

Thato Moagi blends her love for farming with her passion for women and keeps the success of women in agriculture unstoppable

13 September 2021

At 27 years of age, Thato Moagi is arguable one of the youngest women in agriculture. She speaks to us from her 50-hectare Legae La Banareng farm, in Modimolle, Limpopo, which has become a model of successful mixed farming, from livestock to crops, and even an apiary.

Thato is the first South African to receive the prestigious Nuffield Agriculture Scholarship, a Trust based in the UK. Her hard work and achievements in agriculture have earned her many awards, including the Limpopo province's Female Farmer of the Year and Female Entrepreneur of the Year.

Thato is also the secretary of Waterberg Women Farmers Association, and a member of the African Farmers Association of South Africa, and Bosveld Dorper Club and even with all these accolades, she says agriculture is not without its racial and gender issues.

“It’s not easy being a young woman in an industry that is dominated by men. I face many barriers like ageism, sexism and the like. But when you overcome some of those barriers you can prove that this space is enough for everyone, no matter what they look like.”

While these barriers exist, they also offer an opportunity for women to create opportunities and start to open doors for each other. “I was lucky to get into a partnership with my dad early on with a majority stakeholder position,” Thato says. “By networking successfully, I was able to overcome those barriers.”

She emphasises the importance of networking in business as it allows you access to opportunities you otherwise may not have. “We need to work with instead of against people. Work with experts, the people who came before who know what they are doing, and use those networks to elevate your voice, knowing that you have that backing,” Thato says. She says networking also helps to free up some time to grow rather than just do the same thing over and over because leveraging each other's knowledge makes a business stronger.

But it’s not so easy for others, who have had trouble with access to land, machinery, and farming technology. Much of the land women work on is rented or land for subsistence farming that directly services the community – not on an industrial scale.

"We still need to open these spaces to women and provide access to land, to mechanisation, and infrastructure. We don't realise it but even physically, machinery is designed for men so that needs to change too. We also need commercial access so that young women can invest in their businesses, families, and futures," she says.

Thato beams with pride when she talks about the women in her life who inspired her to own her success; her grandmother who was a domestic worker and her mother who owned a hair salon. "There are no small jobs for women – these women showed me the meaning of being independent, earning your own salary, and providing for the next generation. They showed me the need to be financially independent." She says her mother showed her that she could do absolutely anything and inspire other women to do the same.

"As for being a woman, we tend to accomplish the most amazing things every day without compensation or recognition. We have an innate sense work ethic that goes beyond awards and accolades and I am inspired by women every single day."

Thato is part of the Womentum Tribe, a class of powerful women from different disciplines who are spearheading the #SheOwnsHerSuccess campaign. They inspire other women towards unapologetically owning their success by sharing their own journeys to success. To hear more about Thato, please visit www.momentum.co.za to listen to her podcast.

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END



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