PULA

PGP
PHAHAMA GRAIN PHAKAMA

SEPTEMBER 2026

It's nearly time to celebrate our farmers...

PHOTO: Lizel Snyman

ON THE COVER: At last year's Ukukhula Conference, Maria Rampedi from Amersfoort was photographed on the John Deere tractor which the New Era Commercial Farmer of 2025 received.

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TAKE A LOOK INSIDE OUR SEPTEMBER ISSUE »

5 TIPS about finance

Bankies Malan, credit and loan coordinator, shares some tips for a healthy relationship with your funder.

1

Build trust early and maintain it consistently by being honest, transparent and reliable in all dealings with your financier.

2

Know what the credit manager looks for – cashflow, repayment history, security, financial statements and risk exposure.

3

Use the budget as your shared language. Communicate before problems become crises.

4

Recognise that both parties carry risk. Mutual understanding strengthens the partnership.

5

Treat the financier as a strategic partner as this relationship should not be only about loans and repayments. It should support long-term sustainability, growth, and food security.

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PGP
PHAHAMA GRAIN PHAKAMA

Celebrating the growth of grain farmers

History was made when the first Phahama Grain Phakama (PGP) Ukukhula Conference was held on 2 October 2025. The next conference will take place at NAMPO Park on 8 October 2026. It will be followed by the annual Day of Celebration, where the exemplary work of all PGP's farmers will be recognised.

Together, these events give black grain farmers a strong opportunity to share their experiences, tell their success stories, exchange ideas and discuss important issues with government officials, funders and other role players in the agricultural value chain – while also being recognised for their achievements.

Pula interviewed Bankies Malan, credit and loan coordinator at PGP, on what to expect of this year's conference.

1. Why is it called the *Ukukhula* Conference?

The word "Ukukhula" means "growth" in isiZulu and isiXhosa. This represents the progress of farmers as they move from small-scale farming to commercial production. It shows how farmers are growing their businesses, creating opportunities and working towards long-term success in South African agriculture.

2. What was the initial goal when planning the conference?

For too long, developing grain farmers had to operate on the margins of national debates about land, finance and markets. *Ukukhula* is about bringing their voices to the centre – to shape the solutions needed for sustainability and growth. It is more than a conference – it is an engine for transformation. Farmers lead the conversations while the government and stakeholders respond. And by ending the event with the Day of Celebration, we honour those who are already showing what is possible.

3. What feedback did you receive after the 2025 conference?

The feedback was extremely positive. Grain farmers welcomed the opportunity to discuss the challenges and issues affecting them. This was evident during the conference through the lively interaction between the panel and the audience. Attendees were not overloaded with presentations, as each guest speaker was allocated only ten minutes to present. The presentations were followed by an engaging panel discussion and a question-and-answer session with the audience, which encouraged meaningful participation and dialogue.

4. Why the decision to split the farmers into two groups?

While farmers across the sector face many common challenges, such as unpredictable weather conditions and rising input costs, the breakaway sessions provided an opportunity to focus on the specific challenges encountered by subsistence and smallholder farmers. These included access to high-quality inputs, mentorship, the storage of produce, markets, affordable financing and livestock nutrition. The sessions also covered the fundamental aspects of crop production to strengthen practical knowledge and skills.

Small-scale farmers gathered in a seperate group to discuss their challenges at last year's conference.

For commercial farmers, the discussions centred on issues such as land ownership, financing and risk management. By addressing the needs and priorities of those groups separately, the conference could facilitate more relevant and meaningful discussions, which contributed significantly to its overall success.

5. What can our farmers look forward to this year?

Although the format will be the same, we are very excited to bring in a session on livestock production with the Red Meat Industry Service (RMIS) on board. This is to help farmers learn more about diversifying a farming operation through livestock. The legendary veterinarian, Dr Faffa Malan, will be one of the special guests this year. He will share information on foot-and-mouth disease and other topics concerning livestock production.

The programme will again be packed with representation from the government, including five provinces' MEC's for Agriculture, as well as the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development, the South African Insurance Association (SAIA), the South African Cultivar & Technology Agency (SACTA), the Kgodiso Development Fund and FNB, ensuring that the discussions are once again practical, informed and solution-oriented.

6. Who are the partners who are making this event possible?

The PGP Ukukhula Conference is proudly supported by Bayer, FNB, Hollard, Kagiso Trust, Khula, Pannar, the RMIS, Santam and Standard Bank. Our media partners *Farmer's Weekly*, *African Farming* and AmaFama, ensure that our farmer stories of transformation and growth are shared widely.

COMPILED BY THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Meet the team

Phahama Grain Phakama (PGP) is Grain SA's farmer development programme, dedicated to supporting developing grain producers across South Africa – from subsistence to new-era commercial farmers. Through mentorship, training and capacity building, the team supports developing farmers across six provinces making the most of their land to contribute to household and national food security.

Despite the challenges and many other changes over more than 20 years, the heartbeat of the Grain SA Farmer Development Programme remains unchanged. PGP cares about agricultural development in South Africa and farmers growing their enterprises even in challenging environments. The team strives to make a positive difference wherever they are involved.

COMPILED BY THE EDITORIAL TEAM

THE TEAM AT GRAIN SA CORPORATE OFFICE IN PRETORIA

Bankies (William) Malan, credit and loan coordinator

Lindie Pretorius, compliance officer

Mlibo Qotoyi, junior operations manager

Jean Adams, PGP administrator

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEVEL

The footprint of the Grain SA Farmer Development Programme presently includes six development regions, with each presenting its own unique character and needs.

Du Toit van der Westhuizen (regional manager in North West)

Eric Wiggill (regional manager in the Eastern Cape)

Jerry Mthombothi (regional manager in Mpumalanga)

Jacques Roux (regional manager in the Free State)

Graeme Engelbrecht (regional manager in KwaZulu-Natal)

Phumzile Ngcobo (assistant regional manager in Dundee)

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PHAHAMA GRAIN PHAKAMA

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From the PGP desk

It is with a deep sense of pride, optimism and renewed purpose that I welcome the relaunch of *Pula* magazine – a meaningful platform that connects us, inspires learning, celebrates progress, and strengthens our shared commitment to the growth of Phahama Grain Phakama (PGP) and the farmers we serve.

The name *Pula*, meaning "rain," carries deep significance. Rain brings life, growth, renewal, and hope. It nurtures potential, transforms the landscape, and creates the conditions for new possibilities. In the same spirit, this magazine represents our commitment to cultivating ideas, celebrating progress, and strengthening the bonds that unite us as the PGP family.

As our organisation continues to grow and evolve, clear and meaningful communication becomes even more important. The relaunch of *Pula* is therefore not simply the return of a publication; it is the creation of a platform through which we can share our journey, recognise our farmers, highlight our achievements, and give voice to the values that define who we are.

Beyond communication, *Pula* must also serve as an educational tool and a catalyst for continuous learning. Each edition should inform, challenge, and inspire us by sharing practical insights, industry developments, best practices, and lessons from across our business. In doing so, the magazine will help equip our farmers with the knowledge, perspective, and confidence to adapt, lead, and contribute meaningfully to a stronger, more capable, and future-ready farming enterprises.

At the heart of this publication are the farmers we serve. As a farmer development organisation, PGP exists to support, empower, and walk alongside farmers as they build sustainable enterprises and contribute to food security, rural development, and economic growth. Every employee, partner, farmer, and stakeholder plays an important role in this shared mission. Through *Pula*, we have an opportunity to honour these contributions, learn from each other, and build a stronger sense of belonging, pride, and shared responsibility.

As we begin this exciting new chapter, I invite every member of the PGP family to embrace *Pula* as more than a magazine. Let it become a trusted source of knowledge, a platform for collaboration, a celebration of progress, and a reflection of our shared commitment to developing farmers who are resilient, commercially capable, and positioned to thrive in a changing agricultural landscape.

The story of PGP is ultimately a story of growth, partnership, and purpose. It is written through every farmer we support, every enterprise we help strengthen, and every opportunity we create for sustainable impact. Let us move forward with confidence, unity, and renewed dedication to farmer development, knowing that the work we do today will help shape stronger communities, a more inclusive agricultural sector, and a better future for South Africa.

DR TOBIAS DOYER – CEO: GRAIN SA GROUP

Farmer of the Year competition

These are the twelve finalists

The Grain SA Farmer of the Year competition honours the growth, learning and resilience of farmers who are members of the Phahama Grain Phakama (PGP) Farmer Development Programme (FDP). Through study groups, practical training, mentoring and on-farm support, this programme helps farmers to improve their grain production in a way that is both profitable and sustainable. The competition provides a valuable picture of how developing grain farmers are progressing.

This year's twelve finalists represent nearly 2 390 ha of land across six provinces, reflect the progress farmers are making as they build stronger farming businesses and move towards commercial grain production. While every farm has its own story, the visits revealed a common theme: Farmers are improving their production, expanding their operations and strengthening their businesses.

The adjudication process took judges to farms across Limpopo, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape, the Free State and North West. After the judges had tallied the scores, the following farmers were selected as the top achievers in their various categories for 2026:

NEW ERA COMMERCIAL FARMERS (MORE THAN 250 TONS)

Masenga Farming, near Kokstad in KwaZulu-Natal, is a mixed farming operation of the Mbutho brothers, Siviwe (left) and Luvo, who took over their father, Luvuyo's, farming operation. On their farm, Alton, maize is produced and they also rear cattle and sheep. According to Siviwe, who manages the crops and finances, one must never stop learning in agriculture. He is grateful to PGP for arranging workshops and information days, where farmers can expand their knowledge. This farming business continues to build on the foundation established by the Mbutho family and has shown steady growth across its different enterprises. Siviwe has been a member of Grain SA's FDP since 2020.

Although Motlalepule Masiu (27) originally looked at a career in banking and accounting, his father encouraged him to engage with the family farm. He completed postgraduate studies in agricultural management at the Central University of Technology before returning to the farm full-time. "I love being out in the fields and driving tractors. Farming is where I belong," he says. He now farms with his family at Driekoppen near Senekal in the Free State. This farming operation (Masiu Farming Enterprise) produces maize, soybeans and sunflower, and also includes a Bonsmara herd. After starting on a smaller scale, the family recently acquired a 700 ha farm. Masiu has been a member of the FDP since 2020.

Obakeng Mogogane (37) farms at Weltevrede Village near Mahikeng in North West, where he is producing maize, sunflower and beans on communal land. Since joining the programme in 2022, he has expanded his operation, invested in larger machinery and strengthened his workforce. His farming business employs 14 permanent workers and provides additional seasonal work during planting and harvesting. His interest in agriculture was developed from a young age through hands-on involvement in farming activities. Over time, this interest evolved into a clear vision of building a sustainable agribusiness. He has steadily expanded his business and has recently implemented various systems – a security system, labour structure, recordkeeping and mechanisation.

POTENTIAL NEW ERA FARMERS (51 HA TO 249 TONS)

Kopano Lentswetshipi who is 37, began farming alongside his father at Weltevrede Village near Mahikeng. In 2014, his father gave him 45 ha to cultivate, and since then he has expanded to 200 ha and established Thusano Excellency. He has also invested in machinery and strengthened the administrative side of his business. Kopano began his farming journey at a young age under his father's guidance. Today this father-and-son team is trying to equip themselves with all the knowledge they need to grow their farming business.

Thembakuye Jeff Hlela (37) farms near Ixopo in KwaZulu-Natal, where he produces maize and soybeans through Hangala Farming. He also grows a variety of organic vegetables and herbs for household use. As an agricultural management graduate, he worked in several areas of commercial agriculture, returning "to his roots". His interest in farming was sparked by his grandparents, who were subsistence farmers. Despite crop losses caused by hail, wind and livestock damage, he remains committed to expanding his operation and securing land of his own.

Vincent Ntuli (45) farms at Springbokpan in North West. After his father's death in 2015, he repaired the family's old machinery and planted his first 15 ha, using income from his mining job. He now cultivates more than 100 ha, creates employment and leases land from members of the local community. Vincent joined the Itsoseng Study Group in 2015 and has been part of the FDP programme ever since. While he is still growing his business and expanding his fleet with proper tractors and equipment, he dreams of owning his own farm.

SMALLHOLDER FARMERS (11 HA TO 50 HA)

Lubabalo Jordan (53) is another farmer who was inspired by his father to take up farming. After working in engineering in South Africa and Ireland, he returned to the agricultural roots his father established. He now farms near Mthatha in the Eastern Cape. Since joining Grain SA three years ago, he has expanded his maize production from 3 ha to 13 ha. He is the chairperson of the Bangilizwe Study Group.

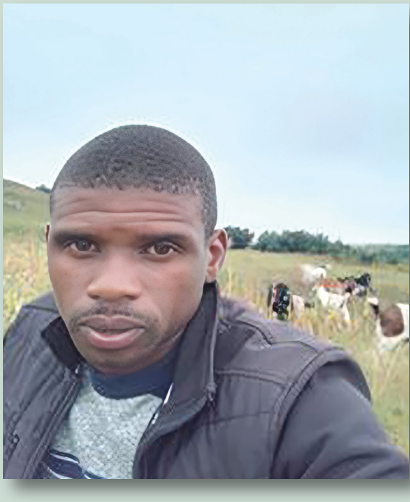
The oldest finalist in the 2026 competition is **Mfaniseni Mnculwane**, who is 78. Mfaniseni began producing maize and broiler chickens near Estcourt in KwaZulu-Natal after returning home from Gauteng in 2002, where he worked in construction. As a Grain SA member since 2011, he finances his own inputs and mechanisation. In his free time, he assists newer study group members with chemical weed control to ensure that they can attain better yields.

These are the...

Having grown up in poverty, farmer **Stuurman Motau** (64) learned that farming was his path to self-sufficiency and family security. He farms with maize and beans near Groblersdal in Limpopo, while also running a substantial livestock operation. Since joining Grain SA in 2019, he has improved his grain yield from less than 1 t/ha to between 4 t/ha and 6 t/ha. He also assists neighbouring farmers with land preparation and planting. As a dedicated participant in the study group workshops and training, he is now aiming for a 6 t/ha to 7 t/ha yield.

SUBSISTENCE FARMERS (LESS THAN 10 HA)

Hombile Nombebe (72) farms in the Eastern Cape and joined Grain SA in 2019. Since then, his farming operation has expanded from 0,5 ha to at least 1 ha. His steady progress and consistently good crops are a result of his training in maize and dry bean production, together with careful planting and weed control.



Manqoba Nkosi (39) farms in Mpumalanga, where he is producing maize and soybeans and also owns cattle, goats and sheep. He holds a qualification in farm management and joined Grain SA in 2016. Improved yields and consistent participation in the programme have strengthened an operation that this keen farmer hopes to expand to 10 ha.

Nkosingiphile Nhlabathi (52) farms in Mpumalanga, where he combines grain production with cattle, goats and chickens. Before joining Grain SA in 2014, he harvested less than 1 t/ha. Through the mentorship of Grain SA and Sizama Impilo Cooperative, he has achieved consistently high-level production, yielding 7 t/ha in the past two seasons.

COMPILED BY THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Photo: Ethan Lubbe

MANAGING an El Niño year

Climate forecasts indicate that a strong El Niño could develop during the 2026/2027 production season. The fact that lower rainfall is expected in an El Niño year means that drought conditions may occur. This highlights the importance of thorough crop and risk planning.

First and foremost, managing an El Niño year is about moisture management and making better use of rainfall. This includes conserving soil moisture, capturing and making the best possible use of available moisture for the crop, and selecting the most suitable crop to utilise limited moisture optimally.

In an El Niño year, producers should avoid making hasty decisions. Stick to what is familiar and what works on your farm. Focus on effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness, as these are where significant savings can be realised. Precision farming is always more rewarding in a challenging year.

These are only guidelines to consider. Consult agricultural advisors in your area and develop a plan that suits your specific circumstances.

GUIDELINES TO CONSIDER

Manage moisture for crops effectively

- Liming remains extremely important, especially during an El Niño year. Acidic soils inhibit root growth and reduce the nutrient and moisture uptake from deeper soil layers, which is limiting crop growth and production. Conduct precision soil analyses and variable-rate lime applications.
- Try to store as much moisture as possible before planting, especially in the western parts of the country. Loose soil in a conventional system helps to capture rainfall. Aim to have fields ready to absorb rainwater before the first spring rains. This allows moisture to infiltrate the soil and reduces runoff. It is important to loosen the soil again as soon as possible after rain to minimise moisture loss.
- Do everything possible to promote the development of strong root systems. In a drought year, good root development is critically important and should be optimised. Proper primary tillage can help achieve this.

Select and manage the crop

- Analyse the production history of your land, particularly rainfall patterns and results from previous El Niño years. Plan according to the dominant soil types on the farm.
- Adjust the yield targets according to the soil's potential. Be careful not to plan for unrealistically high yields.
- Select crops based on profitability, considering the current soil moisture, expected rainfall and realistic yield targets. If a crop cannot be produced profitably, consider not planting it.
- Choose crop and planting date combinations that have the best chance of surviving a midsummer drought. Always plant a package of cultivars.
- Sunflower is well known for tolerating drought better than maize. Consider planting sunflowers rather than maize on high-risk soils. Be cautious of soybeans, as it may abort flowers under excessive heat.
- Plant the chosen cultivar package at the recommended plant population and adjust the population levels according to the soil moisture, yield potential and soil type.

Fertilisation and weed/pest control

- Timely and effective weed control is essential. Do not plant in a weed-infested seedbed. Consider combining chemical and mechanical weed control to keep fields clean.
- Pay particular attention to the management of nematodes and root diseases.
- Fertiliser placement also plays an important role. If the upper soil layer is unlikely to remain sufficiently moist, placing fertiliser deeper in the soil may improve nutrient availability to the crop.
- Maintain the initial fertiliser programme but manage topdressing according to the expected yield potential. Consider adjusting the type of topdressing fertiliser to optimise water-use efficiency.
- Apply fertiliser in a way that allows roots to access nutrients easily and in a plant-available form. For example, consider band placement and deeper fertiliser application.

Mechanisation

- Ensure tractors are used as effectively and efficiently as possible. Reduce tractor hours where feasible to save on diesel costs.
- Inspect wear parts on implements regularly and replace when necessary. Excessively worn ploughshares increase the fuel consumption.

Expenses and markets

- Reduce expenses to the bare minimum. In a drought year, and especially in the following year, price management becomes critically important.
- Consider using options markets to hedge grain prices without committing to physical delivery.

This is a shortened version of an article that appeared in SA Graan/Grain in May 2023.

PIETMAN BOTHA – INDEPENDENT AGRICULTURAL CONSULTANT

Photo: Johan Kunz

Become a successful livestock farmer

PART 1: The production cycle

Producing a calf every year is one of the most important objectives in a profitable beef cattle enterprise. However, good reproductive performance does not begin when the bull is placed with the cows. It starts much earlier, with veld management, nutrition, animal growth, body condition, weighing and planning the breeding season.

The introduction of controlled grazing systems, such as camps and rotational grazing, together with controlled breeding seasons, has allowed livestock farmers to manage their animals more efficiently. Instead of allowing cattle to breed and calve year-round, the farmer can align the herd's production cycle with the period when the farm naturally provides its best nutrition.

This is important because the farmer is always working with two closely linked cycles:

1. The environmental cycle, which is mainly influenced by the rainfall and temperature, and determines the quantity and quality of grazing available throughout the year.
2. The animal's production cycle, which determines how much nutrition the cow requires at various stages such as pregnancy, calving, lactation, mating and the dry period.

Successful livestock management is largely about bringing these two cycles together.

LET THE VELD SUPPORT THE PRODUCTION CYCLE

The nutritional requirements of a cow do not remain the same throughout the year. A dry cow has a relatively low requirement compared with a cow that has recently calved, is producing milk and must become pregnant again. This period after calving is particularly demanding.

A cow needs sufficient nutrients to maintain herself, produce milk for her calf and recover reproductively so that she can conceive again. If she calves during poor grazing, the farmer may have to provide considerable supplementary feed to meet the resulting nutritional shortfall. This can quickly become expensive.

Consider a simple example. If a cow consumes about 10 kg of poor-quality dry grass containing only 5% crude protein, the grazing provides approximately 500 g of crude protein. A dry cow may require only a relatively small additional amount of protein. However, a lactating cow that must produce milk and prepare to conceive again has a much higher requirement. The difference has to come from somewhere. If the veld cannot provide it, the farmer must provide it through supplementation. When this has to be done for many cows over a lengthy period, feed costs increase significantly.

For this reason, one of the most effective ways of reducing production costs is to plan the calving season so that the cow's period of highest nutritional demand coincides as closely as possible with the period when the farm has its best natural grazing.

The farmer should therefore aim for cows to calve shortly before the best grazing becomes available. In a summer-rainfall environment, this allows improving summer veld to support milk production, recovery after calving and preparation for the next mating period. The veld then becomes an important part of the reproductive programme rather than simply a place where cattle graze.

Control the breeding season

The timing of mating is one of the production factors that the farmer can control. Once the breeding season begins, the approximate calving period can also be predicted, as a cow is pregnant for roughly nine months. A defined mating season therefore gives structure to the entire production year.

In many summer-rainfall areas, cows can be mated during summer so that they calve at the beginning of the following summer grazing period. The exact months will vary by region because rainfall patterns differ. Farmers in drier areas, where effective rainfall arrives later, may need to breed later than farmers in wetter areas.The principle is more important than the exact date. The breeding calendar should follow the farm's feed calendar.

A controlled breeding season of less than about three months also creates a more concentrated calving season. This makes management easier because calving, vaccinations, weighing, weaning, pregnancy diagnosis and marketing can all be carried out on more uniform groups of animals. It also becomes much easier to measure the reproductive performance.

When bulls remain with the herd throughout the year, it can be difficult to know exactly when cows were exposed, when they should calve and which animals have failed reproductively. A defined mating season produces clearer information and allows the farmer to identify problem animals much sooner.

> The breeding calendar should follow the farm's feed calendar.

Natural mating is a practical breeding system for many developing and commercial cattle farmers. It requires less specialised infrastructure and technical intervention than some assisted reproductive systems, but this does not mean the bull should simply remain with the cows permanently. Natural mating works best when it is planned and controlled.

MLIBO QOTOYI – JUNIOR OPERATIONS MANAGER: PGP

Young farmers need opportunities

Kelebogile Magogodi, a young North West farmer, who is producing maize and groundnuts.

In agriculture, the conversation often focusses on how to attract more young people into farming. However, the reality is that many young people are already farming. Their challenge is no longer deciding whether agriculture is for them, but finding the support, opportunities and resources needed to grow.

A YOUNG THIRD-GENERATION FARMER SHARES

Kelebogile Magogodi is a young grain farmer from Makgobistad in North West, who recently joined the PGP Farmer Development Programme (FDP). As a third-generation farmer producing maize and groundnuts, Kelebogile's connection to agriculture began long before she managed her own fields. What started as childhood memories gradually became a passion and eventually a career.

Today, agriculture is not only part of her family's legacy – it is the future she is actively building for herself. But like many young farmers across South Africa, the road has not been without challenges. Access to capital remains one of the biggest barriers to growth. Modern farming equipment is expensive, and financing is often difficult to secure.

For Kelebogile, the absence of critical machinery has directly impacted her operation. Without access to modern equipment, harvesting becomes more labour-intensive, more costly and less efficient. Delays during critical periods of the season can affect productivity and profitability.

Despite these challenges, Kelebogile remains focussed on the future. Her vision extends beyond producing maize and groundnuts. She wants to expand her farming operation, access additional land, improve mechanisation and eventually participate in value addition and agro-processing.

In many ways, her ambitions reflect a broader shift among young farmers. They are not only interested in producing commodities. They are looking for opportunities throughout the agricultural value chain. They want to build businesses, create employment and contribute to economic growth in their communities.

Kelebogile is not asking for shortcuts, but for opportunities. 'Once you are already farming, practical support becomes much more important than encouragement,' she says. Motivation may help someone start the journey, but access to finance, markets, mechanisation, mentorship and technical support often determines whether that journey can continue. This is where farmer development programmes play an important role in helping young farmers move from potential to progress.

Although Kelebogile is still new to the FDP, she is optimistic about the opportunities it presents and the role it can play in her development as a young grain farmer. For her, one of the programme's most valuable aspects is the opportunity to receive mentorship from successful commercial producers.

Through the PGP FDP, developing farmers are introduced to learning opportunities, mentorship, technical guidance and industry networks that can help strengthen their farming businesses over time.

For Kelebogile, this support is closely linked to her long-term vision. 'I am confident that the programme will play an important role in my development as a young grain farmer and help me achieve my long-term goal of building a sustainable commercial farming operation.'

Kelebogile's story offers an important reminder: The future of agriculture is not something that lies decades ahead. It is already taking shape in fields across the country, where young farmers are planting crops, taking risks, learning from setbacks and building businesses despite significant challenges.

The question is no longer whether young people have a place in agriculture. The question is whether the sector is creating enough opportunities for them to succeed. For PGP, the answer lies in continued investment in farmer development, mentorship, skills development and the creation of pathways for growth.

Supporting young farmers is not simply about helping individuals build successful businesses. It is about strengthening food security, supporting rural economies and securing the future of South African agriculture. Young farmers do not need to be convinced that agriculture matters. They are already proving it every day. What they need is the opportunity to grow.

NOLO BAKWA – COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: GRAIN SA

Helping farmers reach their full potential

The PGP Farmer Development Programme (FDP) team believes that farmer development is about more than just training and learning new skills. It is also about supporting and developing the individual farmer through study group meetings and farm visits.

When developing farmers progress beyond the study groups and are close to farming independently, the PGP team helps them take the final step. During farm visits regional development managers and mentors spend time with the farmers, get to know them on a personal level, and provide guidance and advice throughout the farming season. During the June/July period, a total of 191 farm visits were conducted, during which farmers were assisted with harvesting, given tips on storing the produce and advised on marketing.

Study group meetings give farmers access to helpful information and expert advice. These meetings help the team to get to know the farmers better, while farmers develop trust and confidence in the team. It is a time when farmers can meet to share and learn from each other. During June and July 189 study group meetings took place.

Here is one of the proud farmers from the Newcastle SG. This group was hard at work threshing and storing their harvested crop.

The farmers of Donkerhoek SG were busy harvesting, shelling and bagging maize.

In the Eastern Cape, Siyabonga Nomlala was visited by Eric Wiggill, regional development manager. They had started harvesting 35 ha of yellow maize.

Discussions at the Dundee SG centred around the challenges the farmers experienced. Apart from late delivery of inputs, they were also burdened by bad weather conditions.

During mentor Johan Nel's visit to the Ramafole SG harvesting, storage, costing and bookkeeping were discussed.

Farmer Jabu Matshinini was harvesting when regional development manager from the Free State, Jacques Roux, paid his farm a visit.

Mentor Paul Wiggill advised Sanele Mbhele on the dangers of mycotoxins and storage of sugar beans.

A film crew visited Vincent Ntuli's farm in North West to shoot a video for the Farmer of the Year competition. Vincent is a finalist in the potential commercial farmer category.