

# SAB & FarmSol empower farmers with state-of-the-art mechanisation

Smallholder farmers, under the FarmSol farmer development programme in the North West, will benefit from an R8m worth of mechanisation and equipment thanks to the South African Breweries (SAB) smallholder farmer mechanisation sharing scheme.



Source: Supplied

The sharing scheme is a collaborative effort between SAB and FarmSol, which provides mechanisation and equipment shared between farmers who loan it out at affordable rates; an initiative set to demonstrate meaningful social impact, transfer skills and knowledge and provide the farmers with access to modern and latest farming equipment and technologies to use towards successful cultivation of crops.

So far, a total of 41 farmers who are part of the FarmSol programme and those who farm in the Free State, KZN and Mpumalanga benefitted from the programme, saving them close to R2m and enabling them to plant on time. The project created 50 permanent and 224 temporary jobs.

According to Zoleka Lisa, VP of corporate affairs at SAB, the brewer has been working in partnership with FarmSol, since 2016, providing non-interest-bearing loans to emerging farmers; enabling farmers to plant crops such as Barley and non-GMO yellow maize supplied to SAB.

Lisa added that some of the funding will go towards the purchase and installation of soil moisture probes; instruments that monitor soil moisture and soil temperature providing an early warning system which empowers farmers with accurate and real-time data. This helps farmers to prevent over and under irrigation, as well as prevents unnecessary energy use, saving costs for farmers.

"Declining agricultural performance is a major driving force behind the growing number of struggling African smallholder farmers. The recovery of this industry offers the greatest prospects for rural populations to escape out of poverty," Lisa says. "More so, the high cost of agricultural machinery together with scarce funding opportunities make access to farming mechanisation equipped with latest technologies a far-fetched dream for many new entrant Black farmers."

The farmers are now empowered to further plant soya beans, sunflower, wheat, canola, and oats as part of crop rotation. For barley crop 2021 and summer crop 2022, the supported farmers received R30,5m in profits payout, with the seasonal average payout per farmer being R191,000 in a season.

## **Precision farming capabilities**

Desmond Sibinda, one of the beneficiaries, says that the project will help them to plant on time, save money and help them learn how to manage their own farming equipment. "Since the start of the mechanisation programme, our farm managed to plant on time and turn a profit. So, we are grateful for the support."

Aron Kole, MD at FarmSol, believes that the partnership with SAB is a special one as the collaborative initiative will see more than 30 emerging farmers accept mechanisation that uses the latest and modern precision farming capabilities. And, currently, FarmSol is reviewing how to best scale the mechanisation programme to achieve broader impact.

"We are pleased with the success of the FarmSol programme and remain proud that working with partners such as SAB means contributing to the success of smallholder farmers, boosting rural development and reducing poverty in rural areas by increasing household incomes," says Kole.

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