



AGRICULTURAL  
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

FEB/MAR 2024

Empowering  
Emerging Black  
Farmers



Access to  
Finance



**AGDA**  
AGRICULTURAL  
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Skills  
Development



Growing  
Young Agri-  
Entrepreneurs



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# From the CEO's desk

The year 2024 is progressing rapidly, and we are quickly approaching the end of the first quarter, with exciting new opportunities arising in the Agriculture sector. The recent announcement by Minister Didiza and stakeholders in the Red Meat Industry regarding exports to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia brings much-needed relief to the sector, which has faced numerous challenges. It also presents an excellent opportunity for our work in supporting the commercialisation of Black farmers in the Red Meat value chain.

During the last quarter of 2023, the AGDA management team and board spent two days in a review and planning session to set the trajectory for 2024. Key issues that emerged include the need for expedited progress on the fund, ensuring that we can fulfil our mandate of support and inclusive growth. Financing remains a major concern for new entrants into the sector, and even established farmers are struggling with working capital issues. We also agreed to continue our value chain approach aligned with the AAMP. Our strategic focus for the year will be on potato and vegetable value chains in Blouberg, Limpopo; the livestock value chain; and grains and oil seeds. We have also been working on strategic partnerships for export commodities such as avocados, citrus, and others. Once again, I want to express my gratitude to the board for their commitment, advice, and guidance in building AGDA and supporting our work.

This quarter has also seen exciting events that provided us with an opportunity to share the AGDA story and engage with young farmers, commercial Black farmers, and other stakeholders. These engagements helped us understand the role AGDA can play in unlocking and supporting sector growth. These events highlight the importance of engagement, collaboration, and

partnerships, so that we can avoid duplicating efforts and build on successful models while supporting one another's strengths.

AGDA continues to focus on building networks that can unlock and expand opportunities for farmers. We have been engaging strategically to improve market access, access to finance, and skills development – more about these efforts will be covered in our next editions.

As an institution, we have always stressed the importance of ensuring that we are well equipped to serve our members and the sector. We warmly welcome Ms. Lynne Roos, who will head our Transaction Advisory and Project Development Unit. Lynne brings extensive experience in the sector and, most importantly, a passion for supporting the development of new entrants.

We have come to realise, as mentioned before, that numerous positive stories unfold in the sector daily. However, we often fail to take the time to celebrate them. Today, on behalf of AGDA, I congratulate one of our members, Mr. Pitso Sekhoto of Remmoho Investments, for successfully unlocking a joint venture transaction in the Free State for apple production, receiving R10 million funding from the Free State's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). Innovative models like this are essential for driving inclusivity in the sector.

Happy reading and looking forward to reaching some important milestones on the fund and major transactions that we are busy with...we will keep you updated

**LEONA ARCHARY**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

# Realigning our path forward: Highlights from AGDA's strategic breakaway



Over several sessions in late November, AGDA's leadership came together for our annual strategic breakaway to assess our progress and chart our path ahead. Key topics included analysing our status, revisiting our vision, developing funding strategies, and determining organisational needs.

## Reviewing Our Journey

As we approach our 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we reflected on AGDA's background and purpose in promoting the inclusive development of the commercial agricultural sector. Our timeline illustrates key partnerships formed, projects undertaken, funding secured and organisational milestones achieved from 2019-2023. We also did an honest SWOT analysis to guide our realignment.

## Reaffirming Our Vision

We affirmed that AGDA still aligns to our founding vision for an inclusive, transformed agricultural sector. However, we realise we need to tailor our approach more to commodity value chains and market-driven models. We identified priority chains like livestock, grains, fruits and vegetables that provide opportunities to involve small and medium black farmers through partnerships across the industry.

## Crafting Our Funding Mix

Our funding strategy includes attracting investment into our impact fund as well as earning professional service fees. But we also rely on corporate social investment, membership fees and institutional grants. We have set targets to incorporate a diverse

funding mix anchored through strategic partnerships.

## Building Organisational Capacity

Clarifying organisational roles and structures ensures we have the capabilities to deliver our vision. This includes specialist skills in areas like transaction advisory, partnerships, project implementation and fund management. We also gain guidance from board committees and want to establish an external advisory panel.

With a clear analysis of where we stand today and a renewed sense of our path ahead, we are energised to continue enabling black emerging farmers to advance over the next five years. Please get in touch if you would like a briefing from our breakaway.



# AGDA welcomes new Head of Advisory Services and Project Development



Lynne Roos, a seasoned agricultural economist with a wealth of experience in the consultancy and advisory sector has recently become part of the AGDA family. She joins AGDA as Head of Advisory Services and Project Development.

Her responsibility within AGDA is to spearhead transformative initiatives within the agricultural value chain. Tasked with crafting comprehensive strategies to tackle industry challenges, she focuses on optimisation, innovation, and sustainable growth. Lynne's unwavering dedication to fostering agricultural development is evident in her passion for formulating effective solutions. With her ability and vision, she will aid to drive the industry's growth and sustainability, ensuring its continued success.

She holds a BSc. in Agricultural Economics: Agribusiness Management from the University of Pretoria. Lynne has proven herself a dynamic force within the agricultural industry.

Lynne has throughout her distinguished career spanning over 8 years, played a pivotal role in various agricultural initiatives across South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, and Lesotho. She has significantly contributed to the conception and oversight of the agricultural programmes in these countries. Her multifaceted contributions encompass involvement in landmark projects such as the development and planning of the national Agri-Parks Programme, alongside her extensive involvement in crafting business plans, conducting feasibility studies, performing due diligence assessments, and overseeing monitoring and evaluation processes.

Notably, she has led the Agricultural Business Unit at Urban-Econ Development Economists for over 2 years. Her work involved collaborating with various strategic partners within different national, provincial, district, and local government institutions, as well as setting up productive relationships with funding institutions, commodity organisations, and private farmers. She has worked in all nine provinces and abroad across various sectors, including horticulture, livestock, grains, and aquaculture.

In 2023, she became part of the PotatoSA team, where she served as an Agricultural Business Analyst within the Information Department gaining further insight into industry dynamics and challenges.

The AGDA management team wishes to heartily welcome Lynne to the team!!

# Meet Oom Kobus, AGDA's Intrepid Expert Agri-advisor



Oom Kobus Van Heerden is an extraordinary individual with a passion for farming. Growing up on a thriving tomato and vegetable farm in Mokopane, Kobus developed a deep love for agriculture from a young age. His journey led him to study a BSc in Agriculture at the University of Pretoria, laying the foundation for a remarkable 13-year career in vegetable farming.

Oom Kobus is set to be featured in both the AGDA social media "Wisdom Wednesday" column and the Q&A section.

In 1996, he embarked on an exciting new chapter when he joined Sakata as the Product Manager for the MayFord vegetable range. Throughout the time he spent at the company, until his retirement in 2013, Kobus played a vital role in various capacities. His responsibility included breeding new vegetable varieties specifically tailored to thrive in the unique conditions of Southern Africa. During this time, Oom Kobus conducted extensive country-wide testing, and ensured the introduction of innovative varieties to vegetable farmers across the nation. Collaborating closely with market agents, Kobus gained valuable insights into consumer preferences, guiding the development of new and improved varieties. In 2006,

he further enriched his expertise by studying Vegetable Genetics in Israel.

His retirement in 2013 did not mark the end of Kobus's journey. He is presently and actively collaborating with organisations and NGOs to support smallholder and emerging farmers. With an unwavering commitment to training and mentoring the next generation of farmers, he strives to give back to the farming community that has shaped his life in such a profound way.

We would like to urge all our readers to use the invaluable information that Oom Kobus is set to provide through our various social media platforms.



# R10 million cash injection for the Maluti Apple Project



Apples processed and washed before packaging.

AGDA honoured the invitation from Remmoho Investment in Agriculture (RIA) to join them in celebrating the Thabo Mofutsanyana Apple Harvest Day held in Bethlehem, Free State. Remmoho has partnered with the Free State Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and the Department of Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA) on the Apple Project.

The harvest day showcased the first stage of the Thabo Mofutsanyana Apple Hub Initiative that will see the region producing up to 180 000 tons of apples per annum.

Chairman of Remmoho, Pitso Sekhoto took stakeholders on tour of the Maluti Fruit Pack House to demonstrate how the apples are washed, sorted, and packaged. The stakeholders included the MEC



Pitso Sekhoto, Chairman of Remmoho Investments explaining the processes of the Maluti Fruit Pack House.

of the Free State Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), Saki Mokoena, MEC of the Department of Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA), Thabo Meeko, apple farmers, and other funders including Land Bank and Nedbank. Once the packaging is completed, the apples are

exported to international markets and distributed to local markets.

Maluti Fruit is owned by fifteen farmers in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District. Remmoho Investment also forms part of the ownership group. Pitso Sekhoto reflected on Remmoho's journey with DARD and DESTEA to have reached the



apple project's financial support by government.

DARD handed over a R10 million cheque to the Apple Project. The

project is expected to achieve a turnover of R50 million per annum once the plan is implemented. Pitso Sekhoto expressed gratitude to the MECs of the Free State provincial

government for their support in the this project. He also encouraged other farmers to work hard and to always knock on doors until they also get assistance.



The MEC of Agriculture and Rural Development, Saki Mokoena supported by Thabo Meeko, MEC of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs, handed over a R10 million cheque to fund the Apple Project in the Eastern Free State.



Stead farm orchard.



Apples are packaged and ready to be transported to markets.



Workers of the Maluti Fruit Pack House packaging apples for international and local markets.

## Some Health Benefits of Apples

- 1 Apples have a high nutritional value and are always in season.
- 2 Apples have antioxidants that promotes brain and heart health.
- 3 The vitamin C in apples assists in immune health.
- 4 Apples have potassium which regulates the nervous system.





# AGDA assists Ayoob Dulla to de-bush his farm

Ayoob Dulla of Zuurbekom, received training in vegetable production from AGDA in 2021 during the Grow to Market training session in Jabulani, Soweto. He completed the AGDA programme in 2022 while farming in his backyard. Ayoob now farms on a 2-ha farm in Zuurbekom, West Rand, where he employs one person. Ayoob is one of the many hard-working farmers who, after spotting social media posts on the training, decided to grab the opportunity, and enrolled. He has never looked back since.



Ayoob Dulla showing off his fully grown maize.

He reflects on his journey with AGDA from the beginning to date. Ayoob cites how AGDA has played a key role in grooming him as a farmer by providing him with initial seeds, equipment and advise after the training, "Kobus Van Heerden has done a sterling job in providing me with the necessary knowledge on how to run my farm and look after the plants."

"With AGDA's continued support, I have been able to employ one

person with whom I work on a 600m<sup>2</sup> land, and we have so far produced various kinds of vegetables which we sell to the local community" says Ayoob.

AGDA has aided Ayoob by sponsoring the de-bushing of the land where he has planted maize which he will be harvesting soon.

Ayoob wishes that AGDA could get the necessary financial support to enable it to continue to aid people

like him, who are venturing into farming.



Ayoob Dulla with Agri Specialist, Kobus van Heerden.



De-bushing of Ayoob's 2-hectare farm.



# Nick Serfontein receives Agri-award

Food for Mzansi (FFM) closed 2023 on a high note with the 2024 AgriFuture SA conference and agri-awards held in December 2023 in Pretoria.

AGDA attended the conference and awards ceremony where Nick Serfontein, a commercial farmer and AGDA board member received an agricultural trailblazer award.

Leona Archary received the award on behalf of Nick.



AGDA team with board members, David Mthombeni and Dewald Olivier at the FFM 2024 AgriFuture SA gala dinner.



AGDA CEO, Leona Archary addressing the audience at FFM 2024 AgriFuture SA Conference.



Samantha Mutoredzenwa, Leona Archary and Quito Naidoo attending the FFM 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary gala dinner.



Leona Archary receiving the award on behalf of Nick Serfontein.



## ABOUT NICK SERFONTEIN

Nick Serfontein embodies the soul of modern agriculture. His unwavering support inspired Food For Mzansi's birth five years ago, marking a turning point for new-era farmers in South Africa. From humble beginnings in the Free State to becoming a prominent leader farmer, his journey weaves resilience and passion.

Transitioning from engineering to agriculture, he led the Sernick Group to a turnover of R1.5 billion in 2019, impacting 14 500 lives. Beyond profit, Nick advocates for inclusive land reform, offering mentorship and education to emerging farmers, shaping a brighter, inclusive future in agriculture, lighting the way for communities.



# Sakata Farmers' Days 2024



AGDA exhibited at the Sakata Farmers' Days event held at Sakata Seed Southern Africa in Teesdale Estate, Rhenosterspruit from 13 – 16 February 2024. The aim of this event was to highlight Sakata's established and dependable seed varieties, but most importantly the latest varieties that have been developed and tested.

Sakata Seed hosts the Farmers' Days event bi-annually for both large and small-scale farmers, retailers, processors, seedling growers, students, and government officials.



AGDA communications team exhibiting at the Sakata Farmers' Days 2024 event.



Sakata's professional team that guided the garden tours.



# PotatoSA's 2024 Transformation Symposium



Boitumelo Mahlangu attending to visitors at AGDA's exhibition stand.

PotatoSA hosted their annual Transformation Symposium at Birchwood Hotel on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2024. The Symposium was themed *"Human Capital Development – An Essential Step in Unlocking Strategies for Economic Inclusivity."*

Other topics of discussion included:

- The importance of regulatory policies in supporting transformation in the sector;
- Strategic Approaches to Nurturing and Enhancing Human Capital for Sustainable Economic Growth;

- Making Transformation Practical & Sustainable;
- The State of Transformation within the Agri-sector in South Africa; and
- Land Development Support.

Leona Archary facilitated a panel discussion titled *"What role can the Private and Public sector play in enhancing Development of Agribusiness?"*



Blouberg Potato Hub board members with AGDA CEO, Leona Archary, at the PotatoSA Symposium.



### Did you know?

Potatoes are a good source of vitamin C, potassium and vitamin B6.



## Blouberg Potato Hub appoints new board member

The Blouberg Potato Hub has appointed Matome Cynthia Makgobu to its board.

Cynthia is a vegetable farmer from Limpopo farming with potatoes, spinach, mustard, butternuts, and chilies. Her motivation, passion and love for agriculture has made her one of the young successful farmers in her Province.

She is excited about her appointment to the Blouberg Potato Hub board and sees her appointment as a learning opportunity.

AGDA wishes Cynthia all the best in her journey with the Blouberg Potato Hub Board.

## AGDA CEO participates at the African Farming Agri-Development Imbizo

AGDA CEO, Leona Archary contributed to a panel discussion with agriculture experts from various entities at the African Farming Agri-Development Imbizo held in February. The panel explored the topic *"Championing transformation and driving inclusive growth in South Africa's farming Industry."* Both emerging and commercial farmers attended the conference.

AGDA also set up an exhibition stand to share our services with the conference delegates.



Leona Archary with the panel of experts.

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