

Producing healthy food for both animals and people with Mangau Animal Feeds

 By [Robin Fredericks](#)

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TotalEnergies recently announced the winners of its 2021/2022 TotalEnergies Startupper of the Year Challenge winners. Matome Motalane, MD at Mangau Animal Feeds, won the award for the best start-up business under three years old.



Matome Motalane, MD at Mangau Animal Feeds

The competition aims to drive entrepreneurship in South Africa while further supporting entrepreneurs who wish to create a sustainable business that will benefit the South African economy and local communities.

Here we chat with Motalane to find out more.

 **Share with us your start-up story. When, how and why did you get started?**

My start-up journey started in 2013 when I was an undergraduate student, this is when I started volunteering in collaborative research projects, assisting post-graduates with their research projects focusing on either farming, disease studies and HIV/AIDS Labs. I was fortunate to obtain a BSc Biochemistry and Microbiology, which has since further fed my passion for developing my animal feeds business.

The aim of starting Mangau Animal Feeds was to solve the challenges of food insecurity in proportion to an increasing human and animal population, to find solutions to disease outbreaks within the continent and beyond, create more employment opportunities with the hopes to solve inequality, poverty, starvation and contribute to a positive social and environmental impact whilst innovating through the introduction of circular economy and technological developments.

I started by conducting a feasibility study in Limpopo, North West, Gauteng and Mpumalanga and I also relied on stats and daily media reports to find out about the state of livelihoods in the country, the continent and the globe at large. I vowed to myself that I am going to become a change maker. I started my business by operating from the roadside which helped me to determine and understand business channels. It was not easy for me to accept that I am now on the streets with a degree, but I swallowed the last little pride I had so that I can start building toward the vision that I had.

■ ***Tell us more about Mangau Animal Feed?***

Mangau Animal Feeds is a green business/circular economy that produces unique types of animal feeds that are organic, nutritious and of good quality including organic fertilisers. Our products will benefit livestock farmers to maximise production, expand their production capacity and ensure that their meat, milk and egg quality is 100% organic, and it is free from carcinogenic substances, free from growth promoters which are common causes of disorders and abnormal growth within animal and human populations. We are a circular company with zero-waste products and eco-friendly.

The company has introduced a unique mobile app called Mafats (please note that the app is available on the Google Play store as a minimal viable product). I am still working on it so that when it is fully operational, customers can get a world-class experience) which is there to offer customers convenience by saving them time and money whilst ensuring that farming becomes sustainable.

The aim of developing an app is to empower and be accessible to various farmers even those who are located in deep rural communities. A feature on our app called "Community Outreach Programme" will provide rural farmers with tips on how they can improve their farming skills and compliance.

■ ***What are some of the obstacles you've faced since you started Mangau Animal Feeds?***

My journey in entrepreneurship was never short of challenges. These included sourcing reliable suppliers who could help with transportation and falling victims to crime.

In 2021, I experienced one of the biggest and most painful obstacles when everything I had invested in the business was stolen. Everything that belonged to the business (my mobile operating steel container was stolen with stock, equipment, stationery, shelves, office equipment and solar system) which came to a value of +-R120, 000.

I was shocked and disappointed that people could do this to another individual who is trying to uplift himself. I didn't have insurance or security measures in place at the time because there was lots of work that needed to be done and I couldn't afford it at that time. That is when I decided to adapt to digital transformation by developing an app and introducing methods of circular economy to try and get back up on my feet again. I am quite happy with the rebuilding process even though it takes time and requires more investments.

■ ***You recently won the award for best start-up business under three years – can you tell us more about your journey through the TotalEnergies Start-upper of the Year Challenge?***

First of all, what I can say to TotalEnergies is that they really showed up for me because I always needed an opportunity where one or few people can say we believe in you Matome, here is the investment, go out there and do what you do best.



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I saw the opportunity of the TotalEnergies Start-upper of the Year Challenge on Facebook and I just passed it because I realised that most of the things that I see on Facebook I must verify that information to avoid being a victim of a scam. But later on, I saw the post again then I decided to visit the TotalEnergies website to verify if there is such a challenge and luckily, I saw that the challenge/competition is legit.

I applied immediately and funny enough, I wanted to apply for all the categories (best start-up under three years and best business creation) other than the obvious one for the best female entrepreneur.

📌 ***What does it mean to you to have won?***

The award came with a cash prize to the value of R250,000 together with marketing resources for my business and mentoring support for myself which is very appreciated. It is much needed too because the prizes will enable me to overcome most of my challenges and ensure that product development is consistent whilst creating more employment opportunities. This will go a long way as I overcome challenges and run a sustainable business and strengthen circular economy business models through innovation.

This is the biggest win in my entrepreneurial journey and I always thank myself for not undermining opportunities and people who make remarks or give constructive criticism, I have also learned a lot from TotalEnergies' panel of judges. They were making remarks as someone who is outside of the business because they were seeing things differently and I appreciate their honesty because as much as I can strive to be a jack of all trades, master of all there is, a touch of someone from outside can go a long way. I feel alive, empowered and ready to walk the entrepreneurial journey.

📌 ***Why animal feed? Tell us about your mission>***

Throughout my study years, I realised that everything starts with what people consume and I want to be one of the biggest role players in terms of being involved in the value chain of producing healthy food for both animals and people.

Just imagine the pain of buying what is not healthy or beneficial to your wellbeing. Most of the disease outbreaks come from what people consume and this is an area of concern, just recently we had an outbreak that nearly collapsed lots of economies, and has claimed lots of lives whilst weakening people's immune systems. Therefore through healthy animal feed, farmers will be able to pride themselves on the right type of quality products used and produce healthy products for the market.

The mission of Mangau Animal Feeds is to become the leading green business that produces quality products while creating employment opportunities in areas we operate within and beyond and help local smallholder farmers to become economic participants because I believe that building sustainable value chains is of paramount importance in building local economies. I believe that food security and sustainability are vital to every nation. I am interested in tackling issues of global warming as a leading factor in challenges such as drought, floods, deforestation and rising waves.

We also have rising levels of poverty, malnutrition, unemployment, inequality, disease outbreaks and starvation.

There is an increasing demand for products of animal origin because almost 99% of the world population relies on products of animal origin either meat, eggs, milk, wool, fish, and ornaments and 0.1% are vegans.

📌 ***What is next for Mangau Animal Feeds after winning?***

The next step for Mangau Animal Feeds is to acquire operating equipment to be able to scale up and take our products to

the market so that our customers can purchase valuable products whilst growing their farming business.

We also have services that are pay as use and we are looking forward to apply for more funding from government institutions and investors to ensure that we increase our operating capacity. We are looking to become a major economic participant so that we can create employment opportunities.

■ ***Any advice for those thinking of starting their own business***

I would advise anyone who wants to start a business by starting with conducting a feasibility study to determine if the problem indeed exists and check areas where there is a market for products and services that you want to introduce into the market or avoid replicating business models that will set one for failure. Business requires resilience to challenges but be willing to grow and introduce new business models.

There is no formula that fits all in business. As an entrepreneur be always willing to go through training to learn different things about business compliance and operations. Always try to minimise risks and invest in the success of the business. Building networks help to reach new heights and be exposed to new people and environments which it would take a little bit longer if one did things on their own.

Business requires patience, dedication, and the spirit of learning from others and I would advise entrepreneurs to open a business and personal bank accounts to avoid spending business proceeds for personal reasons and learn to pay yourself if profit is generated. Focus on your passion, know your weaknesses and strengths and always ask for help once you tried something and you see that it is not working.

■ ***Where would you like to see Mangau Animal Feeds in the next five years?***

Mangau Animal Feeds in the next five years will be a state-of-the-art company that invests in solid value chains, exporting our products and services whilst establishing Agro-Dealers to invest in Agri-Tech and e-commerce.

There are over 50 new, unique, and quality products to be introduced by Mangau Animal Feeds to ensure that challenges faced by various communities are solved through the introduction of circular economy models and technological and environmental practices that are eco-friendly. We are what the world has been waiting for and we are here and will always be here to offer our customers world class products and services. We are looking forward to exporting our products and utilising all Intra-African trade relations including BRICS.

ABOUT ROBIN FREDERICKS

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