



## **Moleboheng LEKOTA**

**Home Country:** Lesotho

**Degree:** PhD in Molecular Plant Pathology

**Expertise:** Agriculture, Biotechnology

**Research Focus:** Disease Resistance in Potatoes

**Host University:** University of Pretoria, South Africa

**Fellowship Awarded:** 2016

Moleboheng Lekota was born and raised in the Quthing district of Lesotho, a landlocked country completely surrounded by South Africa. Her father worked to educate local farmers on how to apply the latest scientific research to their agricultural practices. He would tell Moleboheng about his discussions with the farmers, who would often complain about the problems that impacted their crop yields. This, combined with her family's dependence on its own vegetable fields, inspired her to pursue a career in plant pathology and biotechnology.

Moleboheng obtained a Diploma from Lesotho Agricultural College, followed in 2003 by a BSc in General Agriculture from the National University of Lesotho where she won an award as the best student in the department. After this she spent four years as a horticultural research officer for the country's Ministry of Agriculture. In 2008, Moleboheng received an Australia awards scholarship that enabled her to study at the University of Sydney towards an MSc in Agricultural Technologies, specializing in Plant Biotechnology. From 2010 to 2014 she worked as a Lecturer in the Department of Crop Science at the National University of Lesotho (NUL).

The PhD study focuses on understanding the molecular and biochemical mechanisms underlying resistance to powdery scab disease in potatoes. This vegetable is an important crop in many countries; however infections such as powdery scab reduce its quality and marketability. To date, no effective method for controlling the disease has been found and the pathogen that causes it is able to live in the soil for many years. Moleboheng's study will help farmers to select types of potato that are genetically more resistant to disease and apply more effective disease control processes.

After her studies in South Africa, Moleboheng plans to return to her work as a lecturer and researcher at NUL. Her long term goal is to become a Professor in Molecular Plant Pathology.