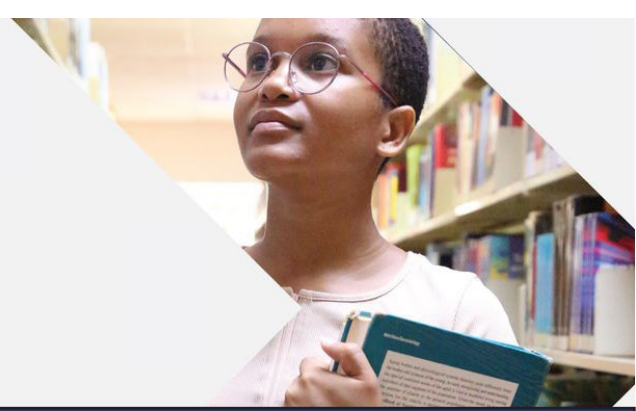




University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

UNIVEN Weekly e-Newsletter



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University of Venda's Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture Spearheads Successful Annual Farmers Day, Introducing Groundbreaking Farmers Market Concept



Group photo of the dignitaries

The University of Venda's Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture celebrated a remarkably successful fourth Annual Farmers' Day, which was hosted by the Experimental Farm on Thursday, 14 August 2025. The event attracted an overwhelming response from representatives of various sectors, including government, municipalities, faith-based organisations, traditional leaders, and community members. Each attendee expressed their understanding and support for the event's mission, demonstrating the widespread appeal of this innovative concept of farmers' markets.

Farmers from all four municipalities in the Vhembe district had the opportunity to

connect and network with fellow farmers, academics, traditional leaders, and agricultural experts. The theme for the annual Farmers Day 2025 was "Strengthening Local Markets and Empowering Farmers for Food Security." This event followed a series of training sessions and workshops aimed at empowering small-scale farmers with technical skills, compliance training, and financial literacy, all of which contribute to food security, rural economic growth, and sustainable livelihoods. The team responsible for running these workshops included Ms Thifheli Kutama, Dr Mpho Tshikororo, Dr Justice Netshipale, Dr Francis Onyando, and the staff from the Experimental Farm. This initiative was led by Prof Natasha Potgieter, the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science,

Engineering and Agriculture. Farmers' Day 2025 reached its peak when we launched UNIVEN FARMERS MARKET, a concept note aimed at establishing a local farmers' market, a gap identified during the contact session with farmers.



The establishment of the UNIVEN Farmers Market will help local farmers save money on transportation costs associated with sending their produce to larger markets outside the province. Additionally, it will eliminate the need for middlemen, who often take a portion of the farmers' profits. By supporting farmers, we will also boost the economy of the Vhembe district, as money will circulate locally. As the market grows, we plan to invite street vendors with mobile kitchens to join, as long as they purchase their ingredients from the farmers at the market. This initiative aims to alleviate poverty by creating jobs and fostering a vibrant, family-friendly atmosphere where visitors can explore local food options. Ultimately, this will contribute to a stronger community by promoting economic growth and supporting local farmers.



Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Venda

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UNIVEN, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, officially opened the University of Venda's Annual Farmers Day, extending a warm welcome to dignitaries, farmers, faculty staff, students, and guests. He acknowledged the significance of Women's Month in his address. Prof Nthambeleni reflected on the theme, "Strengthening Local Markets and Empowering Farmers for Food Security," connecting it to the University's mission of promoting community upliftment and addressing global food challenges.

He emphasised the essential role of agriculture in sustaining families, preserving culture, and driving the economy. He also highlighted the importance of collaboration among academia, government, and farmers. In his speech, Prof. Nthambeleni announced the launch of the UNIVEN Farmers Market, set to begin in the academic year 2026.

Additionally, he mentioned plans for a dedicated agro-processing centre designed to add value to agricultural products and extend their shelf life. These initiatives aim to support small-scale farmers and strengthen rural economies. In conclusion, he expressed his gratitude to Prof Potgieter, Ms Kutama, the organisers, partners, stakeholders, and farmers, reiterating the need for collaborative efforts toward sustainable agricultural solutions.



Cllr Maria Mamedzi, Portfolio Head: Corporate Services Vhembe Municipality

The MEC of Agriculture, Honourable Nakedi Kekana, whose speech was delivered by Acting Executive Mayor of Vhembe, who is the Portfolio Head of Corporate Services, Councillor

Maria Mamedzi, emphasised the university's commitment to supporting local farmers and creating a robust local market. She stressed that the future of agriculture relies not on a single sector but on strong partnerships, a shared vision, and a mutual commitment to sustainable progress. Furthermore, she highlighted the vital role that institutions like UNIVEN play in preparing the next generation of leaders by equipping students, particularly women, with knowledge, entrepreneurial skills, and industry exposure. She added that higher education institutions should not only prepare graduates for employment but also nurture individuals capable of creating their own opportunities.



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

Prof Natasha Potgieter, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, welcomed attendees and emphasised the farmers' day's role in fostering collaboration between government, education, and farmers to strengthen local markets and promote food security. She said the faculty's workshops were aimed at transferring skills to farmers and improving crop and livestock productivity while addressing challenges like climate change, soil degradation, and access to markets. All this is done in alignment with the UN's sustainable development goals of eradicating hunger and ensuring food accessibility for everyone. She encouraged high school students to make UNIVEN a first choice for furthering their studies.



Prof Vhonani Netshandama, Director Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation

Prof Vhonani Netshandama, Director Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation, commended the collective spirit of collaboration demonstrated by farmers and partnering organisations, affirming it as a vital pathway for sustaining and advancing agriculture. In her remarks, Prof Netshandama introduced the Centre of Rapid Incubation within her directorate, which assists farmers in registering their business. She encouraged farmers to embrace the opportunities it provides through consultations and specialised support aimed at strengthening their agricultural practices and fostering long-term growth.



Vhamusanda Pastor John Nemutanzhela, Vhembe Pastors Forum

Representing the Vhembe Pastors Forum, Pastor John Nemutanzhela expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the event and share the same sentiments of assisting local farmers. He commended the University for the excellent organisation of the programme. In his remarks, he highlighted the

pressing issue of unemployment and its adverse effects on women and the girl child, underscoring the need for continued collaborative efforts to address these challenges. He further extended an open invitation for future engagement, affirming the forum's commitment to supporting initiatives of this nature and looking forward to strengthening partnerships with the University.



Mr Emmanuel Mudau, Mathuba Genetics

Mr Emmanuel Mudau of Mathuba Genetics expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to connect with farmers in Vhembe, commending the University of Venda's commitment to walking side by side with the farming community. He urged farmers to view agriculture not only as a livelihood but as a powerful tool to fight poverty, drive innovation, and create lasting impact. Drawing from his own experience of selling livestock at varying prices, he encouraged them to recognise and price the true value of their products based on quality rather than imitation. Mudau further emphasised the need to put knowledge gained from workshops into practice and to embrace unique, forward-thinking approaches that will set them apart in a competitive market.



Khosi Dr. JG Tshifularo from Tshivhase Tribal authority

Representing Thovhele Tshivhase, Khosi Dr. Tshifularo praised the University of Venda's Farmers Day theme as a vital call to action, stressing that food security is both an agricultural necessity and a moral duty central to sustainable development and rural prosperity. He highlighted the need to empower small-scale farmers to transition into competitive, market-oriented commercial producers through modern skills, technology, infrastructure, and market access. He emphasised that locally grown food should feed local communities.



Prof Sebi Lekalakala-Mokgele, DVC: Teaching and Learning

Prof Sebi Lekalakala-Mokgele, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, in delivering the vote of thanks, praised the spirit of unity, innovation, and determination that characterised the Farmers Day.

She reminded participants that true food security depends on action in the fields, not only on policies. Prof Lekalakala-Mokgele applauded the involvement of students as future "scientist-farmers," urging them to begin their farming journeys right from their homes. She expressed heartfelt gratitude to the organiser, Ms. Kutama, and her team while applauding the hard work that is done by Prof Potgieter as the leader of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture.

She also conveyed a word of gratitude to all stakeholders for their contributions, acknowledging the office of the MEC of Agriculture Limpopo, represented by acting Executive Mayor Cllr Mamedzi, Pastor Nemutanzhela, Mr Mudau, Dr Tshikororo, and the exhibitors for showcasing inspiring solutions.



Dr Mpho Tshikororo, the Head of the Department of Agricultural Economics

Dr Mpho Tshikororo, the Head of the Department of Agricultural Economics and a member of the organising team, expressed gratitude to all the exhibitors who supported farmers and participated in the farmers' market by selling essential agricultural products. Among the exhibitors were the University collaborators: the Agricultural Research Council, Tompi Seleka Agricultural College, Madzivhandila Agricultural College, Mashamba TVET College, the Department of Science and Innovation, and many others.



Ms Thifheli Kutama, the Experimental Farm Manager

Ms Thifheli Kutama, the Experimental Farm Manager, announced that the UNIVEN Farmers Market will begin in May 2026. She also stated that the farmers' workshop for both crops and livestock will resume in the academic year 2026. The main highlight of the day was the Farmers Market, which took place from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. By the time the market closed, all the farmers' stalls were empty, confirming that the event was indeed a resounding success.





An Iconic Story of Heavy T Mbedzi Stemming from Rural Roots to Radio Royalty

In August 2025, Heavy Thizwilondi Mbedzi not only takes up a new chapter in his broadcasting journey, but he also officially joins the Department of Marketing, Branding and Communication as the Assistant Media and Sound Broadcasting Officer at UNIVEN Radio, with effect from 01 August 2025. This appointment marks a significant recognition of his expertise, leadership, and contribution to the University's broadcasting and communications landscape.

From the dusty rural village of Ha-Tshikonelo to the commanding heights of South African radio, Heavy T Mbedzi has built an inspiring legacy that spans over two decades. His journey began humbly in the classrooms of Madzikuse Primary

School and later at Madadzhe and Mpandeli High Schools. After matriculating in 1996, financial constraints delayed his university dreams, but despite this, they could not dim his determination.



In 1998, while working long hours in retail, Heavy T found his true calling in radio broadcasting.

What began with a graveyard slot at the now-defunct Tembisa Info Community Radio soon blossomed into a career defined by resilience, creativity, and leadership. Mentored by broadcasting greats such as the late Bob Mabena and Tim Modise, he honed his craft and developed a signature style that captivated audiences.

His breakthrough came in 2004 when he joined UNIVEN Radio, where his rich voice and engaging presence made the Lunch-Time Experience a household favourite. Over the years, he mastered multiple programmes, guided content as Programmes Manager, drove growth as Marketing and Sales Manager, and later shaped the station's vision as Head of Programming and News.

Beyond the microphone, Heavy T is a committed academic.

He earned a BA in Public Administration and Communication Facilitation in 2017, pursued an Honours in Public Administration, and even explored IT and Public Procurement. His passion for learning mirrors his passion for mentoring, having trained and inspired many voices now heard on major national stations.

With over 20 years in broadcasting, Heavy T Mbedzi stands as more than just a presenter, but also as a storyteller, a leader, and a pillar of South African community radio. His story is proof that with passion, perseverance, and a love for learning, one can turn humble beginnings into a legacy that inspires generations, and this is Heavy's Legacy.

"I call on all members of the University community to give Mr Mbedzi the necessary support during his tenure, said Dr Dzaga as he welcomed the Assistant Media and Sound Broadcasting Officer.



UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

**2025 September
Graduation Ceremonies**

The Chancellor of the University of Venda, Adv Mojanku Gumbi, invites all successful graduands to the 2025 Spring Graduation Ceremony, comprising ALL Faculties in ONE session, to take place at the University Auditorium on Friday, 05 September 2025 at 09:00 am.

NB: For more information, contact the Faculty Administrators as follows:

NAME OF FACULTY	FACULTY ADMINISTRATORS	
Faculty of Health Sciences	Aluwani Bugane	015 962 8942
Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education	Gumani Tshimange Mashudu Mainganye	015 962 8888 015 962 8969
Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law	Julius Netshidzivhe	015 962 8961
Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture	Maxwell Maboho Mishumo Nengwekhulu Mukondeleli Masia	015 962 8880 015 962 8954 015 962 8086

Graduands and Guests should arrive TWO HOURS BEFORE the start of the ceremony.

Visit the UNIVEN website: www.univen.ac.za



THOHO YA NZIE

BACKABUDDY CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN

Invest in Student Success. Empower Futures

2025 FUNDRAISING TARGET:

R250,000

WHAT IS THOHO YA NZIE?
A student welfare initiative providing:

- Food Parcels
- Hygiene Items
- Basic Stationery
- To financially vulnerable students, including unfunded undergraduates, defunded students, and postgraduates without bursaries

WHO CAN GIVE?

- UNIVEN Alumni
- Staff and Students
- Local Businesses & Industry Partners
- General Public & International Donors

BE PART OF UBUNTU IN ACTION
Help us build a caring, student-centered university.

JOIN US ON BACKABUDDY
A trusted platform aligned with UNIVEN's 2021–2025 Strategic Plan for digital innovation, student well-being and inclusive support.

DONOR RECOGNITION

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- Digital Thank You Note
- Website & Social Media Mentions
- Invitations to Recognition Events

YOUR IMPACT
Support from the campaign helps students:

- Pursue their studies without interruptions
- Regain dignity
- Focus fully on their academic goals
- Thrive emotionally & mentally

Donate Today. Share Hope. Shape a Future. FOR MORE INFO:

Ms. Tshililo Muthadzwi
082 868 1988
tshililo.muthadzwi@univen.ac.za

Ethics Hotline number:
080 021 2755

Link:
<https://encr.pw/ql1tn>



Innovation in Action: UNIVEN Automates Facilities Management for Staff

The University Uses The Archibus System For Facilities Management/Maintenance. You Can Log A Service Request For Repairs, Maintenance, Waste, Cleaning, And Other Enquiries Which Is Then Directed To The Facilities Management Team.

HOW TO LOG A CALL



SCAN ME

Simply scan the QR code to access Archibus and log your maintenance request in moments. It's quick, easy, and ensures our team can respond promptly to keep things running smoothly.





Log in via your web browser using Chrome:
<https://archibus-prd.univen.ac.za:9000/archibus>



For Maintenance Enquiries
Contact.

 maintenance@univen.ac.za
 Ext: 8222

To Find Out More
Contact.

 Mukhethekanyi.Ndou@univen.ac.za
 Ext: 8605

NOTICE OF THE LAUNCH OF UNIVEN LAW ALUMNI CHAPTER SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, 23 AUGUST 2025

Notice is hereby given of the launch of the UNIVEN Law Alumni Chapter scheduled to take place on Saturday, **23 August 2025**, at the **Protea Hotel Fire and Ice** in **Pretoria**. Registration will commence at **13:00**, followed by the official start of the event at **14:00**. This landmark launch aims to reconnect alumni, celebrate our shared legacy, and strengthen the relationship between the University and its Law alumni.

The event shall also serve as an electoral meeting to elect the members of the Executive Committee of the Chapter. A call for nominations, inviting law alumni to nominate their preferred candidates for election, shall be sent under separate communication.

Kindly bring a relevant form of identification (ID or Driver's License) to facilitate registration, as only verified members of the Convocation who are Law alumni shall be permitted to enter the venue. The dress code is formal, semi-formal, or traditional attire.

We look forward to your presence as we embark on this exciting new journey together.

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.**