

Tongaat Hulett empowering youth in sugarcane farming through transformation initiative

While Tongaat Hulett is undergoing a strategic review and turnaround process to reduce its direct sugarcane farming activities in South Africa, it is also identifying ways to ensure its numerous farms will transition to third party growers, creating opportunities for empowerment while mitigating against potential job losses at the farm level.



Peaceful Ndlovu, partner in Tongaat Hulett's transformation initiative FarmCo

Peaceful Ndlovu has recently been selected to be part of FarmCo which is a Tongaat Hulett's transformation initiative. Ndlovu will lease a 340 hectare farm which has the potential to produce 12,000 tons. This new partnership will enable Ndlovu to grow his current operation threefold.

"It is exciting that Tongaat Hulett is empowering youth in their catchment area," said Ndlovu.

"I believe that this is a start in the right direction as I would like to see more youth being part of the agricultural sector and being given opportunities.

"It is also exciting that this transformation initiative is the first of its kind at this scale. It will impact the individuals who are part of the initiative. It will also safeguard jobs in the Tongaat Hulett catchment area," he said.

Youngest land reform grower

In 2014 at the age of 22, Ndlovu set a precedent for South Africa's youth when he became Tongaat Hulett's youngest land reform grower. He took the reins of his family's 95,8 hectare farm four years after the death of his father. His

father had acquired the farm in 1998 through the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) programme which was a government initiative aimed at helping black South African citizens to access land specifically for agricultural purposes. The strategic objectives of the sub-programme include contributing to the redistribution programme; improving nutrition and incomes of the rural poor who want to farm on any scale; de-congesting overcrowded former homeland areas; and expanding opportunities for women and young people who stay in rural areas.

Ndlovu assumed full responsibility of farm management in 2010. Today he has nine years of farming experience under his belt. Under Ndlovu's management the farm's productivity has steadily increased, moving from 2,684 tons of sugarcane in 2010 to 3,500 tons in 2018.

Ndlovu is also operating as a harvesting contractor. He is working in partnership with Daniel Ndlovu, his mentor. The duo harvests 5,500 tons of sugarcane for small-scale growers in the Waterfall, Ndwedwe Mission and esiDumbini areas. The partnership with his mentor has allowed Ndlovu to share equipment with him and expand his business. Ndlovu also breeds cattle.

Capacity building and training

In addition to his growing success as a farmer, Ndlovu is a member of the South African Farmers Development Association (SAFDA). His portfolio within SAFDA includes managing the Youth Desk and engaging with various stakeholders on creating opportunities for youth – particularly around capacity building and training.

“I am excited to be a member of these structures as they provide a platform to engage with government on issues impacting farmer growth and sustainability. As a young farmer I understand that revitalising the agricultural sector is a national priority. It is therefore important for farmers to work hand in hand with government and the private sector to ensure economic growth and rural development,” said Ndlovu.

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