA representatives and farmer leaders. The discussions covered critical elements essential to ensuring the effective implementation of ongoing projects and improving farmer support mechanisms.

Objectives of the Meeting:

- Define District Farmers Forum as Aggregation Hubs and their roles and responsibilities.
- To prepare for the upcoming WhatsApp training for Farmers Forums.
- To discuss the recruitment of Pollinators and their role in farmer engagement.
- To discuss the significance of Farmers Forums and their sustainability.
- To provide updates on the STEPS initiative and its impact on poultry farming.
- To review the current marketing interventions in the agricultural sector.
- To assess RSDA's role in supporting farmers and different stakeholders.
- To formulate a plan and the way forward regarding implementation and sustainability.

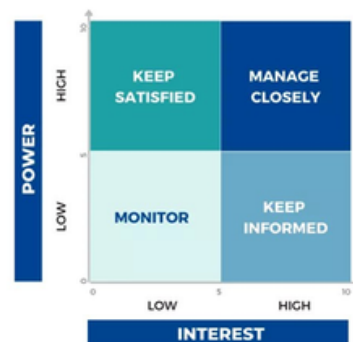
RSDA Support and Sustainability of Farmers Forums
Mrs. Thulo led discussions on RSDA's role in sustaining Farmers Forums through effective stakeholder engagement. A stakeholder analysis was conducted to determine the key players involved in agricultural development at the district level. The session emphasized the importance of collaboration between RSDA, local farmers, government agencies, and private sector stakeholders. Participants discussed ways in which RSDA could further strengthen its role in ensuring the long-term viability of Farmers Forums. Below is the example of Stakeholder analysis from Thaba-Tseka district and the responses on benefits of WhatsApp.

Mr Tsilo facilitated a session on the recruitment of Pollinators. He explained the role of Pollinators in sustaining Farmers Forums by disseminating information, assisting with training, and ensuring continuous engagement with farmers. The discussion also covered strategies for identifying suitable Pollinators and integrating them into ongoing Farmers Forum activities.



WAYFORWARD

- The STEPS initiative remains a crucial driver for poultry sector sustainability and should be expanded to reach more farmers.
- Improved market access strategies are needed to ensure fair pricing and profitability for smallholder farmers.
- The WhatsApp training is a vital tool for enhancing farmer-to-farmer communication and knowledge-sharing and training will be held from 24-25 April 2025.
- The recruitment of Pollinators is essential for sustaining Farmers Forums, and clear criteria for selection should be established.
- RSDA must continue strengthening its role as a key facilitator in stakeholder engagement and policy advocacy.
- A structured follow-up mechanism should be put in place to monitor progress on the agreed action points.



Importance of WhatsApp	What do we use it for?	What can be improved
-Easy to communicate with many people. -This is the cheapest (affordable) means of communication -Farmers share knowledge and skills through WhatsApp.	-Information Dissemination (sharing challenges and opportunities) - Marketing (Advertising) -Climate change updates -Combat stock theft both in Lesotho and, south Africa	-Conference meetings



Rural Self-Help Development Association



Mokhatlo oa Ba Ithusang Ho Itšebeletsa Metseng

STRENGTHENING FARMERS AND COOKS COLLABORATION

VENUE: LCE THABA TSEKA

DATE: 27 MARCH 2025

Introduction

On March 27, 2025 the Rural Self-Help Development Association (RSDA), in collaboration with Slow Food's Cooks Alliance, officially launched a ground-breaking partnership between farmers and cooks in Thaba-Tseka. This initiative is designed to strengthen business relationships between small-scale producers and cooks while promoting the principles of good, clean, and fair food for all.

Objectives of the Collaboration between Farmers and Cooks

The primary goal of this partnership is to enhance local food systems by encouraging cooks to source their ingredients directly from farmers. This arrangement ensures traceability, boosts local agricultural productivity, and provides smallholder farmers with a stable market for their produce. In return, farmers and cooks commit to agreed standard terms in order meeting quality standards and delivering produce at agreed-upon prices and schedules.

Impact and Future Prospects

This partnership marks a significant milestone in the development of a sustainable food system in Thaba-Tseka. By fostering direct connections between farmers and cooks, the initiative is expected to enhance food security, improve economic sustainability, and promote healthier eating habits within the community. Moving forward, RSDA and Slow Food's Cooks Alliance will continue working closely with stakeholders to strengthen this partnership and expand its reach to other districts



Outcomes and Next Steps

- There is high enthusiasm and commitment among farmers and cooks to collaborate for mutual benefit.
- Traditional cooking using local produce has a strong role in promoting food sovereignty.
- Market opportunities exist for farmers through direct partnerships with cooks and institutions.
- The involvement of the Ministry of Tourism opens doors for agro-tourism and culinary heritage promotion.
- Strengthen monitoring of partnerships between cooks and farmers through regular forums and joint planning.
- Provide training on food safety, agro-processing, and nutrition to farmers and cooks.
- Encourage public procurement systems (e.g., schools, clinics) to source from Farmers and Cooks Alliance members.
- Document and promote success stories from the Alliance to attract further funding and policy support.

The Farmers and Cooks Alliance launch event was a milestone in building resilient local food systems in Thaba-Tseka. It successfully brought together key stakeholders and laid the foundation for practical partnerships between producers and processors. Furthermore, the launch of the farmers and cooks' partnership represents a critical step towards transforming local food systems in Lesotho. Through strengthened business ties and shared commitments to food quality and sustainability, this initiative is set to benefit both farmers and cooks while fostering a healthier and more resilient food culture in Thaba-Tseka.

TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 231

Rural Self-Help Development Association

Mokhatlo oa Ba Ithusang Ho Itšebeletsa Metseng

FARMERS' FEEDBACK REPORT ON THE USE OF WHATSAPP COMMUNITY GROUPS VENUE: LANCERS INN HOTEL MASERU DATE: 31 MARCH 2025

Objective

Share farmers' experiences with WhatsApp Community Groups across districts.

In March 2025, (RSDA) with the support from GIZ conducted a capacity-building workshop for farmers focused on the use of digital tools such as social media, WhatsApp, photo-taking, and video-taking. The aim of the workshop was to equip farmers with practical skills to enhance communication, increase visibility of their agricultural activities, and improve market access through digital platforms.

The training also provided a platform for farmers to share their experiences and feedback on the use of WhatsApp community groups, which have proven to be highly beneficial for sharing timely agricultural information, coordinating activities, and fostering peer-to-peer learning.

Farmers' Perspectives on the use of WhatsApp community groups by District

Key Findings:

Mokhotlong: Initially confusing, now appreciated for organized commodity-based groups.

Maseru: participants in the forums are getting used to WhatsApp communities and now easier to maneuver. Their biggest benefit is that important messages are not lost, for everything is organized accordingly.

Botha-Bothe: Easier commodity-specific communication but increased workload for leaders.

Leribe: Improved subscription renewals & targeted announcements. Challenges with admin limitations in making announcement.

Thaba-Tseka: Better membership management & motivation to pay subscriptions.

Berea: Reduced message congestion, lower data usage, but technology literacy remains a challenge for some elderly forum members.

Qacha's Nek: Effective but struggles with digital literacy & language barriers.

Mafeteng: New to the system but positive reception for all forum members.

Mohale's Hoek: Appreciate dedicated announcement space for efficiency.

Quthing: Less missed info, but some feel excluded in topic-specific discussions.

Benefits Highlighted by Farmers

Efficient Communication:

Messages reach the right groups instantly. No need to forward announcements manually.

Organized Discussions:

Commodity-based groups reduce irrelevant chats. Faster decision-making in smaller groups.

Membership Management:

Clear distinction between active/non-active members. Increased subscription renewals.

Data & Time Savings:

Less scrolling, fewer unrelated messages. Targeted groups reduce data usage.



RSDA Extension Services' Perspective

How WhatsApp Communities Help RSDA:

Streamlined Communication: Direct updates to specific commodity groups.

Efficient Engagement: Less need for physical visits; remote support possible.

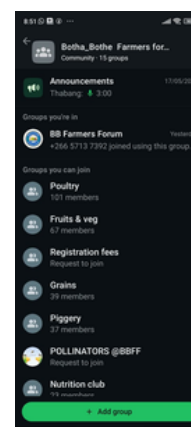
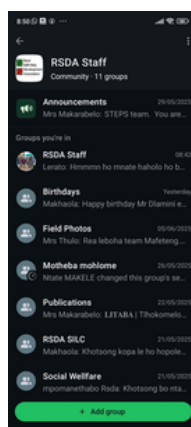
Real-Time Feedback: Farmers share issues quickly via photos/voice notes.

Targeted Training: Customized materials for different commodities.

Better Data Collection: Faster surveys and field reports.

WAYFORWARD

- Expand training for forum leaders & farmers.
- Monitor progress in districts with low adoption.
- Gather ongoing feedback to refine the system.
- Collaborate with RENOKA on scaling best practices.





DISTRICT FARMER LEADERS MEETING VENUE: LESOTHO DURHAM LINK DATE: 18TH JUNE 2025

The Rural Self-Help Development Association (RSDA) held a meeting with farmer leaders from ten districts on the 18th of June 2025 led by RSDA Managing Director Mrs. Thulo. The meeting was to update farmers on current organizational developments, the closure of major projects – STEPS and DLN, and the way forward in sustaining agricultural activities beyond donor support. In addition to reflecting on achievements and challenges, the meeting also introduced new opportunities including the SADP II programme, Renoka, IFOAM organic certification. Farmers also shared their future visions, sharing progress, challenges, and areas of desired inter-district collaboration.

The RSDA Managing Director addressed the farmers, outlining the main purpose of the meeting, which was to discuss:

The closure of the STEPS Poultry Project, and to officially read the termination letter to the farmers.

The conclusion of the Denmark Lesotho Network end of Project.

The Managing Director informed farmers that the STEPS Poultry Project has officially ended. She read the termination letter to the attendees. Additionally, she shared that RSDA has also reached the end of the Denmark network Lesotho-supported project for smallholder farmers in Lesotho.

Mrs Thulo placed on the need for farmers to begin identifying ways to continue their activities independently and sustainably. The absence of external funding should not bring agricultural activities to end but share possible ways to function in the absence of projects.

Feedback from the districts

Leribe farmers forum vision:

- Development of proper agricultural infrastructure
- Acquisition of modern farm machinery
- Financial stability and improved investment
- Access to ICT and technology-based agricultural training
- Installation of irrigation systems
- Consistent production of a designated commodity for reliable markets

Mokhotlong farmers forum vision:

- The district envisions improved infrastructure to support agricultural operations
- Local government has committed to providing this infrastructure support
- Plans are in place to host a fundraising gala dinner to raise resources for forum initiatives



Way forward & Action plan

- To ensure continued communication and coordination in the absence of active projects, RSDA emphasized the importance of maintaining all digital tools—such as laptops, printers, smartphones, and routers—in good working condition. These tools are essential for virtual meetings, accessing training materials, and sustaining active participation in WhatsApp forums, which remain key platforms for information sharing, planning, and collaboration between RSDA and farmers across districts. The task is to check the office equipment that was provided to farmers whether are still working or not.
- A schedule was agreed upon for farmers to provide district updates every Thursday and Friday to keep the WhatsApp groups active and engaged. RSDA officers will then compile and summarize these updates to share key highlights and lessons in “All districts” WhatsApp group.
- Farmers are encouraged to use the tents provided by RSDA in their market days and agricultural related activities.



DISTRICT FARMER LEADERS MEETING VENUE: LESOTHO DURHAM LINK DATE: 18TH JUNE 2025

Maseru Agricultural District Unity Association Vision:

- Improve financial status of farmer enterprises
- Secure formal contracts with produce buyers by 2026.

Berea Business forum vision:

- Increase the production of grains such as beans, maize, sorghum, and wheat
- Improve existing infrastructure and expand the market center
- Secure infrastructure support as promised by local authorities.

Mohale's Hoek farmers forum Vision:

- Increase production of grains such as beans, maize, sorghum, and wheat
- Improve and expand infrastructure including market centers
- Establish abattoirs and an egg collection and distribution center
- Implement product labelling and packaging systems

Thaba-Tseka farmers forum vision:

- Ensure year-round production and availability of fresh produce
- Installation of shade nets to support vegetable farming
- Develop climate change mitigation strategies
- Establish proper storage facilities, including for potato seed preservation

Quthing farmers forum vision:

- Expand summer production coverage to all resource centers in the district
- Establish storage facilities to preserve harvested products
- Strengthen internal structures to improve participation and payment of subscriptions

Botha-Bothe farmers forum vision:

- Strengthen unity among members to transition toward commercial farming
- High levels of information sharing, experience exchange, and idea selling
- Clear communication and awareness creation within the forum
- Effective problem-solving and conflict resolution techniques

Mafeteng farmers forum vision:

- Strengthen the forum into a stable and productive entity
- Secure consistent and reliable markets to encourage year-round production
- Register the forum as a company for broader engagement in commercial activities
- Involve more young people in farming as a business and career

Qacha's Nek farmers forum vision:

- Transition from subsistence to commercial farming
- Ensure timely delivery of seeds and inputs
- Acquire shade nets to protect crops and boost production
- Reinforce structured record-keeping practices to improve farm management