

Nurturing upcoming young farmers

Women are known for their natural nurturing disposition, and this is certainly the case for Louisa Moloka Mogotsi, Segomotso Letebele and Lerato Moilwa, based in the North West Province.
By Yolanda Ntlakaza



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When the farming bug bit Louisa, Segomotso and Lerato, they decided to become citrus farmers. Louisa and Segomotso are both former social workers, while Lerato worked in training in the health and wellness industry. Their farms were acquired between 2012 and 2016 through the government's Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy.

Although they all agree that they still have a lot to learn in the citrus industry, they didn't shy away from hosting young, energetic, knowledge-seeking youths from various institutions such as Taung College, Tshwane University of Technology, Mpumalanga University, Nelson Mandela University, and Fort Cox College. Having these trainees on their farms comes with the additional responsibility of supervising them and ensuring that they obtain the necessary skills and expertise as required by their respective institutions. The three women see this as a mutually beneficial relationship, since they bring in the theory to link with the practical element.

Their goal is to expand the area under

citrus in the province, and to also replace old trees through planting of cultivars that are relevant to the markets. And they are grateful for the support they've received from the industry in the form of study groups, extension, business and financial support, as well as grant funding from the government.

What drives you?

Louisa of Healthy Life for Achievers says:

"I did not choose citrus, but citrus chose me." Louisa commenced in 2016 with orchards of varying quality, age and low yields and has been jumping through hoops to make a success of her venture. She has managed to improve yields, obtain Global Gap certification, and started exporting in the 2021 season. She serves as a member of the Grower Development Chamber and is also an observer on the CRI Board.

Segomotso of Gaman 67 says:

"Getting into farming was my long-time wish, but when it actually happened it was overwhelming. I soon realised that I had to deal with both theory and practice, so experiencing the day-to-day running of

the farm was a steep learning curve. The journey hasn't been easy but it is interesting. Looking at the improvement on the tons and quality of fruit that I produce now compared to when I started, I believe that I have grown and am still growing strong." Her farm has seen a marked improvement, obtained Global Gap certification and also started exporting during the 2021 season.

Lerato of Bathlako Temo says: "The journey was not very easy. We started by irrigating 16 000 orange trees manually with water from the spring, until we received support from stakeholders like Magalies Citrus Company, Ryno Prins and the CGA-GDC who provide technical support." The farm started exporting in 2019, thus becoming the first black owned farm in the province to export citrus.

What sets the youth apart who are part of this programme?

Choosing farming as a career or business is not a regular occurrence. However, these youths have a different opinion about their choice.

Thabang Ngubeni was inspired by his grandfather who was involved in subsistence farming. But his approach is different, as he wants to become a commercial farmer.

Baleseng Maloka believes that farming is a lifelong investment and that it creates jobs and sustains livelihoods. She further mentions that outbreaks of pandemics such as COVID-19 have shown that farming is key to the economy.

Mmasibitse Kemorwe was inspired to venture into citrus farming because most farming in her area is for household consumption. She has purchased 2 750 citrus trees for planting in 2022.

Kgothatso Emily Sepoloane loves the challenges that come with farming and is raring to learn more about providing solutions to food security for the country.

Joyce Maria Banda loves working with her hands and would like to see herself either as a farmer or in a business that

Louisa, addressing participating youth



supports the agriculture value chain.

Ginya Lihle has the determination to try new things and sees herself taking experiences she has learnt during her

training back to her home province in the Eastern Cape. She has her sights on citrus farming.

Tsholofelo Mabelies sees herself as a farmer in the future, producing citrus for both local and export markets. She also wants to motivate the youth to go into agriculture, and to identify an area of interest.

The general feeling from the youth is that there should be more programmes geared towards not only training, but also ensuring that they obtain land and are provided with the supporting resources to enable them to farm. In that way, the farming landscape in SA can be changed for the better. ▶

The youth want more training programmes, as well as to obtain land with the requisite support to farm.



Segomotso



Lerato