

## TUMERIC VALUE CHAIN TAKES OFF FROM SIDVOKODVO

How a Sidvokodvo farmer is turning tumeric into a high-value agribusiness opportunity

## NOT MORE LAND, BUT BETTER YIELDS

Eswatini strategic move for maize production to replace imports

## ESWATINI LIFTS BAN ON BUTTERNUT IMPORTS

NAMBOARD reevaluates ban as local farmers fail to meet demand

## TAVI PHASE II

TAVI Phase II now to include high schools in traditional vegetable growing

## SAPEMP OPENS DOOR TO 1000 JOBS IN SIPHOCOSINI

Project expected to unlock jobs and livelihoods in Siphocosini

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## EDITOR'S NOTE



# 40 YEARS ON: WHERE NEXT FOR ESWATINI'S AGRICULTURE?

**A**pril arrives with symbolism that extends beyond ceremony. As Eswatini marks the 40/40 celebrations, commemorating His Majesty King Mswati III's 40 years on the throne alongside his 58th birthday, the moment invites not only reflection, but measured assessment. Rooted in a uniquely national tradition established in 2008, the 40/40 celebrations signify both four decades of royal leadership and a milestone age, blending heritage, continuity and national progress.

For agribusiness, it is an opportunity to interrogate progress, recalibrate ambition and examine the structural evolution of the country's agricultural economy.

Over four decades, agriculture has remained both a stabiliser and a paradox within Eswatini's development story. It continues to anchor rural livelihoods and contribute to national output, yet it has also wrestled with persistent constraints, low productivity, climate vulnerability and limited market integration. The question, therefore, is not simply what has been achieved, but how effectively those gains have translated into resilience, competitiveness and inclusive growth.

This edition of Agribusiness Media is anchored in that inquiry.

At its centre is a closer examination of large-scale interventions such as the Smallholder Agricultural Productivity, Environment and Marketing Project, an E800 million plus programme that signals a deliberate shift towards structured, market-oriented agriculture. Its ambition, to transition smallholder farmers from subsistence to scale, reflects a broader policy evolution that recognises agriculture not merely as a social safety net, but



as an economic engine.

Elsewhere in this issue, we explore the persistent inefficiencies within the agrifood system, as highlighted by recent frameworks shaping the next phase of development support. Questions of productivity, inequality and market access remain central, particularly as climate volatility continues to test the limits of rain-fed systems.

Equally critical is the human capital dimension. Across the region, a widening gap between academic qualifications and practical agricultural skills is beginning to constrain productivity. The sector's future will depend not only on capital investment, but on the restoration of a balanced skills ecosystem, one that values technical competence as highly as theoretical knowledge.

Yet amid these structural debates, there are quieter, often overlooked signals of progress. From emerging youth-led farming initiatives to expanding value chains and growing export linkages, the contours of a more dynamic agricultural sector are beginning to take shape. These

developments, while incremental, suggest that transformation is not hypothetical, it is already underway, albeit unevenly distributed.

The 40/40 milestone, then, is not an endpoint. It is a vantage point.

It allows the country to take stock of where agriculture has been, to confront where it has fallen short and to define where it must go next. For policymakers, investors and farmers alike, the path forward will require sharper execution, stronger institutions and a sustained commitment to aligning production with markets.

If the past four decades were about laying foundations, the next must be about scale, efficiency and global competitiveness.

That is the lens through which this edition is presented.

*Phesheya Kunene*  
**Editor, Agribusiness Media**



*Siphocosini Indvuna Yenkhundla, Wilton Mamba posing with children in one of the gardens to benefit from SAPEMP support*

# SAPEMP OPENS DOOR TO 600–1 200 JOBS IN SIPHOCOSINI

BY SIBUSISIWE NDZIMANDZE | JOURNALIST

**SIPHOCOSINI** — On the outskirts of Mbabane, where rural life meets the pull of the city, a quiet transformation is beginning to unfold. For years, many young people here have faced limited opportunities, with livelihoods tied to unpredictable rainfall and small-scale farming. Now, a new agricultural programme is offering something different: the promise of jobs, income and renewed hope.

## A NATIONAL PROGRAMME, LOCAL IMPACT

Siphocosini is among 40 chiefdoms selected to benefit from the E851 million Smallholder Agricultural Productivity Enhancement and Marketing Project (SAPEMP), a national initiative expected to support about 3 000 farmers directly, reach

over 117 000 people indirectly and create around 7 500 jobs across the agricultural value chain.

For this community, the significance goes beyond farming. Local leaders see SAPEMP as a pathway to employment, stronger household incomes and a more active local economy. For years, production has been limited by unreliable water

supply and weak market access, forcing many especially young people to look toward town for survival. With irrigation support now in sight, agriculture could become a more stable and dignified source of livelihood closer to home.

## READY FOR OPPORTUNITY

Siphocosini Indvuna yeNkhundla, Wilton Jazi Mamba, says the area had long positioned itself for such an opportunity. In early 2025, local leadership approached the Ministry of Agriculture requesting irrigation infrastructure, highlighting that farmers were already producing maize and vegetables and were ready to expand into commercial farming. When SAPEMP opportunities emerged, more than 120 farmers had already been mobilised around the Masaphasapha Dam area. That level of preparedness, Mamba says, gave the community an edge.

## JOBS BEYOND THE FARM

In Siphocosini, the promise of SAPEMP extends beyond fields and harvests. It is about the jobs created around agriculture from farm labour and transport to input supply, packaging and small-scale trading.

“With access to at least one hectare and year-round production, each farmer can create four to five direct jobs, with even more during peak seasons,” said Mamba. “Including indirect opportunities, we estimate

between 600 and 1 200 jobs could be created.”

For a community so close to Mbabane yet still facing rural constraints, that potential is significant. Its location, combined with improving road infrastructure, places Siphocosini in a strong position to supply urban markets while benefiting from nearby economic activity.

## UNLOCKING LOCAL ECONOMIES

The programme is expected to stimulate broader economic activity. Improved irrigation and infrastructure could enable farmers to produce throughout the year, diversify into higher-value crops and reduce losses linked to seasonal uncertainty.

At the same time, opportunities are emerging in agro-processing and farm input supply, with farmers already spending significant amounts on fertiliser and other inputs. This signals both demand and readiness for expansion within the local agricultural economy.

## HOPE ON THE GROUND

For local farmer Sipho Dlamini, the impact is simple but profound. “Farming is our main source of livelihood, but we struggle with water and markets. If this programme improves irrigation and connects us to buyers, it will change our lives,” he said.

## A BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

At its core, SAPEMP aims to address deeper challenges facing smallholder farmers, including low productivity, climate shocks and poor market access. Yet in Siphocosini, its real impact may be seen in everyday life in steady work, improved incomes and young people choosing to stay and build within their own community.

For this community on the edge of the capital, SAPEMP is beginning to look like more than a farming project. It is emerging as a bridge between rural potential and economic opportunity and for many, the beginning of a different future.





# SMALL LIVESTOCK, BIG RETURNS: INSIDE A YOUNG FARMER'S RABBIT BUSINESS

BY PHESHEYA KUNENE

close attention to detail. Every part of the system, from feeding to breeding and hygiene, reflects knowledge gained through research, observation and experience.

The turning point came when Seyama saw the first litter produced from that single rabbit. What had started as curiosity quickly became a serious business idea. Instead of relying on guesswork, he committed himself to learning about rabbit production, keeping proper records and making informed decisions about breed selection and farm management. This helped transform a small experiment into a reliable and growing enterprise.

Today, his farm has more than 100 rabbits made up of

**K**wanele Seyama's rabbit farming business is proof that a small agricultural venture can grow into a meaningful source of income when managed with discipline, planning and consistency. What began as a

simple gift of one female rabbit from his sister during the COVID-19 economic slowdown has since developed into a structured enterprise that now supports both his livelihood and the growth of other aspiring farmers.

At Emantimandze Rabbit Farm, Seyama's

day begins early. His routine is built around careful feeding, checking cages, inspecting nest boxes and monitoring the health of his animals. What may appear to outsiders as a modest operation is, in reality, a well-organised agribusiness where success depends on





Kwanele Seyama carrying one of his rabbits

commercially valuable breeds such as New Zealand White, Californian, Giant Chinchilla and Dutch. These breeds were selected strategically because of their fertility, growth performance and market value. Seyama does not treat the farm as a hobby. He operates it as a production system where breeding is controlled, feed is measured, and hygiene standards are strictly maintained.

Feeding is carefully balanced using hay as the main component, supplemented by green forage and

nutrient-rich pellets. Animal health is also managed with practical and low-cost methods, including the use of natural remedies such as pawpaw leaves. These measures have helped him keep mortality rates low and improve overall productivity.

The result of this disciplined approach is a business that generates steady returns. Seyama now sells around 30 rabbits each month. His customers include households buying rabbits for meat, families seeking pets, and farmers looking

for breeding stock. From these sales, he earns more than E3,500 per month. This monthly income reflects not only demand, but also the effectiveness of the system he has built.

One of the most notable aspects of his enterprise is that very little goes to waste. Rabbit urine, which many farmers might overlook, is collected and sold as liquid organic fertiliser. As more growers look for sustainable and affordable farming inputs, this by-product has become another useful income stream, strengthening the farm's profitability and resilience.

However, Seyama's growth is now being limited by infrastructure challenges. Demand for rabbits is rising, especially among young people who see rabbit farming as an accessible entry point into agriculture, and among consumers increasingly open to alternative protein sources. Yet limited cage space and shortages of equipment are preventing him from expanding fast enough to meet that demand. The opportunity is clear, but scaling up will require investment in better facilities.

Beyond production, Seyama has also become a mentor. His farm is now attracting aspiring rabbit farmers who want practical knowledge about housing, feeding, breeding and hygiene. He shares lessons from his own journey, including common mistakes such as poor sanitation, inbreeding and weak feeding practices. Through this, he is helping build a network of informed small-scale producers and encouraging a more cooperative mindset among them.

His long-term vision goes beyond his current farm. He hopes to expand his breeding stock, enter formal retail markets, package and brand fertiliser products, and eventually establish a dedicated training centre for rabbit farming. His story shows that in agriculture, success does not always begin with large landholdings or major capital. Sometimes it starts with one small opportunity, managed well and grown with purpose.



# “YOUR MEAT IS STILL SAFE” — EMBIVENI ASSURES NATION AMID FMD CRISIS

BY PHESHEYA KUNENE | EDITOR

**E**swatini Meat Industries has assured the nation that beef sold locally remains safe to eat despite the ongoing Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) crisis that has disrupted livestock exports.

Officials from Eswatini Meat Industries, commonly known as Embiveni, say strict veterinary inspections remain in place to ensure that all meat supplied to the domestic market meets the highest safety standards.

The assurance was given by Nana Odonkor, the newly appointed Marketing Officer at the Embiveni-based meat processor, during a live interview on national broadcaster Eswatini Broadcasting and Information Services (EBIS).

Odonkor acknowledged that the FMD outbreak had disrupted the company’s export operations, but stressed that consumers should have full confidence in the safety of locally supplied beef.

“The Foot-and-Mouth Disease situation has had an impact on our exports,” she said.

“However, we want to assure the nation that the meat supplied to the market is safe. Our products are inspected by highly qualified experts before reaching consumers.”

She explained that the company operates under strict veterinary supervision, with professional inspectors monitoring meat quality throughout the processing chain to ensure compliance with food safety standards.

## EXPORT MARKETS UNDER PRESSURE

While domestic meat safety remains intact, the FMD outbreak has created serious challenges for the country’s beef export industry.

Like many countries in the region, Eswatini relies on international certification confirming that livestock is raised in disease-free zones before beef can enter global markets.

When outbreaks occur, trading partners often suspend

imports to prevent the spread of the disease.

This has affected export channels for Eswatini Meat Industries, which supplies both the domestic market and international buyers.

Prior to the current restrictions, Eswatini exported significant volumes of beef annually to regional and overseas markets, generating valuable foreign currency and supporting thousands of cattle farmers across the country.

**REGIONAL IMPACT RUNS INTO BILLIONS**

The economic impact of FMD extends far beyond Eswatini.

Across Southern Africa, repeated outbreaks have disrupted trade and caused billions in lost export revenue.

In South Africa, one of the region's largest beef exporters, recent outbreaks are expected to reduce export earnings by roughly R1.8 billion between 2025 and 2026.

Over several waves of outbreaks since 2019, the South African beef sector has already recorded export losses exceeding R821 million, while total economic losses could climb to over E2.6 billion if disease outbreaks continue.

These figures illustrate the scale of the challenge facing livestock industries across the region whenever FMD emerges.

**LOCAL MARKET CONFIDENCE CRITICAL**

For Eswatini's meat sector, maintaining consumer confidence in the domestic market has become a key priority while export markets remain restricted.

Authorities say strict inspection systems, veterinary oversight and

regulated slaughter procedures ensure that meat reaching consumers is safe and properly handled.

Odonkor said the company remains committed to maintaining these standards while the country works to contain the disease and restore export access.

"Our focus is to continue supplying safe, high-quality meat to the nation," she said.

"As experts inspect every product before it reaches the market,

consumers can be confident about the quality and safety of the meat they buy."

As veterinary authorities intensify efforts to control Foot-and-Mouth Disease, the industry hopes that once the outbreak is fully contained, international markets will gradually reopen and restore momentum to the country's beef exports.





# ESWATINI EYES A PLACE IN THE GLOBAL TURMERIC BOOM

■ BY SIKHONA SIBANDZE | JOURNALIST

*From Sidvokodvo to the world market, turmeric is emerging as a high-value niche crop with the potential to diversify farming incomes and reduce Eswatini's import bill.*

On a farm in Sidvokodvo, where rows of young turmeric plants are beginning to take root, a new agricultural opportunity is quietly emerging for Eswatini.

Once largely unknown in the country's farming landscape, turmeric is now being positioned as a serious commercial crop with the potential to connect emaSwati farmers to a global market valued at around E90 billion. Globally, turmeric has grown far beyond its traditional use as a kitchen spice and is now in demand for health supplements, herbal medicine, cosmetics and food products, driven by rising consumer interest in natural and plant-based goods.

For Eswatini, this global shift presents an opening. Stakeholders

in agriculture and trade say turmeric could become one of the country's next high-value niche crops, giving farmers a chance to diversify beyond traditional commodities while tapping into an expanding international value chain.

At the centre of that conversation is Macwele Turmeric Farm in Sidvokodvo, one of the country's earliest turmeric ventures, led by farmer Bheki Macwele and his family.

Macwele says turmeric should not be seen as a casual farming experiment, but as a business that requires discipline, technical knowledge and upfront investment. That is why the farm is requiring interested farmers to undergo formal training costing E1000 per participant before joining the production system

being developed there.

Macwele's own journey into turmeric farming began in October 2025, after the family attended training through Amandla Omnotho in Jozini, South Africa. What started as an effort to understand a new enterprise has since grown into a pioneering local initiative aimed at offering training, seed supply and outgrower coordination.

Under the model being developed, farmers entering the value chain will receive more than classroom lessons. They will be brought into a guided production system that includes practical training, technical support, help with sourcing seed, assistance in seeking start-up finance, and the possibility of outgrower contracts.



*Turmeric Farm owners Sibongile Macwele and Bheki Macwele talking to Agribusiness Media in Sidvokodvo*

In other words, growers will not simply be planting a new crop. They will be entering a structured and market-oriented value chain.

Macwele said that structure is necessary because turmeric production demands careful preparation. Compost must be prepared for about three months so that organic material can fully decompose and enrich the soil before planting. Once the beds are ready, rhizomes are planted on top, and the crop then requires ongoing management and patience.

Turmeric takes between six and nine months to mature, making it a crop that may test farmers used to quicker returns. But the potential rewards, Macwele says, can be significant. He estimates that one hectare planted with about 150,000 seedlings can yield up to 40 tonnes when properly managed.

Still, the crop comes with real challenges.

“Our biggest challenges were lack of water and high production costs because we did not have funding,” Macwele said.

He said the E1000 training fee should be seen as part of the broader investment required to enter a specialised value chain and to help farmers understand the realities of production before committing resources.

The timing of this push is significant. Industry estimates place the global turmeric market at around USD 4.9 billion in 2025, equivalent to about E90 billion, with projections showing growth to USD 8.4 billion by 2035. Demand is being driven by food processing, pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, beauty products and herbal remedies.

For Eswatini, turmeric is not only an export opportunity. It also offers potential for import substitution.

Stakeholders say the country currently spends about E2.2 million a year importing turmeric and turmeric-based products. That means there is already an existing domestic market that local farmers could begin supplying if production expands and quality standards are maintained.

This opportunity was among

the key topics discussed during the Eswatini Organic and Medicinal Herbs and Spices Project field day held at Macwele Farm, where farmers, agripreneurs, students, cooperatives, government officials and private sector representatives gathered to explore the crop’s potential.

Among those present was Siphesihle Nkabinde, Manager for Domestic Trade Promotion at the Eswatini International Promotion Authority (EIPA), who said the country’s import bill shows there is already room for local production.

“There is a huge need for farmers to venture into turmeric production because Eswatini spends money importing turmeric products, about E2.2 million per year,” Nkabinde said. “That shows there is already a market. The opportunity is for local farmers to produce and supply it.”

***For more information or to register for training, farmers can contact Macwele Turmeric Farm on 76020117 or 78014629.***



# ESWATINI'S AGRIFOOD SYSTEM IS UNEQUAL AND UNDERPERFORMING

**CAN FAO'S E446 MILLION PLAN FIX ESWATINI'S BROKEN AGRIFOOD SYSTEM?**

BY: PHESHEYA KUNENE | EDITOR

**E**swatini's agricultural economy is confronting a familiar paradox. Smallholder farmers underpin rural livelihoods and national food security, yet the system they operate within remains structurally weak, characterised by low productivity, high climate vulnerability and limited integration into formal markets. The result is an agrifood system that sustains life, but struggles to generate growth.

It is this imbalance that the Food and Agriculture Organization's Country Programming Framework for 2026 to 2030 now seeks to address. Developed in partnership with the Government of

Eswatini, the plan is both diagnostic and prescriptive, acknowledging the sector's inefficiencies while proposing a coordinated pathway towards transformation. With a projected envelope of US\$27.3 million, equivalent to approximately E446.6 million, the framework represents a significant, though not yet fully secured, investment. Only US\$13 million has been confirmed, leaving a funding gap of over E232 million that will ultimately determine the pace and scale of implementation.

At its core, the framework is less about introducing new ideas and more about fixing persistent constraints. For decades, smallholder farmers

have operated within a system that limits their ability to scale. Production remains largely rain-fed, exposing farmers to increasingly erratic weather patterns. Advisory services are inconsistent, forcing many to rely on trial-and-error approaches that carry financial risk. Market access is fragmented, with most farmers selling into informal channels where prices are volatile and margins thin.

The consequences are visible in the data. Average cereal yields hover around 1.0 to 1.1 tonnes per hectare, significantly below regional and global benchmarks. Export participation remains heavily skewed towards large-scale producers, particularly



in commodities such as sugar and citrus, while smallholders contribute only marginally to international trade. In effect, Eswatini operates a dual agricultural system, one modern and export-oriented, the other informal and survival-driven.

The CPF's intervention strategy is therefore deliberately systemic. It prioritises improvements in extension services, aiming to ensure that farmers have access to timely, practical information. It emphasises food safety and standards, recognising that compliance is a prerequisite for entry into higher-value markets. It also foregrounds climate resilience, with a focus on disaster preparedness and sustainable resource management.

For farmers, these interventions are expected to translate into tangible outcomes. Better advisory support should reduce production inefficiencies. Improved standards should unlock access to formal buyers. Enhanced climate resilience should stabilise yields and incomes. In theory, the cumulative effect is a transition from subsistence farming to market-oriented agribusiness.

Yet theory alone will not suffice. Eswatini's agricultural policy landscape is not short of

well-designed programmes. The Swaziland Agricultural Development Programme, launched in 2009, reached more than 20,000 farmers and demonstrated that scale is achievable. However, it also underscored a recurring challenge, without robust market linkages, productivity gains are difficult to sustain. Similarly, emergency interventions during drought periods have provided critical relief, but have done little to address underlying structural weaknesses.

More recent efforts, such as the Irrigation Master Plan introduced in 2025, signal a shift towards long-term planning. By focusing on water infrastructure, the plan acknowledges one of the most binding constraints in the sector. However, irrigation alone cannot resolve the broader challenges of market access, financing and institutional capacity.

The CPF attempts to bridge these gaps through a more integrated approach. It aligns with global initiatives such as the Digital Village Initiative and One Country One Priority Product, while also emphasising partnerships with the private sector. The underlying premise is that agricultural transformation cannot be driven by government alone,

but requires coordinated engagement across multiple stakeholders.

This emphasis on coordination reflects a broader recognition of what might be termed Eswatini's "two-speed" agriculture. On one side are farmers with access to irrigation, inputs, machinery and established markets. On the other are those reliant on rainfall, informal trade and limited support. The persistence of this divide is both an economic inefficiency and a social concern, reinforcing inequality within rural communities.

Closing this gap is central to the CPF's ambition. Whether it succeeds will depend not only on funding, but on execution. Limited digital literacy among farmers may slow the adoption of new technologies. Institutional capacity constraints could affect service delivery. Climate shocks remain an ever-present risk, capable of undermining gains even in well-supported systems.

The CPF's focus on resilience, market integration and institutional strengthening reflects an attempt to move beyond incrementalism towards more substantive reform.



*Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Sydney Simelane*

# ESNAU QUESTIONS WHETHER 2026/27 BUDGET CAN TRULY TRANSFORM AGRICULTURE

BY SIBUSISO MNGADI | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



**T**he Eswatini National Agricultural Union (ESNAU) has raised concern over the country's long-term commitment to agricultural transformation, arguing that the 2026/27 national budget, despite an increase in funding, does little to change the sector's direction.

Reacting to the E2.2 billion allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture, ESNAU Chief Executive Officer Tammy Dlamini said the budget still does not show a meaningful shift toward modernising and strengthening agriculture.

Although government continues to present agriculture as central to economic recovery, food security and rural development, Dlamini said the structure of the allocation tells a different story.

He questioned why Eswatini still falls short of allocating 10 percent of the national budget to agriculture, despite commitments made under the African Union's Maputo and Malabo Declarations, which call on African governments to devote at least 10 percent of public spending to the sector.

Dlamini said the largest share of the agriculture budget is going to infrastructure projects such as Mpakeni Dam rather than to direct investments in farmers, skills and technology

that can drive productivity. While he acknowledged the importance of irrigation infrastructure, he argued that infrastructure alone cannot transform agriculture without parallel investment in people, systems and modern tools.

He also raised concern over the country's agricultural extension system, saying it has not evolved to match modern farming realities. According to Dlamini, extension services need digital tools, data systems and better training to help farmers respond to challenges such as climate change. He said the continued reliance on paper-based systems limits government's ability to monitor farms, support farmers efficiently and plan using reliable data.

Another major gap, he said, is the absence of a national agricultural risk management framework. Dlamini argued that government cannot continue offering input subsidies without putting in place mechanisms such as crop insurance and structured risk mitigation systems to protect farmers from climate shocks and market disruptions.

ESNAU also questioned the effectiveness of input subsidy programmes, saying there is little monitoring and evaluation to show whether they are improving production or simply maintaining the status quo.

Dlamini further criticised what he described as limited consultation with farmer organisations on policy decisions, saying farmers are often left reacting to decisions instead of helping shape them.

He also pointed to the lack of a clear agro-processing strategy, warning that industrialisation efforts will struggle if they are not backed by a reliable supply of quality raw materials.

Despite the bigger allocation, ESNAU believes Eswatini still lacks a coherent long-term strategy to transform agriculture. Dlamini said real change will require coordinated investment in technology, farmer training, extension services, risk management systems and agro-industrial development.



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# BIOSECURITY OR BIO-THEATRE? Eswatini's FMD Moment of Truth

BY: MCEBO EMMANUEL MNISI

Mcebo Emmanuel Mnisi is an impact-driven Biologist and Agricultural Development Strategist with over 15 years of experience scaling agribusiness value chains across Eswatini.



**N**alote inkhomo, uyayidla inyama - Even if you don't own cattle, you eat meat. In Eswatini, this simple SiSwati saying carries a weight far beyond daily life; it speaks to the intimate relationship between our livestock and our very survival. Cattle are not just symbols of wealth in a rural kraal; they are the backbone of food security, rural livelihoods, and national agricultural identity.

Yet today, our livestock sector faces a "systems test" of unprecedented scale. Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is more than a veterinary challenge; it is an economic alarm bell. Exports are disrupted, local markets strained, and livelihoods threatened. When the beef sector sneezes, the whole country feels the fever.

## The Illusion of Protection

Biosecurity is often presented as a checklist: footbaths, disinfectant sprays, fences, and controlled movements. But true protection is not a performance; it is measurable, effective action. Too often, our current measures resemble bio-theatre: well-intentioned, highly visible gestures that crumble when the system is truly tested.

Consider the roadside footbath, an abundant sight across livestock corridors. On paper, it's a frontline barrier. In reality, rainwater dilutes the disinfectant, reducing it to a weak chemical cocktail incapable of neutralizing the FMD virus. What should be a barrier becomes a highway for the disease. Symbolic actions without rigorous maintenance offer the illusion of safety: danger lurks in the gaps.

The science is clear: disinfectants

must maintain specific concentrations, movement controls must be enforced without exception, and monitoring must be consistent. Anything less is theatre, and theatre cannot stop viruses.

## A Call for Disciplined Execution

If Eswatini is to emerge stronger, every stakeholder must embrace accountability, vigilance, and precision. Incwala ayibukelwa, just like our sacred ceremony, biosecurity cannot be watched from the sidelines; everyone must participate. Biosecurity is a shared responsibility, but it starts with discipline.

1. **Policymakers:** Build Infrastructure that Works

**Weather-Proof Solutions:** Invest in robust, weather-resistant biosecurity infrastructure. Footbaths, dips, and checkpoints must function even during heavy rains or harsh sunlight.

**Systemic Monitoring:** Establish routines for continuous solution monitoring, replacement, and documentation to ensure disinfectants maintain potency.

**Consistent Enforcement:** Apply livestock movement controls uniformly. Gaps in implementation are invitations for the virus to spread.

2. **Farmers: The Frontline Defense**  
**Solution Management:** Refresh or replace disinfectants immediately after rainfall. Treat every footbath like a shield, not a decorative element.

**Structural Integrity:** Inspect fences, dips, kraals, and holding pens daily. Preventing accidental contact is far easier than controlling an outbreak.

**Rapid Reporting:** Any sign of disease should trigger immediate

contact with veterinary services. Early detection saves herds.

3. **The Public: Awareness and Cooperation**

**Economic Literacy:** Understand that movement restrictions and temporary market closures are not inconveniences; they are essential interventions to protect meat supply, stabilize prices, and preserve livelihoods.

**Vigilance:** FMD travels easily via boots, tires, tools, and vehicles. Everyone who moves through agricultural zones carries responsibility for containment.

**Beyond Performance: Securing Eswatini's Livestock Future**

The cost of failure is real. When biosecurity measures falter, the virus gains momentum. Rain-soaked footbaths, leaky fences, and overlooked movement controls are not minor oversights—they are cracks in our national defense.

Strategy without execution is theatre, and theatre does not stop viruses. Eswatini now faces a moment of truth: will we treat biosecurity as a performance for the eyes of others, or will we embrace the discipline required to protect our herds, our farmers, and our economy?

The choice is ours. Close the cracks, protect the cattle, and secure the future of agribusiness in Eswatini. Because when it comes to FMD, there is no substitute for rigor, responsibility, and decisive action.



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# ESWATINI VACCINATES OVER 200,000 CATTLE AS FMD CONTROLS TIGHTEN NATIONWIDE

BY PHESHEYA KUNENE | EDITOR

**A**t daybreak across the Kingdom, farmers gather at dip tanks with quiet urgency, confronting a disease that has reshaped livelihoods and tested the resilience of an entire industry.

More than 200,000 cattle have been vaccinated in Eswatini within weeks, yet the persistence of Foot and Mouth Disease has forced authorities to maintain strict movement controls, underscoring that containment will depend as much on discipline as on vaccines.

The morning air is cool, almost still. Then comes the low hum of movement, cattle edging forward, farmers calling softly, boots pressing into damp soil. At a rural dip tank in Manzini, the day begins long before sunrise.

By 5am, the queue is already forming.

Men and women stand beside their herds, watching closely as veterinary teams prepare their equipment. There is no ceremony here, only purpose. Each animal that steps forward carries more than weight, it carries a farmer's investment, a household's income, a fragile hope.

In recent weeks, this quiet ritual has been repeated across Eswatini.

It is the country's most visible response to a crisis that has steadily tightened its grip.

## A SECTOR UNDER STRAIN

Foot and Mouth Disease has left a deep imprint on the Kingdom's livestock sector since its emergence last year. What began as a contained outbreak has evolved into a

widespread disruption, cutting across regions and unsettling the agricultural economy.

By early this year, over 150 outbreaks of the SAT1 and SAT2 strains had been recorded. The consequences have been severe. Eswatini has lost its FMD-free status, closing off access to premium export markets and weakening confidence across the value chain.

Nowhere is the impact more stark than in the feedlot industry.

Out of 619 registered feedlots, only 212 remain operational. The rest have fallen silent, casualties of a system under pressure. For farmers and agribusiness operators, the figures translate into halted production, strained finances, and an uncertain future.



### THE RACE TO CONTAIN

In response, government has moved with urgency.

A nationwide vaccination campaign, intensified in recent weeks, is now gaining significant ground. Backed by 700,000 vaccine doses secured from Botswana, the programme aims to reach the country's entire cattle population within a tightly coordinated timeframe.

So far, over 200,000 cattle have been vaccinated, marking a rapid acceleration in the national response.

At dip tanks across the regions, the process is systematic and deliberate. Each animal is tagged, recorded, and in some cases branded, strengthening traceability in a sector where tracking has long been a challenge.

The scale is significant. The logistics, formidable.

Yet vaccination, for all its importance, is only one part of a broader containment strategy.

### WHY CONTROL STILL MATTERS

Even as progress is made in the field, checkpoints remain firmly in place.

Movement permits are enforced. Borders are monitored. Livestock mobility is tightly regulated.

The rationale is both practical and uncompromising: vaccination reduces vulnerability, but it does not eliminate risk. In an environment where informal movement persists and biosecurity gaps remain, premature relaxation could allow the virus to resurface.

Authorities have therefore adopted a layered response, combining vaccination with surveillance, movement control and strict compliance measures.

It is a strategy grounded not in convenience, but in caution.

### FARMERS IN THE BALANCE

For farmers, the experience is both reassuring and unsettling.

There is relief in the arrival and scale-up of vaccines, long anticipated and urgently needed. Participation at dip tanks has been strong, with many farmers arriving early, determined not to miss their turn.

At the same time, the economic strain is palpable.

Restrictions on livestock sales in affected areas have disrupted income streams. Financial institutions have grown more cautious, limiting access to credit. Feed costs remain elevated. For some, the pressure has already forced difficult decisions.

And yet, cooperation endures.

Farmers are being urged to remain vigilant, to monitor their livestock closely, report symptoms promptly, and comply fully with movement regulations. The message is clear: success will depend not only on government intervention, but on collective responsibility.

### AN INDUSTRY REDEFINED

Beyond the immediate crisis, deeper shifts are beginning to take shape.

The outbreak has exposed longstanding structural weaknesses, from limited traceability systems to gaps in biosecurity enforcement. In response, efforts to modernise the sector are gaining traction.

Tagging, recording and controlled movement are becoming embedded practices. Awareness of disease management is rising. Conversations around resilience and reform are gaining urgency.

This is no longer just a response. It is a recalibration.

### THE ROAD AHEAD

The months ahead will be decisive.

Vaccination must continue at pace. Coverage must expand. Surveillance must remain vigilant. Above all, discipline must hold.

Because containment is not achieved in a single moment, but through sustained effort.

There are, however, grounds for cautious optimism.

# PLANT SOYA BEAN AND OTHER HIGH VALUE CROPS, FARMERS

BY SIBUSISIWE NDZIMANDZE | JOURNALIST

**F**armers in Eswatini are being urged to move beyond maize and beans and start producing high-value crops that already have a formal market.

This was one of the key messages at the Malkerns Farmers Seminar held at Princess Pholile Hall, where farmers were encouraged to focus on crops that can reduce imports and supply local industry.

Soyabean stood out as one of the biggest opportunities.

Eswatini needs about 40,000 metric tonnes of soyabean every year for livestock feed manufacturing. But only about 25 percent of that is produced locally. The rest is imported, mainly from South Africa.

This has created a major gap in the local market.

The importance of soyabean is growing because Eswatini already has a ready buyer. Eswatini Oil Mills in Matsapha, which officially opened in April 2024, processes soyabean into products such as cooking oil and soya meal.

However, local production is still too low. This means the company continues to rely heavily on imported beans to keep operating.

Speaking at the seminar, Bongani Mvubu of Malkerns Research Station said farmers must stop planting without a market in mind.

He said they should focus on crops such as soyabean, barley, saffron and coffee, where demand already exists and buyers are available.

Mvubu said this shift could help farmers make better returns while also helping the country reduce its import bill.

He said farmers should begin to see agriculture as a business and not just a tradition.

While Mvubu was presenting, a student from the University of Eswatini's Luyengo campus, Thabiso Dlamini, raised concern about lack of capital.

He said many young people want to go into farming, but they are held back by shortage of money.

In response, Mvubu said farmers



*Malkerns Town Council CEO, Cinisela Dlamini delivering his opening address at the seminar*



should make use of support programmes already available.

He pointed to institutions and projects such as FAO and FINCLUDE, which offer support in areas such as training, inputs and finance.

“Farmers must stop producing blindly and start focusing on crops that already have a market, while also taking advantage of support programmes like FAO and FINCLUDE that are there to help them grow,” said Mvubu.

Malkerns Town Council Chief Executive Officer Cinsela Dlamini said the seminar was organised to connect farmers with real opportunities.

“This seminar is a deliberate intervention to unlock the economic potential of our farmers by connecting them to markets, knowledge and the right institutions,” said Dlamini.

The message from the seminar was simple.

Eswatini has a growing need for crops such as soyabean and other high-value commodities that are still



*Participants listening to speakers at the seminar being imported. For local farmers, this presents a real opportunity.*

Instead of planting only what they are used to, farmers are now being encouraged to plant what the market is already asking for.



**GOAL**

The overall goal of the project is to contribute to the sustainable reduction of poverty in rural Eswatini



**OBJECTIVES**

To increase SHFs' production, nutrition and incomes and build their resilience to climate change through 3 outcomes:

**Component 1:**

Production and productivity of the target value chains increased, resilience and nutrition of smallholder farming households improved

**Component 2:**

Incomes of rural smallholders from access to markets and financial services of supported value chains improved

**Component 3:**

Service delivery by stronger government and rural institutions



**Executing Agency:** EWADE

**Total Project Cost:** SZL 851,089,000/ US\$45.5 Million

**Funders:** IFAD(PBAS & BRAM), GCF, GoE, Private Sector & Beneficiaries

**Project life cycle:** 8 years

**PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AREA**



## PROJECT COMPONENTS

COMPONENT  
**01**

### Production and Productivity Improvement of the Target Value Group

**Subcomponent 1.1:** Cluster-based support for market-led production and behavioural change and nutrition

**Subcomponent 1.2:** Infrastructure Investments for agricultural commercialization

COMPONENT  
**02**

### Improving Market Linkages and Access to Finance

**Subcomponent 2.1:** Capacity building of clusters and entrepreneurship business

**Subcomponent 2.2:** Market linkages through demand-driven long-term offtake arrangements with anchor enterprises

COMPONENT  
**03**

### Improved enabling environment for promotion of production and marketing of local produce

**Subcomponent 3.1:** Country level policy advocacy  
**Subcomponent 3.2:** Project Management

## TARGET GROUPS

**Direct beneficiaries:** 19,600 small holder farmers & households

**Employment opportunities:** 7,500 households

### Socio-economic groups

- 01** Micro and small entrepreneurs in need of technical and financial assistance to become sustainable commercial farmers
- 02** Rural HHs, who already meet their minimal needs, but who remain vulnerable to exogenous shocks which hinders their capacity to become commercially productive
- 03** Poor rural and peri urban SHFs, who are capable of engaging in commercially oriented activities and require additional support to release their economic potential
- 04** Rural dwellers, wishing to engage in wage or self-employment, associated to support VCs

## VALUE CHAINS



## SAPEMP IMPACTS

### FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE

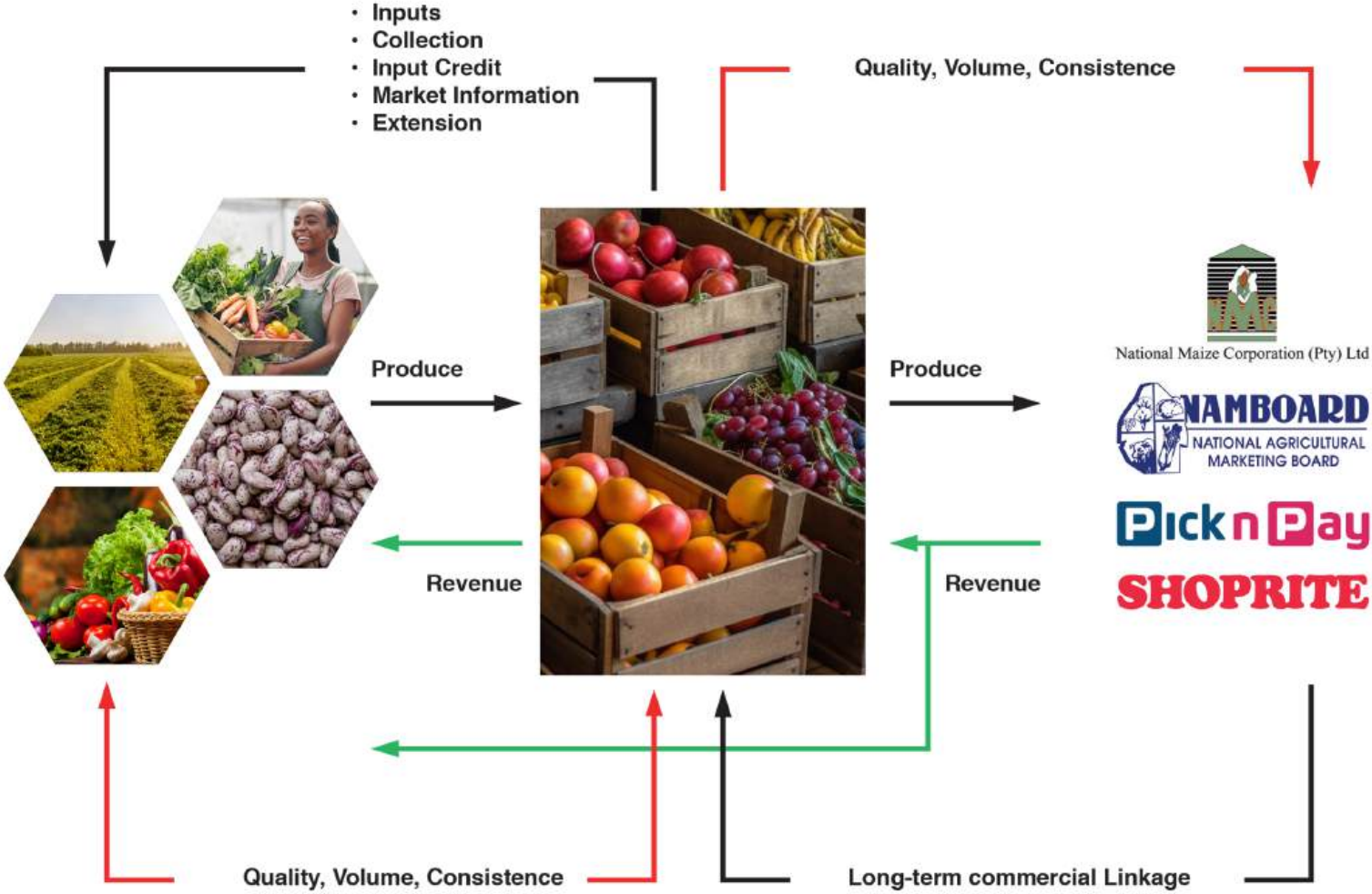
- Food security response
- Develop 987ha for production
- Construct 45 Multipurpose Collection Centres
- Develop 113 shade net infrastructure
- Construct 5 packhouses
- Train 14,351 on production and business management
- Implement 5 financial instruments
- Support 6 policy relevant knowledge products

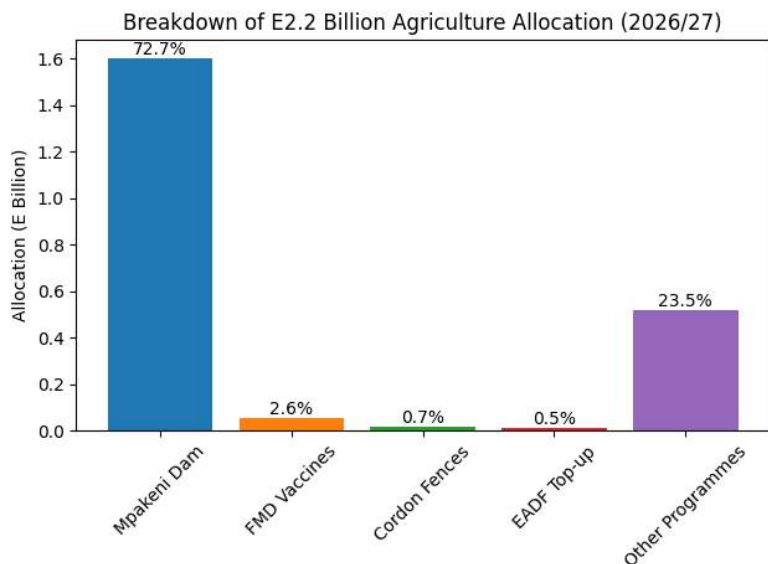




**BUSINESS MODEL**  
Smallholder Farmers

**BUSINESS MODEL**  
Formal Markets





## BREAKING DOWN E2.2 BILLION AGRICULTURE BUDGET

BY SIBUSISO MNGADI

**T**he E2.2 billion allocation to the Ministry of Agriculture in the 2026/27 National Budget is more than just a spending increase — it is a strategic signal.

At face value, the 33 percent rise from last year's E1.65 billion suggests agriculture is climbing higher on Government's economic priority list. But a closer look reveals that nearly E1.6 billion — approximately 73 percent of the total allocation — is directed toward one project: the Mpakeni Dam under the Mkhondvo-Ngwavuma Water Augmentation Programme (MNWAP).

This tells us something important. Government's strategy is not primarily about short-term subsidies or input support. It is a long-term structural bet on irrigation-led agricultural transformation.

### For farmers, the implications are layered.

In the immediate term, livestock producers are likely to feel the most direct impact. Following the disruption caused by Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), the allocation of E57 million for vaccines and E15 million for cordon fence rehabilitation reflects a serious attempt to restore biosecurity and market

confidence. If implemented effectively, this could stabilise cattle markets and reopen regional trade pathways that are critical to rural incomes.

Maize farmers also stand to benefit from continued support under the Hamba Ubuye Revolving Fund. Input financing and improved procurement prices through the National Maize Corporation provide short-term income support and contribute to national food sovereignty. However, these interventions, while important, represent a fraction of the total agriculture vote.

### The dominant story is irrigation.

By channeling E1.6 billion into Mpakeni Dam, Government is effectively prioritising water security as the foundation for agribusiness growth. In a country increasingly vulnerable to erratic rainfall and climate shocks, this is a rational economic decision. Irrigation reduces production risk, increases yield predictability and strengthens the bankability of farming enterprises. It also lays the groundwork for scaling horticulture, high-value crops and agro-processing industries.

The long-term payoff could be substantial. Expanded irrigation corridors can attract private investment in packhouses, cold chains, seed multiplication, fertiliser distribution, logistics and export markets. In that sense, this budget is less about immediate consumption and more about future productive capacity.

Yet there is a strategic tension. With such a large share of funds tied to infrastructure, the remaining allocation must stretch across veterinary services, extension, research, administration, mechanisation support and farmer finance. The risk is that infrastructure outpaces farmer readiness, market linkages and institutional capacity.

Smallholder transformation through SAPEMP and youth integration under the EYEOP programme offer promising complementary pillars. But their success will depend on execution discipline and coordination.

Agriculture's share of the total national budget stands at just over 6 percent — still below the 10 percent benchmark envisioned under the Malabo Declaration. Even so, the 33 percent increase signals movement in the right direction.



# A PLEDGE KEPT

## 40 YEARS OF SERVICE • PEACE • TRANSFORMATION

Forty years after ascending the throne at the age of 18, His Majesty King Mswati III's reign can be read as a story of service, stability, national identity and visible transformation.

BY SIBUSISO MNGADI | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**W**HEN HIS MAJESTY KING MSWATI III was crowned on 25 April 1986 at the age of 18 years and six days, the Kingdom did not simply witness the ascension of a young monarch. It witnessed the beginning of a lifelong covenant of service. In his coronation speech, he declared: "I have pledged myself to your service and throughout my life, with all my heart, I will try to be worthy of your trust."

Four decades later, that pledge remains the clearest lens through which to read his reign.

From the very beginning, the tone was one of humility, duty and resolve. His Majesty acknowledged the weight of the office before him and the responsibility of carrying the hopes of the nation. In that speech, he also stated: "And I'm new to the task but I have in my predecessors an example I can follow with dignity and confidence. I will work

to strengthen the bonds of friendship that already exist between this kingdom and the international community.” Those words mattered because they set the character of the reign early: continuity with the past, confidence in the future and leadership understood first as service.

Over the decades, that promise has been echoed in public messages that returned again and again to peace, dignity, unity and development. In his address to the United Nations General Assembly in 2019, His Majesty spoke of the importance of building “peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies for our future generations.” In 2021,

*“I have pledged myself to your service and throughout my life, with all my heart, I will try to be worthy of your trust.”*

- His Majesty King Mswati III, Coronation Speech, 25 April 1986

he reminded the world that “whilst we embrace modernity, we cannot forget who we are and where we come from” and insisted that “our identity as a nation remains pivotal.” Those statements help explain the wider philosophy of his reign: progress must serve the people, but it must also remain rooted in who emaSwati are.

**A Reign Measured in Change**

If the coronation message was the promise, the decades that followed became the long test of that promise. Across the years, the Kingdom expanded its infrastructure, deepened social investment and continued to project

stability in a changing regional and global landscape. By the time His Majesty delivered the 2026 Speech from the Throne, he could look back on an Eswatini that had, in his own words, undergone “a profound transformation as a nation.” He pointed to modern highways, the international airport, major dams, social welfare programmes and regional development initiatives as visible signs of a country that has continued to build.

The numbers lend substance to that story. His Majesty noted that the economy had grown from approximately E1.4 billion in 1986 to E95.2 billion in 2026. Adding, while the population had almost doubled since 1986, life expectancy had improved from 32 years to 65 years. These are not simply abstract development markers. They speak to a Kingdom transformed in ways that reach ordinary lives and communities.

<p><b>1986 to 2026 economy</b> E1.4 billion to E95.2 billion, according to the 2026 Speech from the Throne.</p>	<p><b>Life expectancy</b> From 32 years to 65 years, as reflected in the same 2026 address.</p>
<p><b>Electricity access</b> 249,014 households connected in 2023, with 50,000 more targeted over five years through World Bank-backed electrification support.</p>	<p><b>HIV response</b> Eswatini surpassed the 95-95-95 HIV treatment targets, according to the WHO Regional Office for Africa.</p>

**Modernisation with Identity**

Yet the transformation under His Majesty has never been framed as change for its own sake. It has repeatedly been linked to identity, continuity and national pride.



## SPECIAL FEATURE | RUBY JUBILEE COMMEMORATION

That philosophy was symbolically reinforced in 2018 when the country officially reverted from Swaziland to the Kingdom of Eswatini, a moment widely understood as a reaffirmation of heritage and sovereignty. It reflected a leadership approach that presents modern progress not as a rejection of tradition, but as something that must grow from strong roots.

The same theme appears in His Majesty's own words. In 2021, he reminded the international community that identity remains pivotal even as nations embrace modernity. That idea helps explain why the Kingdom's development story has been told not only through roads, dams and economic indicators, but also through cultural continuity, social cohesion and the preservation of national confidence. In this sense, the reign has consistently held together two ambitions at once: to modernise

boldly and to remain unmistakably EmaSwati.

### A Covenant of Service

As Eswatini marks the Ruby Jubilee, the anniversary can be read as

***“A King, is King by his people.”*** - His Majesty used the 2026 Speech from the Throne to thank EmaSwati for standing united through the four decades of his reign.

more than a commemoration of longevity on the throne. It is a national reflection on a promise honoured over time. The young King who pledged his life to the service of his people has spent four decades seeking to be worthy of that trust. Roads, dams, expanding public services, stronger electricity access, health gains, international visibility and a reaffirmed national identity all form part of that record.

At its heart, however, the story remains a human one. It is the story of a monarch who came to the

throne young, accepted the burden of leadership early and devoted his years to the service of the Kingdom. The lasting significance of the Ruby Jubilee lies not only in the number of years marked, but in the continuity of purpose across those years. If the coronation speech was the pledge, the national journey that followed became the living proof of that pledge carried forward.

That is why the legacy of His Majesty King Mswati III is not simply that he has reigned for forty years. It is that under his leadership the Kingdom's journey has been one of endurance, dignity, peace, identity and transformation. The nation can therefore look back on this milestone not only with celebration, but with the recognition that the promise made in 1986 has shaped a full arc of service to the people and to the future of Eswatini.





# Bayethe! Wena WaPhakathi.

Stratcom Group | Agribusiness Media extends its sincere congratulations to His Majesty King Mswati III, the Indlovukazi, and the entire emaSwati nation on the celebration of 40 years of His Majesty's leadership legacy, as well as His Majesty's 58th Birthday.

We join the nation in celebrating this remarkable milestone and wish Their Majesties and the Kingdom of Eswatini continued peace, unity and prosperity.



# FEEDMASTER ESWATINI

## The Master of Feed – Your Quality Solution



BY MNCEDISI SIMELANE | FEEDMASTER TECHNICAL ADVISER

In the dynamic and ever-evolving livestock industry of Eswatini, one truth remains constant: feed determines performance. Genetics may set the potential, management may shape the environment, but nutrition unlocks productivity. For this reason, livestock farmers across Eswatini and beyond increasingly recognize one brand as synonymous with performance, reliability, and innovation — Feedmaster Eswatini, proudly known as The Master of Feed. Producing over 12,000 tons of feed per month, Feedmaster stands as the largest feed manufacturer in the country, with distribution networks extending into Mozambique and South Africa (Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, and Northwest). But volume alone does not define leadership. It is range diversity, technical support, laboratory-backed quality assurance, and field experience that truly distinguish Feedmaster from the competition.

**Why One Feed Range Cannot Fit All**  
Livestock enterprises in Eswatini are diverse. We have:



Intensive commercial broiler producers targeting 32-day markets  
 Indigenous chicken farmers operating semi-scavenging systems  
 Smallholder pig producers  
 Commercial pork operations targeting premium carcass grades  
 Emerging youth farmers entering livestock under government initiatives  
 Each of these enterprises has distinct nutritional requirements. Unlike other feed companies that may offer a single boilerplate broiler range or pig range, Feedmaster recognizes that:  
 Different production goals require

different nutritional densities, ingredient compositions, and performance strategies. A one-size-fits-all feeding solution is not technically sound in a country where production systems vary significantly.

### **BROILER FEED RANGES – FIVE STRATEGIC OPTIONS**

Feedmaster offers five broiler feed ranges:  
 Pinnacle  
 Performer  
 Classic  
 Live Bird

**Budget**

**Why Five Ranges?**

Because farmers have different targets:

Farmer Type	Target Age	Market	Nutritional Requirement
Intensive commercial broiler	32 days	Formal retail	High protein, dense ME, optimized amino acid balance
Medium-scale grower	35–38 days	Local butcheries	Balanced cost-performance
Indigenous chicken producer	10-16 weeks	Live bird market	Lower protein, higher energy, flexible
Rural small holder	Variable	Informal market	Cost effective feeding strategy

**Intensive Broiler Production (32-Day Market)**

Farmers aiming for birds ready at 32 days require:

- High Crude Protein (CP) in starter (21–23%)
- Balanced amino acids (lysine, methionine, threonine)
- High Metabolizable Energy (ME)
- Optimal calcium and phosphorus balance
- Highly digestible ingredients

This is where Pinnacle and Performer ranges excel. Dense, high-spec feeds accelerate growth, improve feed conversion ratio (FCR), and enhance uniformity. Properly managed, birds can achieve market weight efficiently with minimal mortality.

**Indigenous and Semi-Scavenging Chickens**

- Indigenous chickens have:
  - Slower growth rates
  - Access to supplementation (grass, worms, grasshoppers, insects)
  - Lower protein requirements
  - Higher energy requirements relative to protein
- Using ultra-dense broiler feed for indigenous systems may result in:
  - Unnecessary cost
  - Over-supplementation
  - Poor economic efficiency
- Feedmaster’s broader range ensures that nutritional supply matches production system reality.

**Technical Support: Starter Usage and Proper Transition**

Many feed companies recommend 1 bag of starter per 100 chicks placed. Feedmaster’s technical team, however, recommends:

- 2 bags of broiler starter per 100 chicks placed.
- Why?
  - Starter feed is critical for:
    - Gut development
    - Immune system priming
    - Skeletal formation
    - Early frame development
  - Extending starter use to day 17 ensures stronger foundation growth. On day 18, birds transition to grower pellets.
  - Managing the Starter-to-Grower Transition
    - Transitioning from crumble to pellet is physiologically stressful for birds.
    - Abrupt change may cause:
      - Drop in feed intake

- Temporary growth lag
- Uneven uniformity
- Feedmaster recommends:
  - When left with ¼ bag of starter crumble, begin mixing with grower pellets
  - Gradually increase pellet proportion over 1–2 days
- This avoids performance drops and protects weight gain momentum.
- Smooth transitions = stable FCR = improved profitability.

**PIG FEED RANGES – THREE STRATEGIC LEVELS**

Feedmaster provides three pig feed ranges:

- Pinnacle
- Performer
- Classic

**Growth Timelines Based on Range**

Feed Range	Market Age	Performance Level
Pinnacle	16 weeks	High performance
Performer	18 weeks	Mid performance
Classic	20 weeks	Economical

**Target Market Weight**

- 80 kg live weight
- 60+ kg dressed weight
- For serious commercial pig farmers targeting rapid turnover, Pinnacle Pig Grower Pellets provide unmatched performance.
- At approximately E361 per 50kg bag for Regional groups, it remains one of the most competitively priced high-spec pig feeds in the country.

**Late-Stage Feeding and the Hominy Chop Temptation**

- Two weeks before market, pigs consume:
  - Over 2.5 kg per pig per day
- For 10 porkers, this equals nearly half a 50kg bag per day.
- This is often where farmers become tempted to dilute feed with hominy chop.
- Why Dilution is Risky
  - While hominy chop lowers immediate feed cost, it:
    - Dilutes protein and amino acid balance
    - Increases fat deposition
    - Increases backfat thickness
    - Reduces lean meat percentage
  - Triggers carcass penalties from wholesalers
- At this stage, pigs have their best Feed Conversion Ratio (FCR). Muscle deposition is highly efficient when fed complete rations.
- Diluting feed at this peak conversion stage reduces meat gain and ultimately reduces profit.

**Feed Conversion Ratio (FCR) – The Profit Indicator**

- FCR measures:
  - kg feed consumed ÷ kg live weight gained
  - Lower FCR = better efficiency.
- At peak finishing stage:
  - Muscle gain is efficient
  - Nutrient utilization is optimal
  - Dilution destroys the biological advantage
- Farmers who maintain full ration feeding often report:
  - Faster turnover

## SPONSORED FEATURE | FEEDMASTER ESWATINI

Improved carcass grading

Repeat buyers

Many testimonials now confirm that consistent use of Pinnacle Pig Grower Pellets allows pigs to reach market weight by 16 weeks, creating faster cash cycles and better enterprise sustainability.

### Laboratory Quality Assurance

Quality is not assumed, it is verified.

Feedmaster operates an in-house quality assurance laboratory where:

Raw materials are tested

Finished feeds are analyzed

Moisture levels are monitored

Protein content is verified

Mycotoxin risks are checked

Particle size is evaluated

Non-conforming feed is condemned before reaching customers.

This guarantees:

Nutritional accuracy

Consistency

Value for money

In livestock production, inconsistency costs farmers money. Quality control protects performance.

### Regional Capacity Building and Farmer Training

Feedmaster does not merely sell feed, it builds farmers.

Through:

Regional training programs

Farmer days

On-farm visits

Technical advisory services

Farmers receive:

Feeding guidelines

Transition strategies

Growth monitoring techniques

Mortality management advice

Record-keeping support

This hands-on support ensures that feed performance translates into real farm profitability.

### Let the Animals Do the Talking

Feedmaster's philosophy is simple:

Performance should speak for itself.

When farmers clearly communicate their targets:

Age to market

Desired uniformity

Mortality expectations

Target carcass grade

The Feedmaster team matches them with the correct feed range.

Livestock enterprises are businesses.

Businesses require precision inputs.



### Why Field Experience Matters

Being the largest feed producer in Eswatini provides:

Extensive exposure to different production systems

Broad field troubleshooting experience

Cross-border learning

Technical benchmarking

Few competitors can match the combination of:

Production capacity

Technical laboratory support

Regional market exposure

On-ground advisory presence

When challenges arise, disease outbreaks, performance dips, carcass penalties, responsive technical support becomes critical.

Feedmaster stands behind its customers.

### Testimonials from Commercial Farmers

Across Eswatini and neighbouring countries, large-scale livestock farmers consistently advise new entrants:

“Choose a feed company that will help you make money and stand with you when challenges come.”

Performance, transparency, and technical backup define long-term partnerships.

A Strategic Choice for Every Farmer

Whether you are:

A youth farmer entering pig production

A broiler farmer targeting 32-day turnover

An indigenous chicken producer

A commercial pork supplier

A rural household rearing livestock

Feedmaster offers a range suited to your ambition, however, the key is communication.

When purchasing, always inform the salesclerk or technical advisor:

Your production goal

Target market

Desired growth timeline

Enterprise size

Together, we convert those goals into achievable outcomes.

### Feedmaster – Your Quality Solution

In a competitive livestock market, nutrition is not an expense, it is an investment.

Cutting corners in feed quality leads to:

Slower growth

Poor uniformity

Increased mortality

Carcass penalties

Lost profit

Investing in structured, scientifically formulated feed ensures:

Optimal FCR

Consistent weight gain

Improved carcass quality

Faster cash cycles

Sustainable enterprise growth

As the Master of Feed in Eswatini,

Feedmaster continues to deliver:

Multiple performance-based feed ranges

Laboratory-backed quality

Regional farmer training

Competitive pricing

Technical integrity

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## OUTLETS IN ESWATINI

### HHOHHO REGION

- Simomodo General Dealer - Buhleni - **78893793**
- Khuba Traders - Mbabane Industrial Site - **76612760**
- Buycash Hardware - Piggs Peak - **76314267**
- Africa Chicks - Mbabane - **78060651**
- Buy Cash Hardware - Buhleni - **76314267**
- Easytech Investments - Buhleni - **76408224**
- Africa Chicks - Piggs Peak - **78060437**
- Smomodo General Dealer - Matsamo - **7677658**
- Africa Chicks - Madlangempisi - **79883793**
- Celiwe Felicia Matsebula Feeds - Madlangempisi - **7988933**
- Tibuvutsi Investments-Ezulwini - **79681662**
- Farm Land - Mbabane - **76381423**



### MANZINI REGION

- Khuba Traders - next to St Theresz **76555909**
- SAAB Agricultural Suppliers - Mahhala Matsapha
- Buycash Hardware - Mankayane - **76553699**
- Easytech Investment - Luve - **76140780**
- Siyaya Embill Farm Supplies - **76256923**
- Africa Chicks - Manzini - **78061752**
- Easytech Investments - Kwaluseni
- Farm Land - Mbabane- **76381423**

### LUBOMBO REGION

- Buycash Hardware - Sithobela - **76553699**
- Bafuyi Traders - KaLonhlupheko - **76384812**
- Farm Chemicals - Big Bend - **76120138**
- MZK Investments - KaMzilikazi - **76249621**
- Africa Chicks - Maphiveni - **78061742**
- Africa Chicks - Siphofaneni - **78060645**
- Multi-Feeds - Mpaka - **78700056**
- Multi-Feeds - Siteki - **78519490**

### LUBOMBO REGION

- Buycash Hardware - Sithobela - **76553699**
- Bafuyi Traders - KaLonhlupheko- **76384812**
- Farm Chemicals - Big Bend - **76120138**
- MZK Investments - KaMzilikazi - **76249621**
- Africa Chicks - Maphiveni - **78069174**
- Africa Chicks - Siteki - **78060662**

### SHISELWENI REGION

- Vilakati Farm Services - Nhlngano - **763341765**
- Africa Chicks - Nhlngano -
- Nhlngano Trading Centre - Nhlngano - **76741515**
- SAAB Agricultural Services - Nhlngano **76023205**
- AJC Agencies - Hlathikhulu Town - **76068496**
- Extrashine Investments - Nhlngano - **76437669**
- Multi-Feeds - Nhlngano - **78762028**



# E61 MILLION CLIMATE-SMART DRIVE TARGETS 25 000 LIVELIHOODS AND 6 500 HECTARES

BY PHESHEYA KUNENE - EDITOR

...This month, Eswatini has set in motion a US\$3.8 million food systems transformation programme designed to lift 25 000 people, rehabilitate 6 500 hectares of degraded land, and reposition agriculture as a resilient, climate-smart engine of growth.

**A** Season of Reckoning, A Season of Renewal  
The fields of Lubombo do not hide their history. The soil tells it plainly, seasons of exhaustion, of waiting too long for rain, of harvests that never quite matched the effort. Yet, in recent weeks, a subtle but decisive shift has begun to take hold.

There is movement. Pipes laid where there were none. Training sessions under acacia trees. Farmers

gathered not in worry, but in strategy.

This is not spectacle. It is structural change, unfolding quietly but deliberately.

The Human Equation Behind the Numbers

For Thandiwe Dlamini, the arithmetic of farming used to be unforgiving. Inputs rose, rainfall faltered, and yields hovered at the mercy of uncertainty.

“You could do everything right and still come out with nothing,” she reflects, her tone measured, almost analytical.

Now, the variables are changing.

Access to irrigation has altered her production calendar. Climate-smart techniques have introduced a new discipline, soil moisture retention, crop rotation, calculated planting. What once depended on instinct is increasingly guided by method.



EWADE CEO Dr. Samson Sithole, Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs Jane Mkhonta-Simelane, Minister of Agriculture Mandla Tshawuka, FAO representatives and other officials posing for a group photo after the official launch

“I can plan now,” she says. “That changes everything.”

Her experience is emblematic of a broader recalibration taking place across farming communities, where risk is being managed rather than endured.

### FROM POLICY TO PLOT: A SYSTEM IN TRANSITION

At its core, the GEF-8 Food Systems Transformation Project represents a deliberate policy pivot, from reactive agriculture to anticipatory systems.

The intervention is expansive in scope yet precise in intent. It couples land restoration with productivity enhancement, ensuring that environmental repair does not come at the expense of economic output. Over 6 500 hectares of degraded land are earmarked for rehabilitation, while 15 000 hectares will transition into improved, sustainable management systems.

EWADE’s Commercial Director, Musa Masilela, frames the initiative as a long-term investment in

agricultural credibility, one that seeks to stabilise yields, strengthen value chains, and reduce systemic vulnerability.

The emphasis is not merely on producing more, but on producing reliably.

### REDEFINING VALUE IN AGRICULTURE

There is an emerging consensus among policymakers that agriculture must evolve beyond subsistence if it is to remain viable.

Minister of Agriculture Mandla Tshawuka articulates this shift with clarity, positioning the initiative as a mechanism to move farmers along the value spectrum, from survivalist production to semi-commercial and, ultimately, commercial viability.

### PARALLEL TO THIS IS A GROWING RECOGNITION OF ECOLOGICAL LIMITS.

Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs Jane Mkhonta-Simelane underscores the necessity of aligning agricultural expansion with environmental stewardship. Soil conservation,

water efficiency, and ecosystem integrity are no longer peripheral concerns, they are foundational to productivity itself.

In this framing, sustainability is not a constraint. It is an asset.

### AN INFRASTRUCTURE OF PARTNERSHIP

The architecture of the project is as significant as its ambition.

Implementation rests with the Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise and the Eswatini Agricultural Development Fund, institutions tasked with translating policy into practice. Technical oversight is provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization, while financing flows from the Global Environment Facility.

This multilayered collaboration reflects a broader trend in development economics, where complex challenges demand coordinated, cross-institutional responses.

Dr Patrice Talla of the FAO characterises the initiative as a landscape-scale intervention,

integrating governance, financing, production systems, and innovation into a single operational framework.

It is, in effect, systems thinking applied to agriculture.

### CONFRONTING STRUCTURAL WEAKNESSES

The context is unambiguous. Agriculture underpins nearly 80 percent of rural livelihoods in Eswatini, yet it operates under persistent strain.

Climate variability continues to erode predictability. Soil degradation diminishes returns. Water scarcity constrains expansion. Meanwhile, rising input costs and limited youth participation threaten the sector's long-term sustainability.

The current intervention does not attempt incremental adjustment. It opts instead for structural correction.

Rangeland rehabilitation, invasive species control, crop diversification, and community-led resource governance form part of a broader strategy to rebuild resilience from the ground up.

The objective is not to eliminate risk, an impossibility, but to recalibrate it to manageable levels.

### MEASURABLE RETURNS, TANGIBLE SHIFTS

Beyond livelihoods and land, the project carries measurable environmental dividends.

An estimated 350 000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent emissions are expected to be mitigated, positioning Eswatini within global climate commitments while reinforcing the economic case for sustainable agriculture.

At the household level, diversification is already emerging as a key outcome. Farmers are

experimenting with new crops, adjusting planting cycles, and engaging more actively with markets.

Yet the most consequential shift may be psychological.

Confidence, long eroded by uncertainty, is returning.

### THE NEXT PHASE: EXECUTION AND SCALE

With March marking the operational onset, attention now turns to delivery.

Training programmes are intensifying. Irrigation infrastructure is being deployed. Institutional coordination is being tested in real time. The coming months will determine whether design translates into durable impact.

Critical to this will be the development of functional value chains, access to finance, and market integration, elements that will ultimately define whether productivity gains convert into sustained income growth.

For a younger generation observing from the margins, this transition may well redefine agriculture as a viable, even attractive, enterprise.

### A CALCULATED BET ON THE FUTURE

Back in her field, Thandiwe surveys a crop that, this season, appears less vulnerable to the whims of weather.

"This time, it feels different," she says, with quiet conviction.

What she is describing is not optimism in the abstract, but a shift in probability.

Eswatini's E61 million wager on climate-smart agriculture is,



Ministry of Agriculture Principal Secretary- Sydney Simelane speaking during the event



Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs Under Secretary- Hlobile Dlamini introducing the minister of agriculture.

at its essence, a calculated bet, that with the right systems, the right knowledge, and the right partnerships, farming can move from uncertainty to predictability.

And in a sector where so much has long depended on chance, that may prove to be the most transformative change of all.



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# E300 000 EEF GRANT MAY HELP COMMUNITIES MEET RDF 10% DEPOSIT

BY: NOSIPHO MKHIZE | JOURNALIST



Communities struggling to raise the 10 percent contribution required to access the Regional Development Fund (RDF) may now have a new route to bigger development projects, after officials confirmed that the Eswatini Environment Fund (EEF) grant can be used as that deposit in qualifying cases.

The clarification was made during an Eswatini Environment Fund webinar held on 30 March 2026, where applicants were taken through funding categories, eligibility requirements and the application process for the current call.

Sisekelo Shongwe, Project Officer at the Eswatini Environment Fund, told participants that the grant of up to E300,000 can be used as the required RDF contribution, provided the timelines between the two funding processes are aligned.

“Yes, correct. You can. You can definitely use the Environment Fund grant as a 10% deposit,” said Shongwe, while cautioning applicants to ensure that the timing of their RDF project matches the Environment Fund implementation period.

The announcement is likely to draw attention from communities

that have long viewed the RDF contribution requirement as a major barrier to accessing larger government-backed projects. Under RDF requirements, communities are expected to contribute at least 10 percent of total project cost, while the fund may finance up to 90 percent.

For many groups, that upfront contribution has been one of the main reasons promising projects fail to move beyond proposal stage.

The EEF clarification now positions the fund as more than a grant for environmental protection alone. It also opens the possibility for communities to use environmental projects as a stepping stone towards bigger infrastructure and livelihood initiatives.

This means community groups with projects linked to water harvesting, wetland restoration, tree planting, recycling, biodiversity conservation, greenhouse farming or nursery development may not only access environmental funding, but could also use it to strengthen their chances of unlocking broader community development finance.

Officials said the Environment Fund is open to a wide range of applicants, making it one of the more accessible public grant opportunities available to grassroots groups.

Eligible applicants include community-based environmental groups, youth groups, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, individual applicants whose projects benefit the wider community, as well as schools, colleges, universities and research institutions.

Shongwe said individuals are allowed to apply, but stressed that projects must demonstrate benefits beyond one person.

“As long as your project is a project that benefits others as well, it should not be a project that is only for you,” she said.

She added that the fund is designed to reach even those at grassroots level, with forms available in both English and siSwati, and submissions accepted either electronically or physically.

To qualify, projects must show a positive environmental impact, demonstrate how they will improve community livelihoods, and prove they can continue beyond the funding period. Applicants are also expected to show community ownership or stakeholder involvement, while proposals that include youth, women and people with disabilities are encouraged.

One of the key messages from

the webinar was that environmental protection should not be treated as separate from everyday economic survival.

Shongwe said applicants should think beyond conservation alone and show how their ideas can also support income generation and strengthen livelihoods.

Priority funding areas under the current Environment Fund cycle are sustainable land management, sustainable water management, chemicals and waste management, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and ecosystem and biodiversity protection and sustainable use.

Officials explained that these areas can cover projects such as land rehabilitation, tree planting, wetland protection, water harvesting, dam-related interventions, recycling, safer chemical handling, greenhouse production, ecotourism initiatives and environmental education projects.

The application process begins with obtaining the official form, which is available from the Eswatini Environment Authority website, the Environment Fund office, or by request through official contact channels, including WhatsApp.

Applicants may type and email the form or complete it by hand and submit it physically.

Among the compulsory requirements is a letter from the relevant local authority approving the project. For applicants in urban areas, officials said letters from municipalities are also accepted. Additional support documents, including letters from funders or technical partners, may be attached where relevant.

Once the submission deadline closes, applications go through a desktop evaluation by a Technical Selection Committee made up of specialists from different fields, including environmental experts, engineers, researchers and gender and youth specialists.

Projects that score above the cut-off mark move to the second stage, which involves either

**ESWATINI ENVIRONMENT FUND**  
**CALL FOR APPLICATIONS**

The Eswatini Environment Fund (EFF) provides grants and implements projects which promote environmental sustainability by funding community conservation projects in key areas

**THE FUND PRIORITY AREAS**

- CHEMICALS & WASTE MANAGEMENT
- SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT
- ECOSYSTEM & BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION
- SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT
- CLIMATE ACTION

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www.eef.org.sz  
(+268) 7606 6175

**APPLICATION STAGE**  
SUBMIT APPLICATION FORM AND GUIDELINES  
To EEA Offices  
RHUS Park, Mbabane  
reception@eea.org.sz

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:**  
1600 HRS | 16 APRIL 2026

**SHORTLISTING**  
Review and evaluation of submitted applications

**GRANT AWARDING**  
Response of successful and unsuccessful applications

**PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**  
Execution and monitoring of funded projects

**MAXIMUM GRANT AWARDED:**  
E300 000

**SCAN HERE FOR APPLICATION FORM AND GUIDELINES**

**Eswatini Environment Fund**  
Sikhoziwe Sibusiso

ground-truthing visits or project presentations.

Officials said applicants with concept-stage projects that do not yet have a physical site will still be considered and may present their ideas directly to the panel.

Final decisions are made by the Board of Trustees, after which successful applicants are announced and feedback is given to all applicants.

For communities with plans that have stalled because they could not raise the RDF contribution, the latest clarification is likely to be seen as a significant opening.

Instead of viewing the Environment Fund only as a conservation facility, communities

may now begin to see it as a practical route into larger development projects — particularly those that combine environmental protection with jobs, income and local economic growth.

# ESWATINI LIFTS BUTTERNUT IMPORT BAN AS LOCAL SUPPLY FALLS SHORT

BY SIBUSISIWE NDZIMANDZE | JOURNALIST



**E**swatini has lifted its ban on butternut imports after local production declined to levels no longer sufficient to meet national demand, reopening the market to foreign supply in a move aimed at preventing shortages.

The National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBoard) announced that butternut imports will resume from 23 March 2026, following a fresh assessment of local production and market availability. The review found that domestic supply had weakened, making it necessary to reopen imports to maintain steady access to the crop.

The decision marks a reversal of the position taken just three months earlier, when Eswatini restricted butternut imports on 22 December 2025 after local production had improved and was considered adequate to supply the domestic market. At the time, the restriction was intended to protect local growers and give priority to produce cultivated within the country.

However, the latest development underlines the difficulty of sustaining production levels consistently throughout the year. While local farmers had initially responded well enough

to justify the import restriction, output has since fallen, prompting authorities to reopen the market in order to bridge the supply gap.

Butternut remains one of the more significant crops in Eswatini's horticulture sector, both as a food commodity and as a source of income for farmers. According to the Ministry of Agriculture's 2019/20 Annual Performance Report, butternut was the leading exported vegetable through the Encabeni Fresh Produce Market, with exports reaching approximately 82.57 tonnes valued at E291,800.

NAMBoard's 2019/20 Annual Report further indicates that butternut was among the most traded commodities on the domestic market, with around 325 metric tonnes sold at a value of approximately E1 million. The figures reflect the crop's commercial relevance, not only in terms of local consumption but also in trade and farmer earnings.

The reopening of imports therefore highlights a persistent structural challenge within the country's horticulture value chain: local production may be improving, but it remains vulnerable to fluctuations that affect the ability to supply the market consistently.

NAMBoard said decisions on whether to restrict or reopen imports are guided by ongoing supply assessments. These assessments are supported by data collected through the Eswatini Horticulture Information System (EHIS), a platform through which farmers register their crops, planting schedules and expected harvest volumes.

This information allows the board to monitor production trends more closely and determine whether domestic output is sufficient to justify restricting imports, or whether imports need to resume to cushion the market against shortages.

For consumers and traders, the lifting of the ban is expected to stabilise availability and ease pressure on supply chains. For farmers, however, it sends a clear signal about the importance of maintaining reliable production volumes if local produce is to retain priority in the market.

Ultimately, the decision reflects the delicate balancing act facing agricultural authorities — supporting local farmers while safeguarding national food supply. It is a reminder that import controls can only be sustained when domestic production is not only strong, but consistent enough to meet market demand over time.

# REVISED BORDER TEMPORARY RESTRICTION NOTICE

(Issued under the NAMBoard Act No. 13 of 1985)

## NOTICE TO ALL IMPORTERS OF VEGETABLES

Subsequent to the notice issued on 15th December 2025 pertaining to the temporary restriction on the importation of butternut, which became effective on 22nd December 2025, the National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBoard) has reassessed the current market conditions and availability of the commodity locally.

The assessment indicates that the available local volumes of butternut are currently insufficient to meet market demand.

**Considering the above, the following adjustment is hereby communicated:**

Commodity	Description of Action	Effective date
Butternut	Importation Restriction Uplifted	23 March 2026

**Farmers are encouraged to continue registering and updating their production statistics on the Eswatini Horticulture Information System (EHIS) to enhance effective market regulation and planning.**

For any enquiries regarding the above-mentioned notice, please **contact the Head of Legal, Trade & Regulation, Mr. Bongani Mdluli at 7802 2963.**

**By Management**



# NOT MORE LAND, BUT BETTER YIELDS: ESWATINI'S MAIZE STRATEGY SHIFT

BY SIBUSISIWE NDZIMANDZE | JOURNALIST

**F**or a country where maize remains a staple food and a pillar of household food security, the question is no longer simply how much land is planted, but how much grain that land can actually produce. That was the central message emerging from the 2026 National Maize Seed Variety Field Day in Mahlanya, where farmers, seed companies and agricultural officials gathered to assess maize performance and reflect on the country's growing food production challenge.

The event may have focused on seed demonstrations, but the issues it raised were far bigger than variety

selection alone. At its core was a hard reality: Eswatini still does not produce enough maize to feed itself. The country requires about 140,000 metric tonnes of maize annually to meet national demand, yet current production stands at roughly 75,000 metric tonnes, leaving a shortfall of around 65,000 metric tonnes that continues to be covered mainly through imports from South Africa.

This gap persists despite maize being planted on about 75,000 hectares across the country. The challenge is productivity. Average yields remain low, at around 1.2 tonnes per hectare, a figure that underscores why expanding land

under cultivation is no longer seen as the most effective solution. Instead, government is now pushing a more targeted strategy—one that focuses on increasing yields on the right land rather than simply increasing hectareage.

According to Christopher Mtsetfwa, Senior Agricultural Officer in Technical Services, Eswatini is encouraging maize production to be concentrated on around 40,000 hectares of suitable land where higher productivity can be achieved. If farmers can raise yields to an average of four tonnes per hectare, the country could produce as much as 160,000 metric tonnes—enough

to meet domestic demand and potentially create a surplus.

That shift represents more than a technical adjustment. It signals a change in national thinking about maize production: from area expansion to productivity improvement, from blanket planting to strategic land use. It is a strategy built around the belief that food security will depend not on doing more of the same, but on farming more efficiently and more intelligently.

The field day offered farmers a practical window into that thinking. Seed companies used the platform to showcase how different maize varieties perform under local conditions, giving producers a chance to compare traits such as yield potential, adaptability and resilience. For many farmers, such events provide critical information that can shape planting decisions for the coming season.

Samson Shongwe of LimaGrain-Seed Co. said their role was to help farmers understand the options available so they can choose seed varieties suited to their environments and production goals. In a context of shifting weather patterns and tightening margins, the right seed choice can make a significant difference.

For farmers such as Zanele Dlamini of Lobamba Lomdzala, that knowledge is essential. She attended the field day specifically to observe how the different varieties were performing, with the aim of making better seed choices for the next planting season. Her interest reflects a broader reality across the country: farmers are looking not just for seed, but for solutions that can improve their chances of success in increasingly difficult conditions.

Those conditions were acknowledged openly at the event. Minister of Agriculture Mandla Tshawuka described the current season as one of the most difficult many farmers have faced, marked by erratic rainfall and extreme heat. In some areas, he noted, nearly 80 percent of the country's annual



Manzini Regional Administrator Prince Chief Gija at Lobamba National Maize Variety Day

rainfall fell within a single week, only to be followed by intense heatwaves that sharply reduced the prospects of a good harvest.

His remarks underscored the extent to which climate change is reshaping the production landscape. Even where improved seed is available, performance can still be undermined by poor rainfall distribution, heat stress and inadequate water management. This is why the conversation around food security is now extending beyond seed choice to include irrigation, climate resilience and stronger support systems for farmers.

The Ministry of Agriculture says timely access to inputs remains one of the critical factors in improving maize productivity. Farmers need not only good seed, but also access to tractors, manure, fertiliser and other essentials in time for planting. Delays in any of these areas can reduce yield potential before the season has even begun. In this sense, productivity is not just about what happens in the field, but also about how well the broader system supports farmers

from the outset.

Water management remains another major concern. Although Eswatini received substantial rainfall this season, much of it was lost because of inadequate harvesting and irrigation infrastructure. To address this, government is working closely with the Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise (EWADE) to strengthen irrigation systems and support more reliable crop production.

Seen in this light, the field day was about much more than maize varieties. It reflected the urgent need for a coordinated national effort to close the production gap through better yields, improved infrastructure, stronger farmer support and more climate-resilient farming systems.

As Eswatini continues to bear the cost and vulnerability of dependence on imported maize, the message from Mahlanya was both practical and strategic: the path to food security will not be built simply by planting more land, but by producing more from the land that matters most.

# TRADITIONAL VEGETABLES MARKET DEMAND HITS 1.5 MILLION KG

BY PHESHEYA KUNENE



In Eswatini, traditional African vegetables such as pumpkin leaves, amaranth and okra are emerging as a major commercial opportunity, with demand now estimated at 1.5 million kilograms a year and the market valued at about E50 million.

At a time when policymakers often speak of creating markets, the case of traditional vegetables shows that the market already exists. The challenge is not demand, but supply.

Speaking during the TAVI Phase II inception workshop, stakeholders said the focus must now shift from subsistence production to commercial farming. Mcebo Mnisi of the World Vegetable Center captured this shift simply, saying farmers must move from “growing for the pot” to “growing for the pocket.”

The broader numbers highlight the scale of the opportunity. Eswatini’s total vegetable demand stands at about 41.5 million kilograms annually, but an estimated 82 percent of that is still not met locally and is imported. For many, this is a paradox: the country continues to import produce that can be grown locally.

Traditional vegetables have long been familiar in households and communities. They are culturally accepted, nutritious and well suited to local conditions. Yet they have remained largely outside formal markets and structured value chains. What is changing now is not the crop itself, but the way it is being viewed. These vegetables are increasingly being recognised as economic products with clear demand, income potential and institutional support.

One of the strongest market anchors is the school feeding programme. More than 80 farmers are already supplying 42 schools across the country, reaching over 22,800 learners. This has created a practical link between nutrition and market access.

For some farmers, the benefits are already visible. Some are earning more than E19,000 from supplying traditional vegetables. While that may not seem large in national economic terms, it is significant for smallholder farmers because it shows that the business is viable. More importantly, it offers predictability, something that is critical in agriculture.

What also sets the TAVI initiative

apart is that it does not look at production alone. It approaches the sector as a full system, from seeds and farmer knowledge to markets and post-harvest handling.

Opening the workshop, Principal Secretary Sydney Simelane described the initiative as a driver of structural change rather than a short-term intervention. The focus is on building systems that can support long-term growth, including seed systems, genebanks, demonstration farms and standardised production frameworks.

In Malkerns, demonstration plots are already being used as both training centres and testing grounds. Farmers are also being organised into groups, with 84 farmers clustered into 10 groups and an initial target of producing three tonnes. The target may appear modest, but it is designed to build momentum and confidence.

Project Manager Sophia Chan said the second phase of the initiative is built around two linked goals: increasing commercialization and boosting consumption. The strategy recognises that markets alone are not enough if consumer demand is weak, while consumption alone cannot improve farmer incomes without structured markets. The aim is to



grow both together so that traditional vegetables become more common in diets and more reliable in formal value chains.

Support is being provided through technical assistance, starter kits and improved access to quality seed, all as part of a wider effort to strengthen the production ecosystem.

However, one major challenge remains post-harvest losses, which are estimated at up to 50 percent. This means a large share of value is lost before produce reaches the market. Proposed solutions include cold storage, solar drying and better logistics. Cutting losses would effectively raise supply without requiring farmers to plant more.

Support from Taiwan has also strengthened the programme and given it continuity. In policy terms, the initiative speaks directly to national priorities such as food security, lower import dependence and climate resilience.

Traditional vegetables are especially suited to this agenda because they require less water, adapt well to local conditions and offer high nutritional value.

What is emerging is not yet a fully developed industry, but the signs are clear. Demand is there, farmers are starting to organise and institutions are aligning around the opportunity. If backed by consistent execution and stronger farmer participation, traditional vegetables could move from the margins of Eswatini's agricultural economy to the centre of a new growth sector.



*TAVI Phase II inception workshop participants at the George Hotel, Manzini*



# HUGE DEMAND FOR PORK IN SHISELWENI PUSHING FARMERS

BY SIBUSISIWE NDZIMANDZE | JOURNALIST

In Shiselweni, pig farming is increasingly proving to be more than a small-scale rural activity. It is becoming a serious business opportunity, driven by strong and growing demand for pork both within the region and across Eswatini.

That demand is already visible on the ground. The Shiselweni Livestock Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited currently has access to a market that requires around 80 pigs per week, a figure that points not only to the size of the opportunity, but also to the urgent need for farmers to increase production and improve consistency.

The picture in Shiselweni reflects a wider national trend. In 2024, Eswatini recorded 34,209 pig slaughters, producing about 1,973 tonnes of local pork valued at more than E105 million. Yet despite this output, the country still imported over 770 tonnes of processed pork, showing that local production is still not enough to fully satisfy demand.

For farmers such as Mahlubi Hadebe of Hlatsi, this gap between demand and supply is a strong signal

that pig farming has real growth potential. Hadebe, who is both a pig farmer and Chairperson of the Shiselweni Livestock Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited, believes the way forward lies in improving production and working together through organised farmer structures.

Established in 2023, the cooperative now brings together around 200 pig farmers operating at

different levels. Beyond providing a platform for farmers to connect, the cooperative is helping members coordinate supply, share practical knowledge and position themselves more effectively within the growing pork market.

For Hadebe, cooperation is not just about numbers; it is about building a structure that can help farmers meet market expectations and turn pig farming into a more reliable source of income.

He says the cooperative already works with a buyer who requires around 80 pigs every week, but meeting that demand consistently remains a challenge. Supply is there, but not always in the volumes and regularity the market requires. This, he says, is why farmers must treat pig farming as a business and invest in improving their production systems.

For Hadebe himself, better production begins with better knowledge. He keeps 12 sows and one boar, and says continuous training has become one of the most important tools helping him strengthen his piggery business.



Extension Officer in the Ministry of Agriculture, Sibusiso Sikhondze



Over time, he has actively participated in workshops and training sessions organised by stakeholders such as Feedmaster Eswatini, Cranefeeds and Arrow Feeds, which he credits with improving how he manages his operation.

Most recently, he attended the Pig Production Farmers Day held at Nhlanguano REO Hall, organised by Feedmaster Eswatini in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture.

The event gave farmers practical insights into pig production, animal health and farm management, all of which are critical for farmers who want to compete in a growing but demanding market.

For Hadebe, such workshops do more than just add information. They help farmers refine their methods and make better business decisions. One of the most valuable lessons for him was on record keeping, particularly the importance of tracking breeding cycles. Understanding the correct heat stage for mating, he says, allows

farmers to improve productivity and plan breeding programmes more effectively.

Training on pig nutrition and the importance of quality piglets also reinforced a key message: farmers who want to produce pigs that meet market standards must be prepared to invest in good inputs.

Feedmaster Eswatini Technical Adviser Mncedisi Simelane emphasised the importance of quality piglets and nutritious feed in producing healthy pigs suitable for the market, while encouraging farmers to source their piglets from reputable weaner bulk suppliers.

Animal health remains another critical area. During the same event, Ministry of Agriculture Extension Officer Sibusiso Sikhondze guided farmers on pig health management, with a strong focus on biosecurity and disease prevention. These are not minor technical matters. In a sector vulnerable to disease outbreaks, strong biosecurity can make the difference between profit and loss.

Hadebe knows this all too well. He says one of the biggest challenges facing pig farmers is the impact of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreaks. When FMD is detected in an area, the market can stop buying pigs from affected farmers for around 30 days. During that time, pigs that are already ready for slaughter must continue to be fed, increasing costs and placing a heavy burden on farmers.

Even with these challenges, the cooperative is thinking beyond immediate supply. Hadebe says members are already looking at ways to strengthen their position within the pork value chain, with one of their long-term ambitions being to establish their own abattoir. Such a facility would allow farmers to slaughter and process pigs locally and sell directly to buyers, giving them greater control over the market and potentially increasing the value they earn from their livestock.

To maintain momentum and strengthen collaboration, members of the cooperative meet on the last Tuesday of every month to discuss farming activities, share experiences and plan future initiatives. These meetings reflect the cooperative's broader vision: building a stronger pig farming sector through collective effort, practical learning and market-focused production.

Hadebe says the demand is there but farmers must build the capacity to supply it. In that sense, the growth of pig farming in Shiselweni is not just about rising pork demand. It is about farmers learning to organise, improve and position themselves to benefit from a market that is already waiting.

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# BROILER MARKET DEMAND OUTPACES SUPPLY AS FARMERS URGED TO SCALE UP

BY SIBUSISIWE NDZIMANDZE | JOURNALIST



**B**roiler farmers have been told to “scale up or miss out”. This transpired at the Broiler Production Farmers Day on 30 March 2026, where industry players warned that rising demand continues to outstrip supply across Eswatini’s poultry sector.

Eswatini’s 2024 animal production report estimates domestic chicken consumption at 22,205.69 tonnes, against local broiler production of 17,104.04 tonnes, highlighting a production shortfall that continues to be supplemented through imports.

Speaking during the Broiler Production Farmers Day held in Manzini, Mncedisi Simelane, Technical Adviser at Feedmaster Eswatini, said the market for broilers is strong, structured and driven by consistent throughput requirements from processors.

“The market is there. Feedmaster, together with Umbuluzi Farm Chickens, require around 3,000 chickens per hour and approximately 28,000 to 30,000 chickens per day,” Simelane said.

He urged farmers to transition from smallholder production to commercially viable broiler operations capable of meeting off-take agreements.

“Farmers need to upscale their operations. You can start from 500 birds and above, but the goal should be to reach volumes that allow for consistent supply into the market,” he said.

The message aligns with broader global trends, where poultry remains the fastest-growing protein segment. However, stakeholders emphasised that participation in this growth requires scale, consistency, biosecurity compliance and market alignment.

## MARKET ACCESS AND COLLECTIVE MARKETING

Simelane also encouraged farmers to adopt collective marketing models, noting that aggregation can improve supply consistency and strengthen access to formal markets.

“If you cannot meet the market alone, join forces with other farmers. As a

group, you can supply larger volumes and access better markets,” he said.

He further highlighted the importance of integrating into the broader poultry value chain, including access to feed, veterinary services and reliable market channels, while also urging farmers to expand their operations by tapping into financing opportunities such as loans provided by the Eswatini Agricultural Development Fund (EADF) and the Youth Enterprise Revolving Fund (YERF).

## FINANCING OPTIONS FOR FARM EXPANSION

Fanele Dlamini from the Eswatini Agricultural Development Fund (EADF) outlined financing instruments available to support both start-up and expansion phases of poultry enterprises.

He said start-up farmers can access financing ranging from E5,000 to E3 million, while established farmers can access between E5,000 and E5 million for scaling operations.

“EADF funding focuses on key investment areas including irrigation

infrastructure, on-farm infrastructure, fencing, equipment and implements, as well as production inputs to support farmers in scaling their operations,” Dlamini said.

He added that loans are structured at an interest rate of 9 percent per annum, making them accessible for agribusiness expansion.

Dlamini also encouraged farmers to develop practical, working farm plans rather than relying on formal documents.

“You don’t need to buy a business plan. Clearly outline your production goals and consult your extension officer to align your plan with technical requirements before approaching EADF,” she said.

### DOMESTIC MARKET GAP PERSISTS

The case for scaling up is further supported by Eswatini’s import profile, which indicates continued reliance on external supply to meet domestic demand.

In 2024, the country imported 2,815.83 tonnes of mechanically deboned meat (MDM), 1,284.72 tonnes of processed chicken, and 116.42 tonnes of other chicken products, reflecting a gap between local production and consumption.

Stakeholders say there is significant room for local producers to increase output and capture a larger share of the domestic poultry market.

### FARMER RESPONSE ON THE GROUND

For farmers, the insights are already influencing production planning and enterprise scaling.

Celucolo Mavuso, a broiler farmer from Vusweni who attended the training, said the session had helped him better understand market

requirements and production targets.

“I currently have a flock of 500 broilers, but this workshop has helped me understand the size of the market and what is required,” Maseko said. “Now I know I need to work towards increasing my flock size and improving my production system to meet that demand.”

His response reflects a shift towards market-oriented production systems, where output is aligned with demand rather than subsistence needs.

### TECHNICAL GUIDANCE AND FLOCK MANAGEMENT

From a production standpoint, farmers were also guided on improving flock management practices, housing efficiency and biosecurity protocols.

Penny Mabuza from the Ministry of Agriculture advised farmers to implement structured production cycles to improve performance and reduce disease risk.

“Farmers should allow at least a two-week downtime between batches before introducing new chicks,” she said, noting that this period is critical for cleaning, disinfection and breaking disease cycles.

She also emphasised the importance of ventilation management in poultry housing.

“When opening for the chickens, the curtains should be pulled down like a car window to regulate airflow properly,” Mabuza said.



### A SECTOR WITH STRONG COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL

The insights shared during the session point to a sector with strong commercial potential, supported by rising demand, established off-take channels and available financing mechanisms.

However, stakeholders emphasised that unlocking this potential will depend on farmers’ ability to adopt commercial production systems, maintain consistent supply, implement good agricultural practices (GAPs) and integrate into structured value chains.

With a clear domestic supply gap, strong processor demand and growing institutional support, broiler production is increasingly positioned as a viable pathway for youth and smallholder farmers to build sustainable, market-driven agribusinesses.

# YOUNG BEEKEEPER EXPLORING COSMETICS WITH BEESWAX

BY SIBUSISIWE NDZIMANDZE | JOURNALIST



For many beekeepers, the value of the hive begins and ends with honey. But for Siphesihle Dlamini, a young farmer from Mzilikazi and founder of Opulento Farms, the hive holds far more potential—one that extends into the growing world of natural cosmetics and value-added products.

Dlamini is preparing to launch Opulento Scents, a new product line that will transform beeswax into a range of consumer goods including lip balms, body lotions, soaps, aromatherapy candles and even wood polish. The initiative represents a deliberate move to unlock the full economic value of beekeeping by turning what is often treated as a by-product into a profitable business opportunity.

At the heart of this venture is a simple but powerful idea: beekeeping is not just about honey. By diversifying into beeswax-based products, Dlamini is positioning himself to generate income even when

Beeswax, which remains after honeycomb is processed, has traditionally been underutilised by many small-scale producers. Yet globally, it is gaining recognition as a valuable raw material in the natural beauty and wellness industry. In countries such as the United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand, beeswax is widely used in the production of skincare products, while Europe remains a major market where demand for beeswax in cosmetics continues to exceed local supply.

These global trends highlight a growing shift towards natural and eco-friendly products—an opportunity that Dlamini is keen to tap into at a local level. By converting beeswax into market-ready goods, he is not only adding value to his own operation, but also demonstrating how other farmers can expand beyond raw production and enter higher-value markets.

His ambition goes beyond personal business growth. Dlamini is equally focused on building a

““

Sometimes honey production becomes low because weather conditions affect flowering,” he explains. “By producing products from beeswax, we can still generate income even when honey harvests are lower.

honey yields are affected by external factors such as climate variability.

stronger beekeeping community.

“I want to help others

who want to start beekeeping,” he says. “If more people learn how to manage bees and understand the value chain, we can grow the industry together.”

Dlamini’s journey into beekeeping is rooted in both family influence and exposure to agricultural training programmes. He was first inspired by his uncle, his father’s elder brother, who had long been involved in beekeeping in the rural community of Mzilikazi. That early influence sparked an interest that has since grown into a structured agribusiness venture.

His development as a young farmer has been supported by several initiatives aimed at empowering youth in agriculture. In 2024, he participated in the Innovative Climate Smart Youth Tunnel Production Training under the Women Farmer Foundation, before going on to complete entrepreneurship training supported by Junior Achievement and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Through this programme, he secured E10,000 in start-up capital, which helped him establish Opulento Farms.

Further exposure came through the African Food Changemakers Programme, which focuses on conservation farming and climate change adaptation, as well as the Smarter Agriculture Programme supported by the Taiwan International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Taiwan. These experiences introduced him to modern agricultural technologies and broadened his perspective on how farming can evolve into a diversified business.

Dlamini’s venture is emerging at a time when the beekeeping sector in Eswatini itself presents significant growth potential. The country currently produces about 35 tonnes of honey annually, while combined local production and imports suggest a national consumption of around 63 tonnes. This gap highlights an



Siphesihle Dlamini co-founder of Opulento Farm

opportunity not only to increase honey production, but also to expand into value-added products derived from the hive.

For Dlamini, the future of beekeeping lies in that diversification.

“Beekeeping is not only about honey,” he says. “If farmers understand the full value chain, they can create many products from beeswax and build stronger businesses.”

With the planned launch of Opulento Scents later this year,

he hopes his venture will serve as both a business and a model—showing how young farmers can combine innovation, sustainability and entrepreneurship to create new opportunities within agriculture.

In doing so, he is not just producing from the hive—he is reimagining what the hive can produce.

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