



Publication		
SATURDAY CITIZEN		
Page	Date	AVE (ZAR)
6	Sat 08 June 2019	10552.75



Discovering cowpea

UNIVERSITY: WILL BE INTRODUCING PLANT TO SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

» Crop can't be planted on a large scale because of scarcity of seed.

Sipho Mabena

The North West University is pioneering the introduction of the southern African indigenous cowpea to the scientific world, with researchers in the animal sciences department working to establish whether animals could also consume the plant.

In a country that is struggling with water supply, researchers at the university discovered that the cowpea plant does not require much water compared with other field crops.

The university will be the first institution in the world to introduce the cowpea, found in small pockets around Mafikeng, Lerhurutshe, Kuruman and Botswana, to the scientific community.

The crop is known by different names in different regions, such as *Mae a Tsilwana* and *Ggopo tsa Nare* in Setswana.

In Afrikaans it is called *akkerboom* or *dopboontjie*, in Sepedi the crop is known as *dinawa*, in Xitsonga is known as *tinyawa*, in Tshivenda it is known as *Munawa*,

while isiZulu speakers call it *imbumba*, *indumba* or *ihlumaya*.

Under the supervision of lecturers Motlogelo Mokolobate and Dr Khosi Ramachela from the School of Agricultural Sciences, Rose Semanya, a master's student at the Mafikeng campus, is looking

at what agronomic factors can influence the cowpea. Agronomy is the science and technology of producing and using plants for food, fuel, fibre and land reclamation.

The crop cannot be planted on a large scale because of the scarcity of the seed. "One kilo-

gram of seed has the potential to plant a hectare of land, drastically reducing the cost of seeds and fertilisers. Due to this cowpea's vigorous vegetative growth, it completely covers the soil surface and reduces soil erosion," Semanya said. - news@citizen.co.za