

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY PROGRAMME FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA- APPSA HELD FIELD DAYS IN THE LERIBE, QUTHING AND MASERU DISTRICTS



APPSA implemented by the Department of Agricultural Research (DAR) showcased technologies through a series of field days in two research sub-stations and on-farm namely Ts'ifa li Mali, and Machache as well on-farm in the respective districts of Leribe, Maseru and Quthing. The field days aim to bring farmers and researchers together respond to the project development objectives by making farmers and end users aware of available improved technologies where a whopping turn-up of 260 farmers attended the event.

On the 06th March 2023, the field day was hosted in Leribe at Ts'ifa li Mali research sub-station under Hlotse resource center and Nkoeng under Tale resource center. The morning session was dedicated to Nkoeng with the afternoon session predestined for Ts'ifa li mali. While at Nkoeng, the members of the farmer field school (FFS) took the lead in demonstrating two potato varieties: first the Panamera species followed by the sweet potato production. Mr Tilia Letsoela, a lead farmer, spoke on behalf of the Nkoeng FFS indicating that the nutritive value of these crops captured their interest. He marveled the ease at which the crops are produced and encouraged other farmers to practice sweet potato farming.



As deliberations moved the day, the next station was at Ts'ifa li mali research sub-station. It is here where the demonstration of beans took center stage under APPSA R&D sub-project entitled *“Adaptation and promotion of bruchid resistant bean varieties in Lesotho and Angola”*. Other technologies flashed were Beans (NUA 45) and maize (ZM 523) seed production which is the responsibility bestowed upon Seed Development Unit (SDU) of the Department of Agricultural Research. Leading the SDU, Ms Marankoe Selikane stated that seed from previous harvest can be used for the next planting season to bridge the financial gaps in seed input imminent among most farming communities in Lesotho. Furthermore, a staggering seventy-four (74) bean varieties were demonstrated by agronomy section of DAR while still at Ts'ifa li Mali. According to the scientist from the department, Ms Mahali Makoloi clarified that some varieties will be recommended to the farmers based on their performance. About thirty (30) of the varieties are biofortified. Based on the engagements and feedback, farmers showed massive interest and willingness to try planting some of these crops.



Following a two-day lapse, another field day was held as on-farm at Ha-Makoe in Quthing district on the 9th March 2023. Soybean was the commodity of the day - planted on-farm under APPSA R&D sub-project entitled “*Soybean introduction and utilization technologies to enhance nutrition and income generating activities in Lesotho and Angola*”. The principal investigator (PI) Dr Pulane Nkhabutlane conveyed that each farmer present is encouraged to plant soybean crop in their own fields in the next planting season and as such share seeds with other fellow farmers. In the same spirit of encouraging practice and adoption, farmers exhibited biproducts of soybeans.



The third field day was held at Machache research sub-station in the Maseru on the 20th of March 2023. The area comprises of five sorghum varieties under APPSA R&D sub-project entitle “*Strengthening sorghum seed delivery systems in Lesotho and Angola*” - where Dr Mpho Liphoto is the principal investigator. Peal Millet which is not common in Lesotho was also demonstrated.

The Director of the Department of Agricultural Research Dr Lefulesele Lebesa having attended all the field days, briefed the multitudes on the mandate of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nutrition and Food Security (MAFS) which is to ensure food security. The Director asserted the contribution of the department towards food security in the country, which prioritizes generation of technologies that exhibit desirable traits. Dr Lebesa reiterated the importance of research in agricultural food production if we are to overcome a surge of challenges. She thanked the farmers for availing themselves for field days to gather knowledge and share insights.



Over five hundred 500 people participated on these field days. They included District Agricultural Officers, District administrators, Seed producers, Non-governmental Organizations, representatives from the Department of Marketing, Department of planning and policy analysis, local chiefs and Counselors, extension officers, students from the two academic institutions of higher learning (National University of Lesotho (NUL) and Lesotho Agricultural College (LAC)), farming communities and researchers from the National University of Lesotho, the Lesotho Agricultural College, and the Department of Agricultural Research researchers.