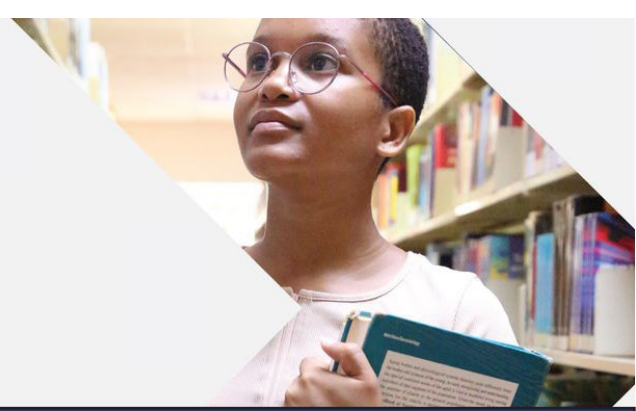




University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

UNIVEN Weekly e-Newsletter



ISSUE 23 | 11 April 2025

Empowering Farmers for a Sustainable Future: University of Venda Hosts Groundbreaking Farmers Workshop



University of Venda staff and guests

On Wednesday, 9 April 2025, the University of Venda's Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture, in partnership with Africa International Trade Connect, held an inspiring and insightful workshop for farmers. This workshop took place at the University of Venda (UNIVEN) Agricultural Hall. Over 280 farmers, students, and industry stakeholders attended this impactful workshop, which aimed to prepare participants for the annual Farmers Day in August.

The primary objective of the workshop was to address the challenges farmers face, such as limited access to capital, market opportunities, and compliance issues. Key stakeholders, including municipalities, SARS, banks, and other relevant entities, collaborated to discuss strategies for market access, explore funding opportunities, and navigate compliance challenges.

During the official opening of the workshop, Prof. Natasha Potgieter, the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture, emphasised the importance of collaborating with key stakeholders to discuss compliance issues. This includes working with the South African Revenue Service (SARS), the banking sector, Municipalities, and other partners to support the agricultural community. Prof. Potgieter stated that the faculty is committed to sharing skills and knowledge while supporting funding and marketing initiatives.

By fostering collaborations with organisations like AITC and other stakeholders, UNIVEN aims to establish a strong network that comprehensively supports our farming community.



Prof Natasha Potgieter, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture

She explained that the workshop would provide valuable demonstrations and resources to help farmers comply with regulations, creating new opportunities for funding, marketing, and attracting investors. Professor Potgieter also recognised the crucial role of agriculture in the South African economy, despite the difficulties posed by financial constraints and compliance challenges. She concluded her speech by stating that the workshop aims to focus on discussing solutions for market access, exploring funding opportunities, and addressing compliance issues.



Mrs Susan Mukanganyama, CEO of Africa International Trade Connect

Mrs Susan Mukanganyama, the CEO of Africa International Trade Connect (AITC), delivered an enlightening keynote address during the combined workshop. She began her speech by explaining that AITC is a distinguished organisation dedicated to connecting farmers and businesses with investors, buyers, and resources, thereby fostering growth within the agricultural sector. By collaborating with the Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture, AITC creates a platform that enables knowledge

sharing, networking, and practical solutions for the farming community.

Mrs Mukanganyama acknowledged the importance of collaboration across industry sectors, particularly in agriculture. She expressed her gratitude to financial institutions such as ABSA Bank, Standard Bank, and various municipalities for their support.

She also addressed critical issues such as access to capital, information sharing, trust between trading partners, and the absence of established trade rules. She stressed the importance of having a registered business and meeting necessary criteria to engage effectively in global trade. Additionally, she called for the creation of financial and trade networks to empower African businesses, especially those led by women, youth, and persons with disabilities, and encouraged business owners to seek support in scaling their operations.



Ms Thifheli Kutama, UNIVEN Farm Manager

During the workshop, Ms Thifheli Kutama said this workshop is meant to provide a platform for sharing knowledge and discussing compliance to enable participants to access markets and funding while attracting investors.

She highlighted the role of the AITC and noted that through interactive discussions and practical guidance, participants would gain a deeper understanding of the importance of compliance and how to implement it in their farming operations effectively.

Ms Freda Makoto from UNIVEN Office of Technology Transfer spoke about the role of innovation in agriculture and its potential for

job creation and entrepreneurship. She emphasised the importance of protecting and commercialising agricultural knowledge, particularly Indigenous practices, through Intellectual Property (IP) laws. Makoto explained the way farmers could retain ownership of their innovations, including patents, trademarks, and plant breeders' rights. She shared examples of successful agricultural innovations such as muringa and Rooibos tea, while encouraging farmers to explore opportunities for commercialisation. Ms Makoto also stressed the value of South Africa's biodiversity, particularly in the Venda region as a valuable resource for economic growth. She urged farmers to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset and consider Agro processing as a way to contribute to food security beyond traditional farming practices.

Mr Mukundi Mushaphi, Manager, Local Economic Development (LED) at Vhembe District Municipality expressed his appreciation for the partnership with UNIVEN and emphasised the importance of collaboration with various organisations. He encouraged farmers to expand their knowledge and skills, from growing fruits like mangoes to managing damaged crops.

Farmers also received practical guidance on how to open business accounts, register their businesses, and apply for funding. Representatives from Thulamela Municipality, the South African Revenue Service (SARS), the Small Enterprise Development Finance Agency (SEDFA), ABSA, and Standard Bank provided valuable advice on accessing financial support and business services. These messages reinforced the workshop's goal of empowering farmers to succeed in the competitive agricultural market.

This workshop successfully created a platform for knowledge exchange, networking, and skill-building among farmers, students, and industry professionals. It underscored the importance of innovation, collaboration, and compliance in driving the future growth of agriculture in South Africa. As farmers continue to navigate challenges and opportunities, the university remains

committed to supporting their efforts in building a sustainable and prosperous agricultural sector.

Mr Thomas Mokoatlo, the regional manager for AITC Limpopo province, expressed his excitement at the turnout of farmers who came to learn about compliance. He concluded by encouraging farmers to participate in the upcoming conference with investors, funders, and other stakeholders who can contribute to their growth and success.

Mr. Humbelani Nemadzhilili, Manager: Spatial Plan and Land Use at Thulamela Municipality explained the process of acquiring permission to occupy (PTO) from the chief to the municipality. He assured farmers that the municipalities would provide the necessary support to help them comply with the requirements of their funders.

The South African Revenue Services was represented by Ms. Kholani Mavundza, who actively engaged with farmers to help them understand their tax compliance and regulatory requirements. Farmers were encouraged to stay informed about their obligations not only to secure funding but also to avoid penalties and other consequences.

To complete the compliance circle, the university invited financial institutions to give farmers information about funding packages available. Mr Ndivho Nemutudi represented Absa, while Mr Mukondi Nemavhulani represented Standard Bank.



Engaging exhibitors



Pictures of panel members who were also speakers during the workshop

Advanced Construction Standards for UNIVEN as it Hosts Construction Industry Development Board BUILD Programme to Strengthen Skills and Compliance in Construction



On Friday, 04 April 2025, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) hosted the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) BUILD Programme at the Research Conference Centre. The session that was attended by industry professionals, emerging contractors, and development facilitators, staff members from finance, facilities and legal services aimed to provide critical training on construction standards, compliance, and enterprise development.

Attendees were introduced to the CIDB-BUILD Programme and given an overview of its significance in enhancing industry standards and skills development. The CIDB training conducted was specifically for the Finance, Facilities and Legal Service staff.



Mr Aluwani Magadani, Director: Facilities Management

During the session, Mr Aluwani Magadani, warmly welcomed attendees and guest speakers, expressing his appreciation for their presence. He acknowledged the collaborative efforts of various departments including Human Resource, Supply Chain, Finance, and Facilities in organising the session, which aimed

to promoting knowledge sharing and best practices in infrastructure development. He highlighted the importance of compliance with procurement regulations and CIDB standards to enhance supplier performance within the university. Mr Magadani emphasised the significance of the insights to be shared by the CIDB representatives and expressed hope for active engagement throughout the session.



Mr Edward Singo, Manager: Procurement Development CIDB

The first session by Mr Edward Singo delved into the Best Practice Project Assessment Scheme, focusing on quality assurance and compliance in construction. This session provided a platform for industry stakeholders to engage on the best strategies for ensuring high standards in project execution. Mr Singo presentation outlined the implementation of the CIDB Standards for skills and enterprise development in construction projects which focuses on the Skills Development Standard, which mandates structured workplace learning opportunities through contracts, targeting various learner groups including artisans, university students, and professionals.



Pranveer Harriparsadh, Manager: Skills Development CIDB

The second session, facilitated by Mr Pranveer Harriparsadh experts in the field, covered crucial topics such as indirect targeting for enterprise development, tender and contract documentation, and i-Tender and RDP compliance. He touched on the implementation of the CIDB Standards for skills and enterprise development in construction projects. It focused on the Skills Development Standard, which mandates structured workplace learning opportunities through contracts, targeting various learner groups including artisans, university students, and professionals. It introduces the Contract Skills Development Goals (CSDGs), detailing compliance requirements, cost calculations, and roles of both clients and contractors. His presentation also covered the role of the CIDB Skills Development Agency (SDA) and its Learner Management System (LMS), as well as the Standard for Indirect Targeting for Enterprise Development, emphasising support for emerging enterprises through structured development plans.



Mr Karabo Mokone, Register of Project

Mr Karabo Mokone concluded the presentation sessions by giving a presentation that provided training on the iTender and Register of Projects (RoP) systems, focusing on enhancing compliance in the construction procurement process. It outlines the step-by-step registration and compliance procedures required by the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), including advertising tenders, registering project awards, contract terminations, and practical completions. Mr Mokone also highlighted the legal requirements and compliance thresholds for public and private sector projects, emphasises the importance

of accurate data capture, and introduces monitoring tools used by the CIDB to ensure transparency and accountability in the construction sector.



Mrs Beauty Mutheiwana, Director Supply Chain and Expenditure

The CIDB-BUILD session concluded with closing remarks from Mrs Beauty Mutheiwana, Director Supply Chain and Expenditure who expressed

sincere gratitude to the CIDB team and all participants for their active engagement in the training session. She highlighted the value of the knowledge shared, acknowledging it as a crucial step toward improving compliance and implementation within infrastructure development. Mrs Mutheiwana emphasised the importance of continued collaboration and support, noting that challenges remain but can be overcome through ongoing engagement. She also stressed the importance of understanding compliance beyond policy documents, through direct interaction and education.

This impactful training session reaffirmed UNIVEN's commitment to knowledge dissemination and industry collaboration, ensuring that emerging contractors are well-equipped to thrive in a competitive landscape.

Professor Masello mesmerises his audience with an intriguing lecture on birds



Prof Juan Masello, an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences delivered yet another fascinating lecture, this time, it was

about specialisation in birds. The lecture took place on Wednesday 2nd April 2025 in the Life Sciences and Chemistry Building.

The lecture is part of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture initiative called 'Research Conversations,' designed to increase the engagement of the university community with the top-class research conducted in the faculty.

Prof Masello is based at the University of Bielefeld in Germany but faithfully visits the UNIVEN every year. He set the scene for his lecture in the remote, harsh and yet majestically beautiful Falkland Islands, or Islas Malvinas, lying in the southern Atlantic Ocean some 6,000 km south-west of Cape Town. His study is basically on animals. On this occasion were dolphin gulls, but he also spoke about many other seabird species with which he has worked on the Falklands. Prof Masello suggested the hypothesis that individual specialisation could be driven by optimal foraging, dominance and intraspecific competition. He outlined a general model that could be applied to any bird species to estimate foraging effort.

After his lecture, Prof Masello undertook a lengthy conversation with the audience, answering the many questions that ensued. Although the University of Venda biology students have the opportunity to work with a

wide range of plant and animal specialists, the university did not have a bird specialist before the appointment of Prof Masello. Therefore, the student members of the audience were particularly thrilled with the talk and engaged extensively with Prof Masello about his adventures in the field. It is hoped that research conversations such as these will continue to provide information and insights to our up-and-coming young scientists and inspire some of them to become more involved with bird biology.

Prof Masello collaborates closely with UNIVEN's highly rated researcher, Prof Yoshan Moodley of the Department of Biological Sciences. Together, they have worked on several projects and published many papers. Furthermore, the high calibre of research typical of Prof Masello's work helps to improve the level and prestige of the university's research profile.



Attendees of the lecture

If you spot anything out of the ordinary on campus - contact the University Hotline by calling toll free number 0800 212 755 or email: univenhotline@tip-offs.com

Improper conduct includes the following...

- 1. Financial misconduct,**
- 2. Misuse or misappropriation of University assets,**
- 3. Health and safety risks,**
- 4. Plagiarism,**
- 5. Fraud and corruption.**