

ProAgri

technology for the farmer

A F R I C A

No 123

Free



**Smart farmer's guide to
buying the right tractor**

p 5

**Drones in farming:
From toy to
precision tool**



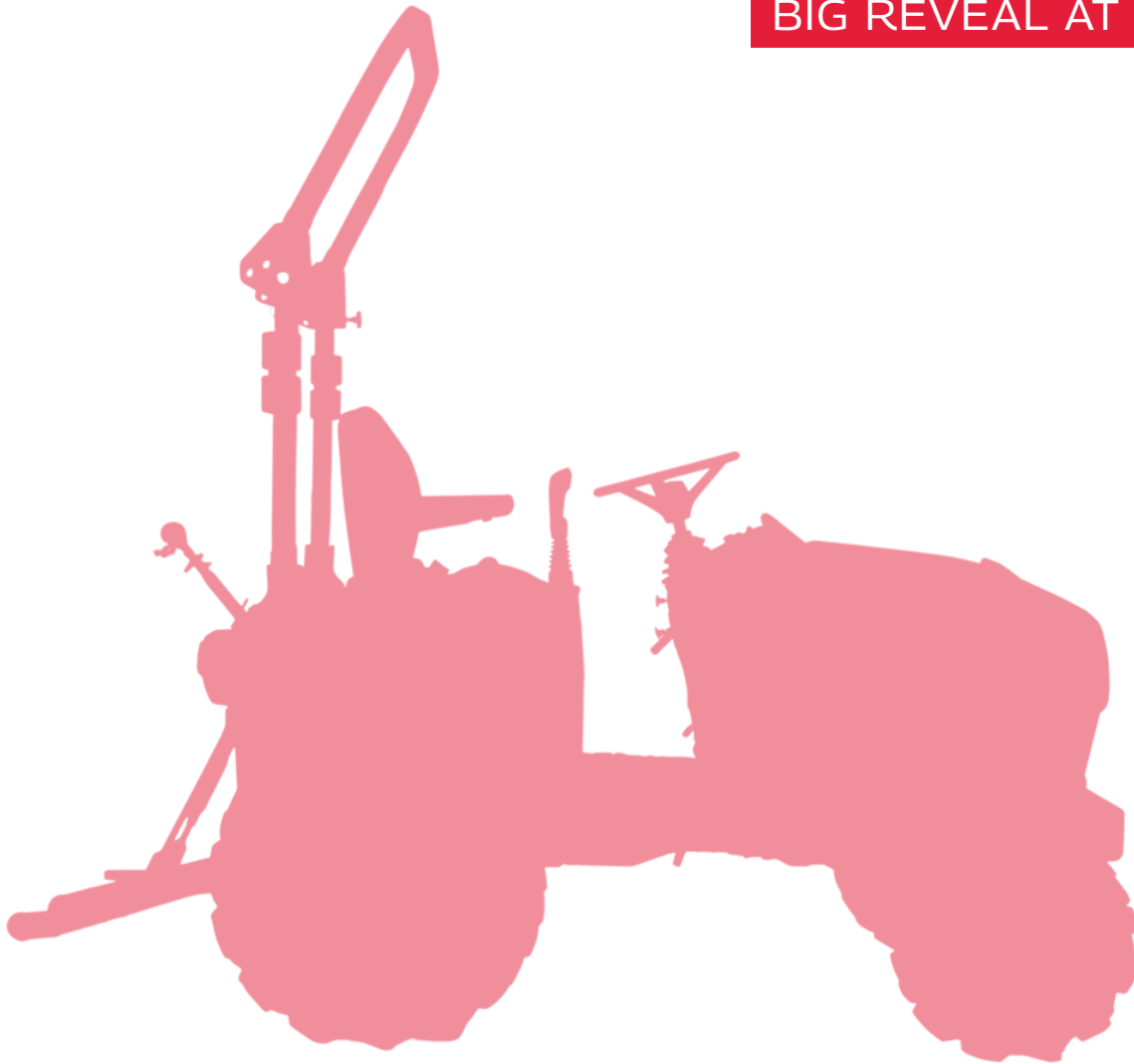
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Dear ProAgri Africa readers,

Across Africa, farming is still about one simple thing ... getting the job done, season after season, with what you have available. Whether you are a small-scale farmer in Zambia, a maize farmer in Botswana, or a mixed farmer in Kenya, the challenges may look different, but the pressure is often the same: make it work, even when conditions are not perfect.

Right now, many farmers across the continent are dealing with rising input costs. Fuel, fertiliser, feed and transport all continue to rise, and there is little sign of relief in the short term. For most farmers, this means tighter planning, careful spending and making every litre of diesel and every hectare count.

The weather is also playing its part again this season. Some areas have received heavy rains that delayed planting or harvesting, while others are watching closely as forecasts point towards more uncertain conditions. It is a reminder that farming in Africa always requires patience, quick decisions and the ability to adjust when things change without warning.

Transport remains one of the biggest hidden pressures in agriculture. Getting produce from farm to market is not always simple. Long distances, rough roads and high fuel costs continue to add strain, especially for commercial farmers and transport operators moving goods across borders. When transport fails or becomes too expensive, the whole

chain feels it, from the farm gate to the final buyer.

This is where our cover story for this month comes in. We look at the new FAW J7 truck, recently launched and already making its way into the African transport space. Built for long-distance hauling, it focuses on what really matters for operators here: fuel use, driver comfort on long roads and reliability when the loads are heavy and the distances are long. Read more on page 2.

As we move further into the dry and windy periods in many parts of Africa, farmers are also being reminded to stay alert and prepared for veld and farm fire risks. Simple planning, working firebreaks, and having equipment ready can make a big difference when conditions change quickly. Turn to page 14 for more.

Across the region, many farmers are now moving into harvest, while others are still preparing for the final stretch of the season. After months of hard work, careful decisions and working around the weather and rising costs, this is the moment where patience and effort start to show in the field. We wish all our farmers a safe, smooth, and successful harvesting season ahead.

Thank you for reading with us.

ProAgri greetings!
Bianca Pretorius
bianca@proagri.co.za

Cover

The new FAW J7 enters the African transport space with a clear focus on what matters most on the road: fuel efficiency, reliability and driver comfort over long distances.



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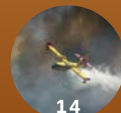
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DRIVE BOLD, drive the new FAW J7



FAW has done it again! If you're looking to upgrade your fleet and take your long-haul transport business to the next level, you need to check out the all-new flagship FAW J7 heavy-duty performance truck.

Recently launched in Sandton, Johannesburg, the J7 brings sophistication, technology, reliability and next-level performance to the market. The J7 won't replace the trusted JH6 range. However, it will offer a refined, premium version of what FAW has already proven works.

Built with fleet productivity, safety and operator comfort in mind, the J7 is designed to tackle the real demands of African conditions.

It boasts a high-output powertrain, automated transmission, advanced safety systems and connected-driver comfort, all neatly wrapped in one valuable product that challenges other brands in the market.

"This vehicle is designed for the demands of modern logistics businesses that need dependable performance, lower operating pressure, and a truck that supports both business productivity, driver comfort and safety on long-distance routes, backed with a B10 service life of 1,5 million kilometres," said Xin Huang, COO of FAW Trucks South Africa, during the launch event.

A tried and tested product

The development of the J7 took six years and countless tests to ensure it's a top-of-the-range competitor against other brands, deploying 200 units over a six-year period. This culminated in over 18 million km of testing.

Ricqui Alexander, National Service Manager at FAW, said: "This included case testing, long haul testing and short haul testing across various different European and Asian markets. One notable test included a route from Changchun, where FAW head offices are in China, to Turin in Italy. This particular corridor is 20 000 kilometres long and covers 99,9% of global operating scenarios. This includes mountainous areas, extreme temperatures, plateaus and dust environments and in some cases even more extreme conditions than one would experience in South Africa."

These tests were done in conjunction with well-established companies like ZF and Bosch to ensure that the maximum service life could be achieved from these units.

by Natasha Pretorius

"The J7, if maintained correctly and maintenance practices are adhered to, achieves a retail service life of 1,5 million kilometres," Alexander added.

Getting down to the basics

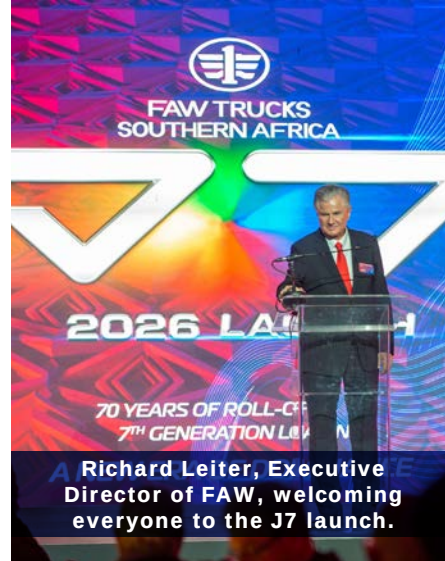
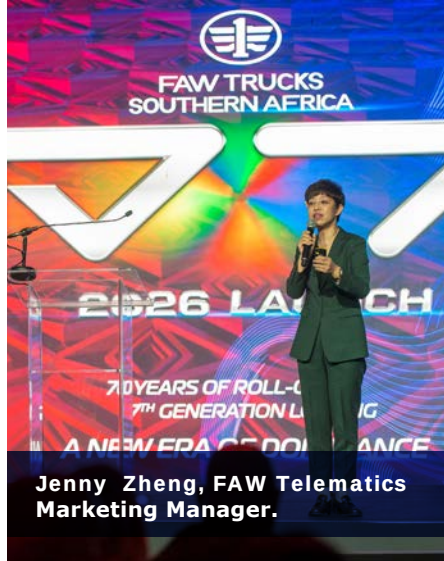
The J7 enters the market as a premium 6x4 tractor for long-haul and cross-border transport, with clear emphasis on driver experience, safety and comfort.

It comes with a premium extra-wide sleeper of 900 mm, a high-roof cab height of 2 150 mm and a flat-floor layout.

Features include a 600 mm air suspension seat, integrated 27-litre fridge, noise reduction of 63,2 dB while driving, automatic climate control and a generous 1 350-litre storage space. The reinforced all-steel cab structure is paired with advanced driver-assistance



Ricqui Alexander, National Service Manager of FAW Trucks Southern Africa during the J7 launch.



and safety systems, including AEBS (Advanced Emergency Braking System), ESC (Electronic Stability Control), FCW (Forward Collision Warning), LDWS (Lane Departure Warning System), TPMS (Tire Pressure Monitoring System) and an integrated camera-monitor system to keep drivers focused and safe.

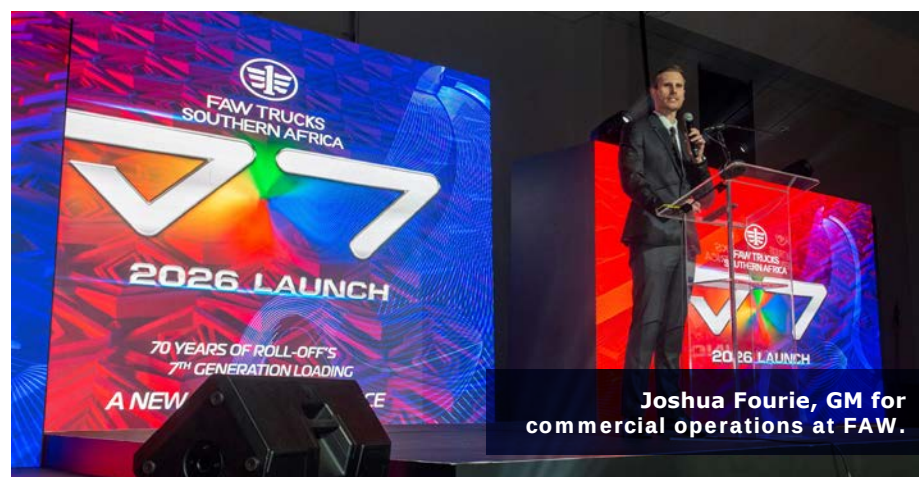
FAW Trucks Southern Africa also offers suspension options tailored to operational needs: Rear air suspension for sensitive cargo or parabolic leaf springs for maximum durability and strength.

Top-of-the-range operating system

With a state-of-the-art truck, you should have superior telematics, and this is where the Chinese company Yuwei comes in. They have developed the FAW OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) telematics system used in FAW products.

"Yuwei is FAW's OEM telematics. After years of evolution, we have become an international leader in OEM technologies. We connect over 2,2 million vehicles in real time, have more than 200 000 fleet partners, a global annual growth of more than 300 000 online vehicles and process 220 TB of data. But global leadership is not only about data but about presence," said Jane Zheng, Marketing Manager for FAW Telematics.

This OEM system is a fully scaled API (Application Programming Interface) system to help you keep track of your fleet, your drivers, your operations



and your production. It can provide customers with:

- Engine data
- Gearbox data
- Electronic metering
- T-box data
- Location data
- Fault data
- Driver behaviour analysis
- Alert data

Going the extra mile

FAW didn't stop there. FAW Financial Services announced a balloon loan available to clients, with ultra-low payments and flexible trade-in or refinance options.

Liu Xiao, CEO for FAW Financial

Services, explains: "Your cash flow should be readily available as a safety cushion for your business. That is why we want you to buy a vehicle with a professional auto finance company and make use of our exclusive auto loan."

They have calculated this payment based on the J7 retail price, with 50% imported over a 48-month term and a 30% payment at maturity. This means your monthly payment could be as low as R41 000, which is 34% lower compared to traditional products, and R3 600 lower than European loan products.

The new flagship J7 will also be assembled locally at the FAW Coega plant in the Eastern Cape. Backed by FAW's strong support infrastructure, operators also benefit from a broad dealer footprint across Southern Africa, 24/7 parts availability, roadside assistance and an industry-standard warranty of up to 36 months or 600 000 km.



It's time for transport to step into the future, and the FAW J7 is leading the way. Learn more about this exciting model by visiting the FAW website: www.faw.co.za.

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THE SMART FARMER'S GUIDE TO BUYING THE RIGHT TRACTOR

by Misheck Mukupa, SARO Digital Marketing Officer

In modern agriculture, a tractor is more than just a machine; it is the backbone of productivity, efficiency and long-term farm growth. Whether operating on a small field or managing hundreds of hectares, the right tractor plays a critical role in determining output, cost efficiency and operational success.

With a wide variety of models and specifications available, selecting the right tractor can be a complex decision. Understanding key considerations and working with a trusted supplier can make all the difference.

Understanding your farming needs

Every farm is different, and the starting point when purchasing a tractor is a clear understanding of your specific requirements. The size of your land, type of crops and nature of your operations all influence the kind of tractor you need.

For smaller farms, lower-horsepower tractors are often sufficient for basic tasks such as ploughing, planting and transportation. As the farm size and workload increase, so does the need for more powerful and versatile machines capable of handling a wide range of implements efficiently. Larger farms, especially those exceeding 100 hectares, require high-horsepower tractors that can deliver consistent performance over long working hours.

SARO Agro Industrial Ltd offers a carefully selected range of tractors suited to all scales of farming. From TAFE tractors ranging between 35 hp and 100 hp (26 kW and 74 kW), to Landini models from 50 hp up to 300 hp (37 kW and 221 kW), and Kubota tractors between 85 hp and 135 hp (63 kW and 99 kW), farmers are assured of finding equipment that aligns with their operational needs.

Choosing the right horsepower

Horsepower is one of the most important factors to consider when buying a tractor, as it directly determines the machine's capability. Selecting the correct horsepower ensures that the tractor can handle the intended tasks without strain, while also avoiding unnecessary fuel consumption.

Matching the tractor to the implements you plan to use is essential. Heavier tasks such as ploughing, ripping and hauling demand more power, while lighter activities require less. Making the right choice not only improves efficiency but also extends the lifespan of the equipment.

At SARO, expert guidance is provided to help farmers assess their needs and select the most suitable tractor, ensuring both performance and cost-effectiveness.

Reliable quality

A tractor is a long-term investment, and durability should never be compromised. Machines that are built to withstand demanding agricultural conditions provide better value over time by reducing breakdowns and maintenance costs.

The tractor brands available at SARO, TAFE, Landini and Kubota are globally recognised for their engineering excellence and proven performance. These machines are designed to operate efficiently in diverse and often challenging farming environments, making them a reliable choice for Zambian farmers.

Importance of after-sales support

While the initial purchase is important, the true value of a tractor is realised over time through the support that comes with it. Access to professional servicing and technical assistance is essential to maintaining performance and minimising downtime.

SARO has built a strong reputation for its after-sales service, offering skilled technicians and dedicated support teams across the country. This ensures that farmers receive timely maintenance and repairs, allowing them to focus on their operations without unnecessary interruptions.

Availability of spare parts

One of the key considerations when investing in a tractor is the availability of genuine spare parts. Without reliable access to spares, even minor mechanical issues can disrupt operations and lead to significant losses.

SARO distinguishes itself by maintaining a consistent supply of spare parts for all its tractor brands. This commitment gives farmers confidence that their equipment can be maintained efficiently, ensuring longevity and sustained productivity.

Insights from the field

Practical experience from fellow farmers often provides a valuable perspective. Joseph Masama, a farmer based in Mumbwa managing over 200 hectares, is



Landini 100 hp tractors are available from SARO.

a testament to the importance of quality machinery and dependable support.

Having invested in multiple tractors and farming equipment from SARO, including a 100 hp TAFE tractor, Joseph highlights quality and spare parts availability as the key reasons for his continued partnership.

"I buy from SARO because of the quality of the equipment and because whenever I need a spare part or need my tractor serviced, I know it is available. I cannot afford to have my machines sitting idle. SARO understands that. They have never let me down," he says.

For large-scale farming operations, these factors are critical in ensuring consistent performance and avoiding costly downtime.

Choosing the right partner

Ultimately, buying a tractor is not just about selecting a machine; it is about choosing a partner who will support your farming journey. A supplier with the right expertise, product range and support systems can make a significant difference in long-term success.

SARO Agro Industrial Ltd has positioned itself as a trusted destination for tractor purchases in Zambia by offering a wide selection of globally respected brands, expert advice tailored to individual needs, strong after-sales support and reliable access to spare parts.

Investing in a tractor requires careful consideration of your farming needs, the right horsepower, and the long-term reliability of the machine. Equally important is the support system behind the purchase, from servicing to spare parts availability.

With the right guidance and a dependable partner, farmers can make informed decisions that enhance productivity and drive growth. SARO remains committed to supporting farmers with quality machinery and dependable service, ensuring that every investment contributes to long-term agricultural success.



Visit the SARO website at <https://www.sarozambia.com/> to learn more about the wide range of tractors they have available to suit your every farming need.



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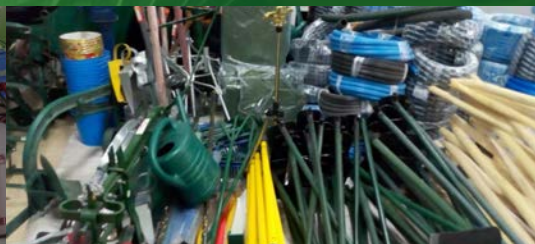
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THE USE OF

DRONES

IN FARMING

PART 2

by Nicole Fourie

At first glance, a drone may appear to be little more than a toy gliding through the air. In modern agriculture, however, this technology has rapidly developed into a powerful management tool. For farmers across Africa, and particularly in South Africa, where farms often span vast and rugged terrain, drones offer new ways to monitor crops, apply inputs with precision, and make decisions based on reliable data.

Drones can broadly be divided into three main categories: fixed-wing drones, multi-rotor drones, and hybrid drones. Each type possesses distinct characteristics that make it suitable for a range of agricultural applications.

Fixed-wing drones

Fixed-wing drones operate on the same principle as a conventional aircraft. Instead of using rotating rotors, they rely on aerodynamic wings and forward motion to generate lift and remain airborne.

This design enables the drone to travel longer distances and cover extensive areas efficiently. It is particularly valuable on large grain or grazing farms, where producers require a rapid overview of expansive fields.

Key features:

- **Wings:** provide continuous lift and energy-efficient flight.
- **Propulsion system:** typically electric or petrol-powered to generate forward motion.
- **Control surfaces:** including rudder and elevator for stability and directional control.
- **Autopilot and GPS:** allows for pre-programmed flight paths for accurate mapping.

Agricultural applications:

Fixed-wing drones are primarily used for large-scale field mapping and monitoring. Equipped with advanced sensors and multispectral cameras, they can rapidly collect data on crop health, plant density and soil conditions. On large farms producing grain, soybeans or maize, this technology enables farmers to identify problems such as drought stress, nutrient deficiencies or pest outbreaks at an early stage.

Because fixed-wing drones can cover

vast areas in a single flight, they are particularly valuable for producers managing extensive croplands or grazing systems

Advantages for farmers:

- Very long flight times and wide-area coverage.
- High energy efficiency.
- Well suited to large farms and commercial agriculture.

Their main limitation is that they typically require space for take-off and landing, making them less practical for smaller farms.



A fixed-wing drone.



A hybrid drone.



A multi-rotor drone.

Multi-rotor drones

Multi-rotor drones are probably the most widely recognised models. They use multiple rotors or propellers to take off, hover and manoeuvre with precision. Most agricultural variants are available as quadcopters, hexacopters or octocopters. Their ability to take off vertically and remain stationary in the air makes them especially well suited to precision tasks on the farm.

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Key features:

- Precise control and stability.
- Ability to hover over a specific location.
- Easy deployment without the need for a runway.
- Compatibility with a wide range of sensors and spraying systems.

Agricultural applications:

Multi-rotor drones can operate over a defined area and even hover in place. This makes them ideal for tasks such as precision spraying where pesticides, fertilisers or foliar feeds can be applied directly to targeted sections of a field.

In high-value crops such as orchards, vineyards and vegetable production systems, farmers can use these drones to monitor individual plants and detect problems quickly. They are also frequently used for detailed field inspections, enabling farmers to identify damage caused by wind, pests, or water-related issues.

Advantages for farmers:

- Excellent manoeuvrability, even in uneven terrain.
- Ideal for smaller fields, orchards, and vineyards.
- Relatively affordable and easy to operate (Strip-Till Farmer, 2017).

For many South African farmers – particularly those specialising in high-value crops such as citrus, grapes, and vegetables – multi-rotor drones are currently the most practical and widely used option.



A hybrid drone spraying a farmer's field.

Hybrid drones

Hybrid drones, also known as vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) drones, combine the strengths of fixed-wing and multi-rotor designs. They are capable of vertical take-off like a multi-rotor drone, before transitioning to fixed-wing flight for longer distances.

This technology is particularly useful in areas where large surfaces must be monitored but where no runway is available.

Key features:

- Vertical take-off and landing.
- Transition to energy-efficient horizontal flight.
- Long flight times and wide-area coverage.

Agricultural applications:

Hybrid drones combine vertical take-off capability with the efficiency of fixed-wing flight, making them especially suitable for large farms. They can be launched from a small open space and then fly across extensive agricultural areas to collect data.

They are often used for large-scale crop monitoring, water management, and precision agriculture analysis, where significant volumes of field data are required to support production decisions. In Africa, where many farms are located far from infrastructure such as runways, hybrid drones offer a practical solution for monitoring large areas quickly and efficiently.

Advantages for farmers:

- Greater coverage than multi-rotor drones.
- No runway required.
- Combines efficiency with practical usability (Asteria Aerospace Limited, 2023).

For African agriculture – where farms are often remote or expansive – this type of drone can serve as an ideal management tool.

Why drones are becoming increasingly important

Research shows that agricultural drones enable farmers to operate with greater precision and efficiency. Modern drones can, for example, apply inputs accurately, reduce labour requirements and collect valuable data on crop health, soil conditions and water management (Zhang & Kovacs, 2023).

Practical benefits for

African agriculture:

- **Precision farming:** inputs are applied only where needed.
- **Labour savings:** reduced reliance on manual labour.
- **Access to difficult terrain:** such as steep slopes or waterlogged fields.
- **Improved decision-making:** Data enables faster identification of problems.

As this technology becomes more affordable, it is clear that drones are no longer merely a novelty. In modern agriculture – from small-scale producers to large commercial farms – they are rapidly becoming an indispensable management tool in the sky.

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Water Research Commission. (n.d.) *Using drones to monitor crop health and water use* (Report no. 29711).



Different drone models.

AFRICAN CUISINE PART 18: WEST AFRICA – IVORY COAST

by Tisha Steyn

The Ivory Coast is a country in western sub-Saharan Africa. The capital, Yamoussoukro, is located in the centre of the country, but the port city of Abidjan is the largest. Unlike other countries in the region, the Ivory Coast enjoys political stability.

This tropical country is bordered by Guinea to the northwest, Liberia to the west, Mali to the northwest, Burkina Faso to the northeast, Ghana to the east and the Atlantic Ocean's Gulf of Guinea to the south.

With 31,5 million inhabitants (2024), the country is the third-most populous in West Africa. The official language is French; religions include Islam, Christianity, and traditional faiths, often entailing animism.

It is the most biodiverse country in West Africa, with more than 1 200 animal species, including 223 mammals, 702 birds, 161 reptiles, 85 amphibians and 111 species of fish, along with 4 700 plant species.

There are six terrestrial ecoregions, namely the Eastern Guinean forests, Guinean montane forests, Western Guinean lowland forests, Guinean forest-savanna mosaic, West Sudanian savanna and Guinean mangroves.

Nearly 65% of the land is being farmed and includes arable land (9,1%), permanent pastures (41,5%) and permanent crops (14,2%). The fertile land is mainly cultivated by small-scale farmers, who receive fairly decent prices for their crops. About 55% of the income is generated by cocoa and coffee, as well as rubber exports.

The tropical climate with two rainy seasons and warm temperatures is geographically suitable for growing grains, peanuts and palm oil. The rainforest in the southern part limits agriculture, but the northern part's woodland and savanna provide fertile soil for crops.

Cuisine

The Ivory Coast's traditional cuisine, which shows similarities with neighbouring countries, is influenced by the food produced, including staple ingredients such as tubers and grains, ground nuts, vegetables, fruit, spices, palm oil, as well as pork, chicken and seafood.

Street food

Ivorians like to eat at *maquis*, small, open-air restaurants that are unique to the region. *Maquis* normally offer braised chicken and fish covered in onions and tomatoes served with attiéké (fermented cassava couscous) or kedjenou (Ivorian chicken stew).

Alloco is a popular street food consisting of ripe, sliced plantains fried and salted in palm oil, served with a spicy sauce prepared with onions and chilli. Alloco can be enjoyed on its own as a snack or as a side dish for braised chicken or freshly grilled fish.

Staples

Attiéké is prepared with grated cassava and palm oil, which is processed into a fine, grainy product similar in appearance and taste to couscous. It is eaten as breakfast, lunch and dinner, and most commonly paired with fried fish and vegetables.

Fufu, or fufou, another staple, is a big dumpling prepared using a mixture of cassava and green plantain flour in equal portions with lukewarm water. The mixture is shaped into a ball and cooked in a pan over a low flame. It is eaten

with one's fingers and is used to scoop up other foods on the plate, particularly sauces and soups.

Placali, which resembles fufu in appearance, is also prepared using fermented cassava dough. It is slow-cooked with water and then allowed to cool. It is usually eaten for lunch, accompanied by stew, sauce or soup prepared with palm nuts or peanuts.

Meat

Kedjenou is a traditional dish prepared by slowly cooking chicken and vegetables in a clay pot called a canari. Traditionally, chicken or guinea fowl is used, but sometimes it's also made with fish. Proteins can be omitted to enjoy kedjenou as a vegetarian dish.

This popular dish is cooked without water or oil as the vegetables and chicken cook in their own juices.



Vegetables may include tomatoes, sweet and hot peppers and spices, especially fresh ginger. Certain ethnic groups cover the pot with banana leaves during cooking. Kedjenou is served with rice or attiéké.

Mafé or peanut butter stew is prepared using meat, such as chicken, lamb and beef, as well as tomatoes, onions, peanuts, garlic, cabbage and leaf or root vegetables. There are many different versions, which include okra, maize, carrots, cinnamon, hot peppers, paprika, black pepper, turmeric, cumin and other spices. It's generally accompanied by white rice or fufu.

Poulet Braisé is a chicken dish prepared like fish – marinated and slow-cooked on the grill. It is usually eaten with a spicy chilli sauce. Poulet Braisé is a popular streetside food, favoured by Ivorians.

Choukouya is the West African version of flame-grilled meat, such as beef, chicken or goat. Once cooked, the meat is chopped up, topped with onions and served with a spicy sauce, fries or alloco.



Mafé sauce is a peanut butter stew consisting of meat such as chicken, lamb and beef, and vegetables – as well as onions, garlic and peanuts. Vegetarian options are made with tomatoes, onions, peanuts, garlic, cabbage and leaf or root vegetables. (Source: <https://travelfoodatlas.com/ivorian-food>)

Fish

Garba is a widely consumed street food dish consisting of attiéké and deep-fried pieces of tuna. The dish is seasoned with tomatoes, chopped onions and peppers, with a bit of oil from the fried tuna and seasoning. Garba, which is eaten at any time of day, is sometimes served wrapped in a banana leaf.

Poisson Braisé is a fish dish. Fresh fish is usually marinated in garlic, lemon, parsley and pepper, and cooked slowly on a hot grill. It is served topped with sautéed onions and tomatoes and complemented by attiéké or alloco.

Poisson en papillote is a fish dish cooked with lemon marinade and sometimes tomatoes. It's served wrapped in foil.



Biékosseu is a chilli sauce eaten with fufu and accompanied by dry fish or snails. (Source: <https://www.chefspencil.com/top-24-foods-from-ivory-coast/>)

Sauces

Sauce Kopè is a sauce prepared using crab, snails and fish or beef, okra and spices. The okra gives it a gooey consistency, and the sauce is usually eaten with placali. Gouagoussou sauce is prepared with aubergine and okra and enjoyed with fufu.

Djoumbélé is another sauce that uses fresh or dried okra as its base. The dish is served with fufu, banana, yam, rice or placali.



Placali is prepared with fermented cassava. (Source: <https://travelfoodatlas.com/ivorian-food>)



Gnamakoudji is a ginger-flavoured drink consisting of water, ginger, spices and a sweetener. (Source: <https://travelfoodatlas.com/ivorian-food>)

Drinks

Bissap, also known as roselle juice, is a drink that is prepared by using the calyx, a group of sepals that forms the outermost whorl of the hibiscus flower. The drink is usually sweetened and chilled, but when it is consumed hot, it's known as hibiscus tea. Bissap is often served with mint leaves. Gnamakoudji is a ginger-flavoured beverage consisting of ginger, water, spices and a sweetener. The ginger and spices are steeped in hot water, then removed, sweetened and chilled before serving.



Sauce Kopè is prepared using crab, snails, fish or beef and okra, which gives the sauce a gooey consistency. (Source: <https://www.chefspencil.com/top-24-foods-from-ivory-coast/>)



Attiéké is a dish prepared using grated cassava that has a similar taste and consistency to couscous. (Source: <https://travelfoodatlas.com/ivorian-food>)

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AFRICAN INDIGENOUS FOODS

THAT FIGHT INFLAMMATION MAY
HELP PEOPLE WITH DIABETES

Article Supplied

African indigenous food groups present an exciting area to explore when it comes to taste and nutrition. They may even offer potential as nutritional therapy (the treatment of a medical condition, for example, diabetes mellitus, through changes in diet), for people with health problems.

Foods like jute mallow (species of shrub), pearl and finger millet, wild medlar (large shrub or small tree), caterpillars and bambara nuts all have nutritional properties that could be useful in managing inflammation.

Inflammation is the body's natural response to injury or infection. It helps us fight off infections and begins the healing process. However, problems arise when inflammation continues. It can start to damage healthy tissues and blood vessels, interfere with how the body uses sugar and fat, and weaken the immune system. Over time, this ongoing inflammation can lead to diseases such as diabetes.

Fighting diabetes the natural way

Type 2 diabetes is a long-term health condition affecting many adults. It causes serious health problems and a high risk of death.

The worldwide number of people living with diabetes rose from 200 million in 1990 to 830 million in 2022. Prevalence has been rising more rapidly in low- and middle-income countries than in high-income countries. In 2021, diabetes and kidney disease due to diabetes caused over 2 million deaths.

As public health and nutrition researchers, we focus on functional foods – foods with special health benefits. Our research experience in nutrition and health, and plant metabolomics helps us identify bioactive compounds in food that can help reduce the impact of chronic diseases.

We conducted a review of 46 research articles on the role of indigenous African food groups in preventing and managing type 2 diabetes mellitus. It examined the

anti-inflammatory properties of African food groups in relation to this disease. We found that many African food groups significantly reduce oxidative stress linked to type 2 diabetes.

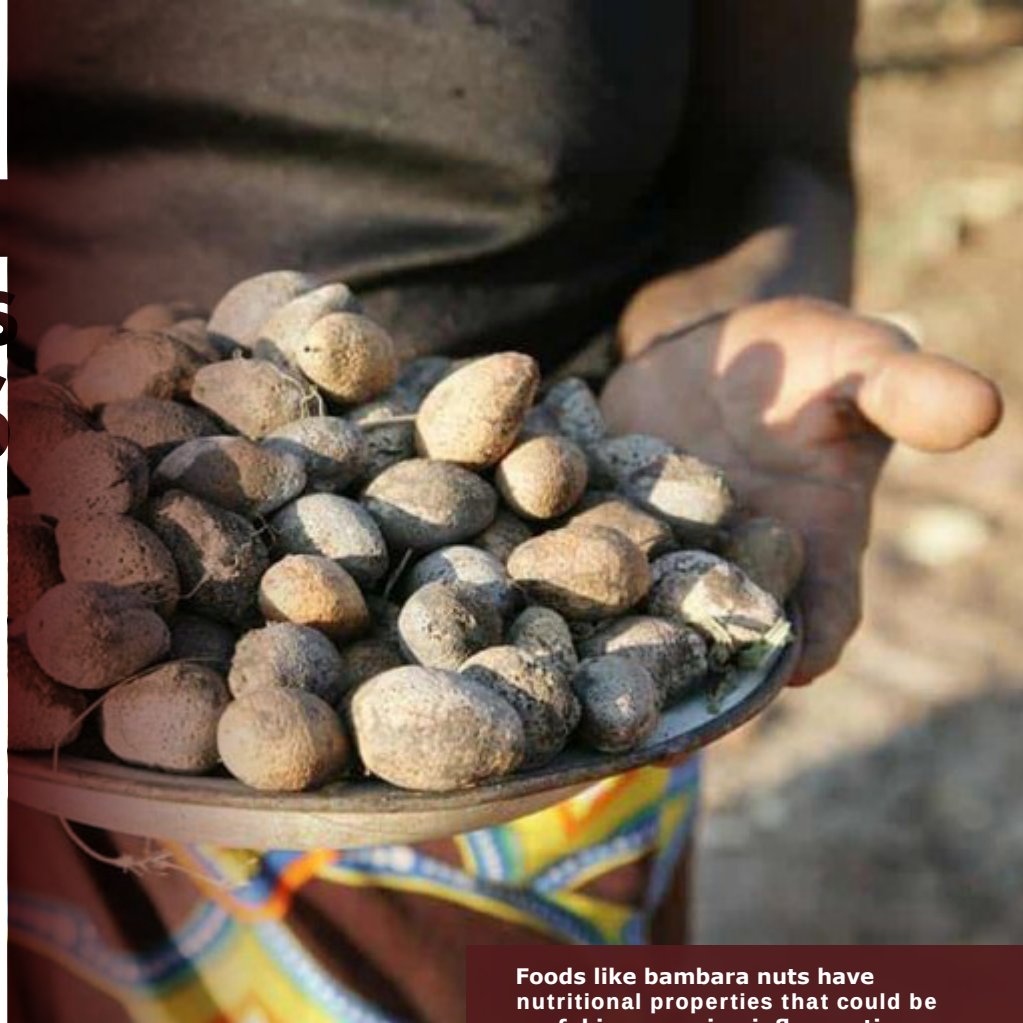
Oxidative stress occurs when the body produces more harmful oxygen-related molecules than it can neutralise with its natural antioxidant defences. This overproduction of oxidants disrupts the normal cellular control systems. We found several phenolic compounds in these African food groups that confer anti-inflammatory properties.

Our findings provide useful information for the development of African traditional therapeutic meals tailored for patients with type 2 diabetes in Africa.

Food groups and type 2 diabetes

The traditional African diet primarily consists of cereals, legumes, fruits, vegetables, milk and poultry, with a notable emphasis on edible insects and low red meat consumption. Many indigenous foods such as okra leaves, nightshade, amaranth and cowpeas are underutilised in modern cooking and farming. They are also often viewed as “food for poor people”.

Over time, many Africans have shifted from traditional African diets, which are rich in fibre, polyphenols and antioxidants, to a western diet high in sugar, salt and unhealthy fats. This change has significantly increased the risk of type 2 diabetes.



Foods like bambara nuts have nutritional properties that could be useful in managing inflammation. (Source: www.bio-innovation.org)

Our analysis covered 46 studies conducted between 2010 and 2023. The selection of these studies enabled a comprehensive evaluation of how African food groups may influence inflammation associated with type 2 diabetes mellitus.

The review highlights the potential mechanisms and outcomes relevant to public health nutrition.

Our findings show that these food groups could be beneficial in mitigating chronic inflammation if included in diets.

Edible insects

Our review shows that edible insects like ants, caterpillars, crickets and locusts release substances called angiotensin-converting enzyme and antioxidant hydrolysates/peptides.

Particularly, locust peptides can block certain enzymes which are involved in breaking down sugars and fats. Breaking down excessive amounts of sugar and fat can lead to risks such as fatty liver disease, diabetes, heart disease and chronic inflammation.

Our review also found common beneficial components in insects include chitin, polyphenols, antimicrobials and peptides/proteins. These components can help reduce oxidative stress in people with diabetes.

Caterpillars have two to five times more antioxidant capacity than orange juice.



Prickly pears can help manage blood sugar by blocking certain enzymes.
(Source: www.supernutritious.net)

or olive oil. Similarly, locusts have high levels of antioxidants and lipoxygenase. Antioxidants are essential for protecting cells and food quality. Lipoxygenase helps produce anti-inflammatory compounds that support cellular health and modulate inflammation. Together, they play a vital role in overall well-being.

Vegetables

We found that African leaf vegetables such as cowpea, nightshade, amaranth and okra leaves can help lower blood sugar levels. In one study, patients with type 2 diabetes who consumed blackjack (*Bidens pilosa*) saw their fasting blood sugar drop after treatment. Blackjack is a traditional vegetable in southern Africa. The leaves can be cooked or they can be used to brew tea. Similarly, pigweed helps reduce total protein levels linked to kidney problems in diabetes.

Vegetables like cowpea leaves, jute mallow and wild bitter gourd have important anti-inflammatory properties. Jute mallow helps reduce inflammation in diabetic patients by stopping the formation of nitric acid and increasing nitric oxide production. Wild bitter gourd helps by lowering the levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines.

Cereals/grains

Indigenous African small grains naturally contain fibre, which helps lower glucose levels. For instance, African finger millet has a high fibre

content that thickens stomach contents and reduces glucose absorption. An experiment on the effects of finger millet on diabetic rats showed that rats given finger millet had lower fasting blood sugar levels compared to untreated diabetic rats. Similar results were found with sorghum, which improved insulin sensitivity and reduced type 2 diabetes in mice.

Our review found that sorghum contains antioxidant compounds like luteolin and quercetin, which may help reduce inflammation in diabetic patients. Red pericarp sorghum in Africa has been shown to lower inflammation levels in diabetic rats. This suggests its valuable medical role.



Northern Nigeria has seen a boom in grasshopper snack sales.
(Source: www.dw.com)

Fruits

Our review found that prickly pears can help manage blood sugar by blocking certain enzymes. Another study found that baobab fruit powder can lower blood sugar. Similarly, wild medlar blocks unwanted enzyme activity. Both offer potentially more affordable solutions for diabetic patients.

Roots and tubers

Cassava contains a substance that prevents dietary starches from being effectively broken down and absorbed in the gastrointestinal tract. This mechanism can contribute to the management of obesity and the regulation of blood sugar levels.

Research indicates that consuming yams or their extracts can enhance important blood glucose parameters. These benefits include lowering fasting blood glucose levels and reducing insulin levels. Additionally, yams and their extracts may help reduce body fat and lower blood lipid levels. These improvements can lower the risk of developing diabetes. Furthermore, if fermented, yams could be very useful in enhancing the antioxidant defence system and modulating inflammatory mediators in diabetic patients.

Livingstone potatoes also show similar effects by improving kidney and liver health in diabetic patients. Laboratory studies suggest that these roots can help regulate glucose metabolism, enhance insulin secretion, reduce insulin resistance, improve blood vessel function and manage oxidative stress levels.



Vegetables like cowpea leaves have important anti-inflammatory properties.
(Source: www.farmworx.co.ke)

Legumes

The most common legumes in the African diet include cowpea, bambara nuts, soybean and mung bean.

We found that cowpea helps produce insulin, which is important for managing glucose. Both bambara nuts and cowpea contain soluble and insoluble fibre, which help reduce blood sugar spikes and cholesterol, making them useful for managing type 2 diabetes. Soybeans also improve glucose tolerance and insulin production.

We also discovered that mung beans can lower cholesterol while boosting insulin secretion. In terms of antioxidants, many legumes can fight free radicals, which cause inflammation in diabetes patients. Specifically, bambara nuts have a higher antioxidant capacity than orange peels.

Way forward

As healthcare costs rise, many people, particularly in marginalised communities, face financial struggles. Incorporating African indigenous food groups in medically tailored meals can reduce health costs and improve well-being.

Utilising local agricultural resources to cultivate these food groups enhances community health, preserves cultural traditions and promotes sustainable diets.

Maize, calabashes and corn drying in the sun in Benin, West Africa.
(Source: Getty Images)



A woman receives a free diabetes blood test on 26 April 2025 in Nairobi, Kenya.
(Source: Donwilson Odhiambo/Getty Images)



It is important to keep people who are not directly involved in fighting a fire away from the scene. (Source: Caleb Cook, Unsplash.com)

FIRE FIGHTING: PLAN AHEAD SO YOU'RE NOT CAUGHT OFF GUARD

by Tisha Steyn

The Namibia Agricultural Union (NAU) has compiled a list of things you must do to prevent a runaway veldfire. The list includes tips on being prepared for a fire, managing a raging fire, safety tips and more.

According to the NAU's newsletter, good rains have fallen in some areas, leaving pastures lush and animals well fed. The best time to think about firefighting is when the grass is green, however, remember that the grass will wither and die during the dry season, leaving highly flammable biomass on the land. One lightning strike, a carelessly tossed cigarette butt, or a spark while mending fences can turn into an uncontrollable inferno within seconds.

Although circumstances differ on farms, these guidelines provide a meaningful list of dos and don'ts that can be adapted to suit your own needs.

Plan ahead

Consider the following to help secure your farm in the best possible way against fires:

- Have emergency phone numbers ready to report a wildfire.
- Have farm maps that indicate all roads and water sources. Make sure all water points and dams are accessible for filling up water tanks.
- Buy two-way radios, which work better than cell phones, to communicate with your team of firefighters, neighbours, farmers' association and fire authorities. If possible, choose a fire captain who can coordinate information and feed the firefighters with this information from his car. Two-way radios are more useful than cell

phones in such a situation.

- Keep your firefighting tools in one storage place and keep the fuel tank of your vehicle, fire extinguishers and petrol cans full.
- Train your workers to fight fires and equip them with adequate personal protective equipment. Provide all helpers unfamiliar with the farm with a map of the property, which indicates roads, fences, dams and storage tanks.

Clear borders

- Clear the border roads of your camps.
- Enlarge resting spots for your livestock and bare spots around feed or water troughs to create safety zones in each camp.
- Don't wait for the Roads Authority (RA) to mow the grass on the road reserves along main roads. Mowing teams need written approval from the nearest RA office before tractors and mowers are allowed on road reserves.

Around your home

Reduce the risk of fire on your property by cutting long grass, pruning trees, removing leaves from gutters and pruning plant material that can serve as fire ladders on buildings. Create a defensible space of approximately 20 m between the buildings on your property.

Firebreaks

- Each farmer should divide his farm crosswise into four quarters, each surrounded by a wide firebreak. Then you can burn one quarter and save three.
- Prepare firebreaks around and

through the farm before the grass is completely dry. Make sure your team takes along fire extinguisher equipment when making firebreaks.

- Before you burn flammable materials, you must obtain a fire permit from the local fire protection association. Also inform your neighbours and the local farmers' association of your plans.
- Check the weather forecast and danger index before you decide to make firebreaks or burn garbage – don't do it on a hot, windy day when strong winds are predicted.
- Firebreaks should preferably be made in the evening when it is cooler, and winds are calmer.

Firefighting equipment

- Ensure all firefighting and support equipment – including water carts, pumping units and tools, such as a spare wheel, a jack and a wheel wrench – are in good working order. Every vehicle should have an axe, a shovel and a light chain. The axe can be used to cut down branches, which can be pulled to a central point with the chain. The shovel is handy if you get stuck in a hole, and there are holes aplenty where aardvarks and other burrowers occur.
- Every vehicle must have wire cutters to cut a fence should you or your animals get cornered by a fire.

Wildfires

Report all wildfires to the authorities. Notify your neighbours and the applicable fire associations as soon as possible. In the absence of the

landowner, a responsible person must be on or near the property to fight fires.

It is important to make the land accessible to firefighters and their vehicles, so there must be someone who can open gates and switch off electric fences. Fire trucks are approximately 4 m high, so it is necessary to ensure that these vehicles can easily drive under trees and electricity and telephone poles.

When driving or working in the veld

Be very careful when cutting or welding steel close to dry grass, as the sparks can ignite the grass up to 10 m away.

Never cut and weld alone in the field. Keep fire extinguishers nearby and spray the surrounding dry grass with a small 5-litre hand sprayer beforehand.

Regularly remove grass and seeds from the grille, exhaust pipes and undercarriage of your vehicle. If the exhaust pipe is hot, it will set any loose grass lying on it and the field on fire. Also, don't stop your vehicle in tall, dry grass.

Carbon dioxide

- Stay out of valleys and gulleys as carbon monoxide accumulates in low-lying areas. A lack of oxygen will render you unconscious – and the fire will catch up with you.
- If you have to drive through a fire, the lack of oxygen can cause your vehicle to stall. Gain enough speed before you drive through the flames.
- Always take a valve spanner with you. If your vehicle gets a flat tyre, unscrew the valve and pump up your tyre with water from the fire extinguisher. Screw the valve back in. Drive slowly because the wheel will be unbalanced.
- Always take a flashlight or headlamp with you to the fire. Most fires are extinguished when it gets cooler – usually after sunset.
- Take enough drinking water and salty food with you for your team.

Remove vegetation along walls, which can be used as a fire ladder to jump to your house or your barn's roof. (Source: Benjamin Lizardo, Unsplash.com)



Formal firefighting teams use a spotter plane to assess a fire from the sky, but the same can be done with a drone. (Source: Filippos Sdralias, Unsplash.com)

Counterfires

- Make sure you have information on wind directions before you start a counterfire, or you might start a new fire.
- If you don't have a drip torch, a 9-kg gas bottle with a burner helps to quickly start a counterfire.
- Clear roads by dragging large pieces of bush out of the way. Use a saw or axe to cut down branches and a chain to drag them away.
- If you are using a bulldozer to clear fire roads and have piles of fallen trees and bushes all over the place, make sure there is no grass around them. If these piles of wood catch fire, the flames can easily jump the road; a strong wind can sweep the fire 50 m or even further.
- If you can't put out the fire by noon, discuss with your team where and how to make firebreaks – or wait for the fire to come to you in an open stretch of road. It is no use attempting to fight the fire if you know you can't beat it. Rather, wait and get your fire extinguishers ready.
- Be wary of fires that have the shape of a hand, as you can get trapped between the "fingers".

- While professional firefighting teams use a spotter plane, a drone can give firefighters on the ground a good overview of what the veldfire looks like from above.

Keep in mind that a fire needs three things to burn: flammable material, heat, and oxygen. If you remove any of the three, you can extinguish the fire. Water cools the fire, and the droplets push away oxygen. Always spray water as low as possible into the fire, because spraying it into high flames only evaporates the water. A fire blanket thrown over a relatively small fire will also cut off the oxygen and kill the fire. Rake away flammable material.

Aftercare

Aftercare is extremely important. Walk the fire line with the team and extinguish smoking or burning logs or rake them into the burnt veld. Tree roots burn underground and may start a new fire, while burning trees that fall over can also start a new fire.



Beware of a fire that is burning in a mountainous area, as carbon dioxide gathers in the lowest areas of gulleys and valleys. (Source: Malachi Brooks, Unsplash.com)



Inform your local fire authority, agricultural union and neighbours if you plan to make a firebreak. (Source: Malachi Brooks, Unsplash.com)

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NAU Newsletter 17 April 2026

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