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# THE BRIEF

News Worth Knowing



**Namibia consumes 40,000 tonnes of potatoes, produces only 8,534 tonnes**

**MONDAY 19 JANUARY 2026**

## MAIN STORY



## Namibia consumes 40,000 tonnes of potatoes, produces only 8,534 tonnes

Namibia's potato industry continues to fall well short of domestic demand, with annual consumption exceeding 40,000 tonnes while local production remains limited.

According to the Namibian Agronomic Board (NAB), formal market production stands at approximately 8,534 tonnes, leaving the country heavily reliant on imports to meet consumer demand.

The board said informal markets

### Crucial Dates

- **Bank of Namibia Monetary Policy announcement dates:**
  - \* 18 February 2026
  - \* 22 April 2026
  - \* 17 June 2026
  - \* 12 August 2026
  - \* 21 October 2026
  - \* 02 December 2026
- **Namibia Oil and Gas Conference 18–21 August 2026 in Windhoek**

account for an estimated 41% of locally produced potatoes, highlighting the significant role of unregulated trade within the national supply chain.

During the 2024/25 financial year, potato imports reached 22,751 tonnes, underscoring Namibia’s continued dependence on foreign suppliers.

“Namibia produces only a fraction of the potatoes it consumes, creating a strong dependency on imported supplies to meet local demand,” the NAB said.

The board noted that the sector faces persistent structural constraints, including the absence of local seed potato production. Farmers are required to import all seed potatoes, a factor that increases input costs and often delays planting schedules.

Limited post-harvest washing and packaging capacity further restricts access to formal retail markets, while domestic processing of value-added potato products such as frozen chips and crisps remains non-existent, the NAB said.

“This keeps the country dependent on imports to supply both retail and fast-food sectors,” the board added.

Namibia’s potato imports are sourced mainly from South Africa, where average

yields reach about 37 tonnes per hectare. In addition to fresh potatoes, Namibia imports around 3,754 tonnes of frozen potato products annually, as well as 2,173 tonnes of seed potatoes valued at more than N\$20 million.

To protect domestic producers, the NAB enforces the Market Share Promotion scheme, which requires traders to source at least 47% of fresh produce locally. Borders are temporarily closed to imports when local supply is considered sufficient.

“Through the Market Share Promotion scheme and import management measures, we aim to safeguard local producers and support a more resilient domestic potato industry,” the board said. The NAB identified opportunities to reduce import dependence, including the establishment of local seed multiplication systems, improved washing and packaging infrastructure, and the development of processing facilities. It also stressed the importance of training smallholder farmers in good agricultural practices to improve yields and quality.

“Investing in seed production, infrastructure, agro-processing and farmer capacity building can reduce import dependency and transform Namibia’s potato sector,” the board said.

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## Sankwasa calls for procurement shift to prioritise Namibians

The Minister of Urban and Rural Development, James Sankwasa, has called for stricter enforcement of Namibia's Public Procurement Act to ensure that local citizens, small and medium enterprises, women and youth benefit more directly from government contracts.

Speaking at the 2026 Regional and Local Authorities Induction Training, Sankwasa criticised the continued preference for foreign-owned companies in public tenders and warned regional and local councils to closely monitor joint ventures to ensure genuine local participation.



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He urged authorities to fully implement procurement legislation and prevent public contracts from being dominated by foreign firms or fronting arrangements designed to bypass local ownership requirements.

“The time for ‘Namibia first’ has come. It is said that charity begins at home, but it does not end there. Our procurement must be geared towards the objective set out in section 2, subsection (b) of the Public Procurement Act 15 of 2015, as amended,” Sankwasa said.

The minister said sound procurement practices were central to government’s broader push for accountability, transparency and effective service delivery, linking proper procurement to improved infrastructure, housing and community services across the country.

He also instructed regional and local authorities to accelerate the delivery of housing, sanitation and basic services, warning that poor governance, corruption and mismanagement would no longer be tolerated.

Sankwasa said government has set a

target of delivering at least 10,000 houses per year, alongside improved access to clean water, sanitation and serviced land in both urban and rural areas. He stressed that regional and local authorities are legally empowered to drive development and should reduce their reliance on central government transfers.

“The continued mushrooming of shacks in our local authorities is not the answer to the country’s housing and sanitation challenges. We need proper identification and allocation of land at affordable prices,” he said.

The minister also raised concerns about corruption, financial mismanagement, land abuse and nepotism within some regional and local authorities, describing certain councils as having turned into “ATMs for known tenderers”.

Sankwasa warned that councillors and officials responsible for financial losses to the state would be held personally accountable and could be required to repay misused public funds.

Conversation with Martha Nangombe and James Chapman

# LEADING WITH PURPOSE IN A CHANGING BANKING LANDSCAPE

[Watch full interview here](#)

# Clear rules, zero consequences



Namibia's payments system has finally said the quiet part out loud. Merchants may not surcharge card payments. They may not set minimum or maximum amounts. They may not quietly punish customers for choosing a safer, traceable way to pay.

The notice from the Payments Association of Namibia is clear. It is also overdue.

For years, consumers have absorbed these practices as normal. A few dollars added at the till. A refusal to swipe unless the bill is "big enough". A subtle nudge back to cash, as if convenience and safety were indulgences rather than basic expectations. None of it was legal. All of it was tolerated.

PAN's intervention confirms what shoppers already suspected. The rules were never unclear. They were simply ignored.

The problem is not a lack of regulation. It is enforcement. Namibia's payment system already operates under defined international card rules and domestic law. Visa and Mastercard prohibit surcharging.

The Payment System Management Act backs this up. Yet the behaviour persisted because there was no visible consequence for breaking the rules.

This is what regulatory drift looks like in practice. Not chaos, but quiet erosion. Small breaches repeated daily until they feel customary. By the time a public notice is issued, the damage is already embedded in behaviour. Merchants argue about costs. Bank fees. Margins. Survival. Those pressures are

real. But they are not the consumer's problem. A business model that only works by shifting electronic payment costs onto customers is not being transparent. It is being evasive.

The notice makes an important point that deserves more attention. Penalising card use pushes people back to cash. Cash carries risks. Theft. Loss. Informality. A modern economy does not nudge its citizens towards vulnerability because enforcement feels inconvenient.

Banks are not exempt either. PAN places responsibility squarely on acquiring banks to ensure their merchants comply. This matters. Regulation that stops at "guidance" is not regulation. It is suggestion. If banks continue to look away, this notice will join a long list of well-worded warnings with no behavioural impact. Consumers, for once, are being asked to play a role. Report non-compliance. Escalate. Speak up. That is welcome, but it is also telling. A system that relies on customers to police basic rules is already under strain.

This notice should not be read as a policy breakthrough. It is a correction. A reminder. A line being redrawn after it was allowed to fade.

The real test will be what follows. Whether complaints are acted on. Whether merchants change behaviour. Whether banks enforce their own agreements. Or whether this, too, becomes another document that explains how things should work while daily practice carries on unchanged.

No surcharges. No limits. No confusion. The rules were always there. What has been missing is the will to apply them.

***\*Briefly is a weekly column that is opinionated and analytical. It sifts through the noise to make sense of the numbers, trends and headlines shaping business and the economy with insight, wit and just enough scepticism to keep things interesting. THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ARE NOT OUR OWN, we simply relay them as part of the conversation.***



## Kalimbeza rice farm set to harvest more than 100 tonnes

**K**alimbeza Rice Farm is on track to harvest more than 100 tonnes of rice when the harvesting season begins, despite production challenges caused by persistent rainfall.

The farm is cultivating three rice varieties: Iriga, Nerika 4 and Super.

Farm Manager Patrick Kompeli said seven hectares of Iriga have been planted, although the variety has been reported as contaminated. Eight hectares of Nerika 4, sourced from Zambia, are growing steadily, while 35 hectares of the Super variety are currently being planted to meet the farm's seasonal target of 50 hectares.

Kompeli said projected yields remain encouraging, with Iriga expected to produce three tonnes per hectare, while both Nerika 4 and Super could yield up to four tonnes per hectare.

Based on current estimates, Iriga is expected to produce about 21 tonnes, Nerika 4 around 24 tonnes and Super approximately 51 tonnes, bringing total output to more than 100 tonnes, provided

conditions remain favourable.

"I can assure you that by next week, we will have planted 50 hectares of Super. Although the rain continues to fall and is causing some disruptions, we are still aiming for a yield of three tonnes per hectare for Iriga," Kompeli said.

During a visit to the farm, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform Ruthy Masake urged management to intensify efforts to improve production, noting that limited progress has been recorded since the farm was established in 1990.

She encouraged the farm to scale up operations where possible and to work closely with the ministry to address ongoing challenges.

"If three or four farmers engage in small-scale rice production, they will begin to understand its importance. Once the community is fully informed and involved, things will start to change," Masake said, adding that it was unfortunate the current production targets would not be fully met.

# Vendor lock-in: Your biggest digital transformation risk

By Thomas Hamata

**D**igital transformation is sold as progress.

In practice, many Namibian organisations are quietly discovering it has become their most expensive trap.

Across both the public and private sector, a familiar story keeps repeating itself.

A system is commissioned.

A software company, local or foreign, is appointed.

The promise is modernisation, efficiency, and value.

Years later:

- The system still does not meet business needs

- Users resist or work around it

- Benefits were never clearly realised (if they were ever defined)

- Every change requires a paid change request

- No one inside the organisation truly understands how the system works

- And yet... more money keeps going into it

This is vendor lock-in - a digital transformation governance failure that turns technology projects into long-term financial and operational liabilities.

Here's how vendor lock-ins typically unfold.

1. The organisation outsources thinking, not just building

Architecture, system logic, and design decisions are handed entirely to the vendor.

Internal teams are told, "Don't worry - they



**More organisations in Namibia are facing this exact predicament than many people realise.**

are the experts.”

From that moment:

- Knowledge concentrates externally
- Dependency is created by design
- Internal capability quietly atrophies

The organisation becomes a customer - not an owner.

2. Benefits are vague, but delivery proceeds anyway

Many projects start without:

- Clear outline of the as-is and to-be states.
- Measurable benefits
- Named value owners

Success is defined as “system delivered”, not “problem solved”.

This allows the vendor to deliver something - even if it doesn't change how work is actually done.

3. Change requests become the business model

As reality sets in, the organisation realises:

- The system doesn't fit real processes
- Users resist adoption
- Critical functionality is missing

The response is always the same:

“We can do that - it will be a change

request.”

Each fix costs money.

Each fix extends timelines.

Each fix deepens dependency.

Eventually, the annual cost of “improvements” rivals the cost of building the system in the first place.

4. The system belongs to no one internally  
Years later:

- The original project team has moved on
- There is no in-house expert
- Documentation is outdated or vendor-held

- Even small changes feel risky

At this point, the organisation is no longer choosing the vendor.

The vendor is choosing the organisation.

5. The dead horse theory kicks in

Money has been spent.

Time has passed.

Reputations are attached.

So instead of asking:

“Is this system still worth it?”

Leadership asks:

“How do we make it work?”

More money is committed.

More time is justified.

Hope replaces governance.

The Hard Choice Organisations Eventually Face

At some point, every locked-in organisation reaches the same fork in the road:

1. Cut losses, terminate the contract, and accept the pain of restarting
2. Keep paying, hoping future versions will finally deliver value

Neither option is attractive - because the right decisions were not made at the beginning.

More organisations in Namibia are facing this exact predicament than many people realise. In the next article, I unpack the principles that could have prevented the problem entirely.



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## **GIPF's N\$31m NAMBOB investment delivers 8% net profit**

**T**he Government Institutions Pension Fund's indirect N\$31 million investment in funeral services provider NAMBOB recorded an 8% net profit in the 2024/25 financial year, nearly six years after the investment was made through the EOS Capital-managed Allegrow Fund.

GIPF invested in NAMBOB in August 2019 via Allegrow Fund (Pty) Ltd, one of its unlisted investment vehicles managed by EOS Capital.

The investment followed a period of

operational and governance challenges at the company, which were subsequently addressed through a restructuring programme and branch rationalisation.

EOS Capital Managing Director Elzine Mushambi said the improvement followed deliberate changes to governance and operating structures, resulting in greater stability despite a difficult trading environment.

"The progressive growth we are seeing reflects a structural turnaround strategy focused on governance, operational



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discipline and accountability. Despite significant challenges in the operating environment, NAMBOB recorded an 8% net profit in the 2024/25 financial year,” Mushambi said.

“This performance demonstrates resilience following years of corrective interventions and shareholder support.”

Under the turnaround strategy led by Allegrow Fund, NAMBOB closed eight underperforming branches, streamlined operations and transitioned to a locally driven management structure.

The business has since returned to profitability and is targeting an internal rate of return of 31%.

The turnaround has repositioned NAMBOB within the Allegrow Fund portfolio, strengthening its contribution to long-term value creation while maintaining a national footprint of 13 branches.

GIPF Chief Executive Officer Martin Inkumbi said the investment aligns financial objectives with broader socio-economic considerations, even though direct cash returns have not yet been realised.

“What this means is that while the indirect investment by GIPF in NAMBOB has not yet provided direct cash benefits, it facilitates

a positive impact through improved access to affordable funeral services,” Inkumbi said.

“This is particularly important for people in rural areas and vulnerable groups reached through NAMBOB’s 13-branch national footprint across Namibia.”

NAMBOB, which has operated under the Avbob brand since the 1960s, provides funeral arrangements, cremations, memorial services and funeral insurance.

Localisation efforts linked to the GIPF investment have shifted procurement towards Namibian suppliers, supporting local employment and skills development.

Inkumbi said the fund views the investment as part of its broader mandate to balance sustainability and development objectives.

“This investment fits with our goal of achieving sustainable returns while supporting the socio-economic development of our nation,” he said.

“As the company stabilises, attention will shift to infrastructure improvements, fleet strengthening and operational capacity expansion. We remain focused on long-term outcomes for both the fund and the country.”

# King V: Shaping the future of corporate governance

By Hellmut von Ludwiger

Not long ago, I found myself in a boardroom conversation that had nothing to do with numbers, forecasts, or compliance checklists. Instead, the question on the table was a simple one: Are we making decisions today that we would still be proud of tomorrow? It was a reminder that, at its heart, governance is not just about rules, but about judgement, accountability, and the responsibility we carry toward those who place their trust in us.

It is against this backdrop that the launch of the King V Code marks an important milestone in the evolution of corporate governance in Southern Africa. More than an update to a well-established framework, King V invites organisations to pause, reflect, and re-commit to ethical leadership, transparency, and sustainable value creation.

At Capricorn Group, we view this moment not simply as a regulatory development, but as an opportunity to deepen our approach to governance, leadership and the services we provide to our stakeholders.

At its core, King V reflects a meaningful shift in how good governance is understood and practised.

Drawing on decades of experience and lessons learned, the Code refines governance into 13 principles that



**At its core, King V reflects a meaningful shift in how good governance is understood and practised.**

are intentionally clear and accessible, regardless of an organisation's size or sector.

Its outcomes-based approach centres on four pillars: ethical culture, sustainable performance, prudent control, and legitimacy. While these outcomes may appear aspirational, they are, in fact, practical and form the foundations of trust, resilience, and long-term confidence in a rapidly changing business environment.

One of the most powerful aspects of King V is its emphasis on integrated thinking. Boards and leaders are encouraged to view strategy, risk, resources, and stakeholder interests not as separate conversations, but as interconnected realities that must be considered together.

This way of thinking naturally flows into integrated reporting, which asks organisations to explain not only what value they create, but how they create, preserve, or, at times, erode it over time.

At Capricorn Group, integrated thinking is more than a reporting discipline; it sits at the heart of our approach to value creation and informs daily decision-making. It ensures that financial performance is considered alongside social impact, environmental responsibility, and the long-term well-being of the communities we serve.

King V also acknowledges an important truth about governance that one size does not fit all.

By emphasising the principle of proportionality, the Code allows organisations the flexibility to apply its recommended practices in ways that reflect their unique context, complexity, and stage of maturity.

This balance enables boards to innovate and respond to change, while remaining anchored in sound governance principles.

King V has embraced the concept of double materiality.

This means that organisations need to consider not only matters that affect financial performance, but also the impact their activities have on the (rest of the) economy, society and the environment.

This shift resonates strongly with Capricorn Group's stakeholder-inclusive approach.

We believe that long-term success depends on the health of the communities and ecosystems in which we operate. When we think about creating value in this way, it becomes a shared responsibility rather than just an outcome.

The Code also addresses the realities of digital transformation. It offers more guidance on technology, data governance, artificial intelligence, and new risks. King V encourages boards to lead innovation responsibly.

The message is clear that we must balance opportunities with strong ethical

oversight and prudent risk management. At Capricorn Group, this means encouraging progress and curiosity, while upholding the principle of integrity as non-negotiable.

Throughout King V, the role of the board remains central. Boards are entrusted with setting strategic direction, approving policy, overseeing execution, and ensuring accountability.

Just as important is the responsibility to set the tone for ethical leadership, transparency, and meaningful stakeholder engagement.

At Capricorn Group, our board performs these duties purposefully, showing our commitment to being effective agents of positive change.

Our governance practices are grounded in discipline, independence, fairness, and social responsibility.

We regularly review and improve our frameworks to keep up with changing expectations.

This includes embedding our shared culture, The Capricorn Way, and nurturing a strong risk culture throughout our organisation. For us, sustainability is not just about meeting legal requirements; it is a key part of our strategy that influences our decisions and our responsibility to future generations.

King V is more than just a code. It is a call to action that encourages boards and leaders to manage organisations ethically, consider all aspects of their work, and engage with stakeholders in an honest and thoughtful manner.

At Capricorn Group, we are proud to champion these principles, ensuring that our governance not only meets high standards but also makes a meaningful contribution to society and the economies we serve.

*\* Hellmut von Ludwiger, Company Secretary – Capricorn Group*

# Benchmark Retirement Fund: Celebrating 25 Years of Trusted Service

By Sophia Amoo-Chimunda

**B**enchmark Retirement Fund marks a significant milestone this year, 25 years of service. More than a celebration of growth, this anniversary reflects a journey built on relationships, values, and a long-term vision that has guided the Fund since its inception.

Founded in 2000 by RFS Fund Administrators, Benchmark has grown into one of Namibia's leading privately administered umbrella retirement funds. From humble beginnings, small meetings around kitchen tables, the Fund now oversees assets exceeding N\$10 billion. The anniversary was recently celebrated by staff and the board of trustees at the offices of RFS Fund Administrators.

As articulated by the Founder, Tilman Friedrich, our brand has, from the early days, been built on relationships and trust. Over time, the focus naturally shifted to our members, who today number just over 21,000 active members and pensioners. The dedication of our people has always given Benchmark its soul, and it is their commitment that continues to define us.

Benchmark's resilience and steady growth are evident in its strong financial performance. The Fund delivered robust investment returns over the past year, ranging between 14% and 20% depending on the selected portfolio, well above inflation and reinforcing members' long-term retirement security.

The Fund reaffirmed its vision and strategic priorities as it looks to the future. Its vision remains: a trusted Namibian retirement fund creating a dignified future.



The Fund's mission is to continue providing innovative and unique products; maintain the integrity of information; uphold the highest standards of good governance; remain customer-centric; build constructive and enduring relationships with stakeholders; and strive to optimize value for members.

Benchmark Retirement Fund also emphasises its core values of Integrity, Trust, Humility, Transparency, and Fairness, which guide decision-making at every level. Its strategic themes going forward are cohesion in the delivery of Benchmark's mandate, optimal adaptation to the changing regulatory environment, and an improved customer experience.

# Construction outlook uneven despite easing credit conditions

Namibia's construction sector is expected to remain subdued in 2026, as modest support from improving credit conditions is outweighed by structural constraints and delays in major investment decisions, according to Simonis Storm.

The firm's Economist, Almandro Jansen, said the outlook for the sector remains uneven, shaped by easing financial conditions on the one hand and persistent structural weaknesses on the other. While access to credit is gradually improving, this has yet to translate into a broad-based recovery in construction activity.

Private sector credit extension is forecast to grow by about 5% year on year, driven largely by corporate borrowing. However, household credit demand is expected to remain restrained due to moderate income growth and elevated living costs, limiting activity in residential construction.

Corporate borrowing is expected to remain concentrated in mining, logistics, energy-related services and trade-linked sectors. Mortgage credit is projected to recover only gradually, while instalment and lease finance is expected to remain the strongest area of credit growth.

Simonis Storm forecasts headline inflation to average between 3.6% and 3.8% in 2026, remaining within the Bank of Namibia's target range. Jansen said this outlook should create room for further monetary easing during the year.

"Our base case is for the repo rate to remain stable in the near term, with two additional 25 basis point cuts expected in 2026, likely in the first and fourth quarters," he said.

Jansen added that a stable to easing interest rate environment should gradually improve credit affordability, supporting housing upgrades, renovations and mid-income residential developments rather than large-scale construction projects.

A strong acceleration in large-scale construction activity remains unlikely without clearer progress on major infrastructure, green hydrogen and oil and gas investments. Jansen said final investment decisions in these areas are expected to determine the next phase of growth in the sector.

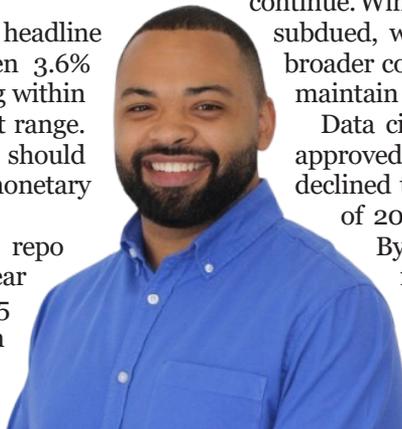
Recent data reviewed by Simonis Storm shows the construction sector contracted by 5% in the third quarter of 2025, following an 11.3% expansion in the previous quarter. The reversal highlights the sector's sensitivity to the timing of large investment decisions.

Structural bottlenecks are expected to persist into 2026, particularly the limited availability of serviced land and constrained public finances, which continue to restrict government's ability to initiate and fund large infrastructure programmes.

Regionally, Simonis Storm expects the two-speed pattern in construction activity to continue. Windhoek is projected to remain subdued, while Swakopmund and the broader coastal region are expected to maintain stronger momentum.

Data cited by the firm shows that approved building plans in Windhoek declined to 543 in the fourth quarter of 2025 from 574 a year earlier.

By contrast, Swakopmund recorded 334 approvals over the same period, up from 205, pointing to firmer construction activity along the coast.





## Project Never Walk Alone targets 31,500 children in N\$12.9m three-year plan

**P**roject Never Walk Alone has adopted a three-year rollout plan to provide shoes to 31,500 barefoot children across Namibia, with a total projected budget of N\$12.92 million for the period 2026 to 2028, the organisation said.

The 2026 phase targets 10,000 children in Oshana, Karas, Otjozondjupa and Omusati at a combined cost of N\$3.92 million. Each region will receive 2,500 pairs of shoes, to be distributed between March and November, according to the project.

Since its inception, the initiative has already assisted 12,750 children across nine regions. This includes 2,200 pairs distributed in Zambezi, 1,823 in Kunene, 1,853 in Khomas and 1,355 in Kavango East, project figures show.

In 2027, the project plans to distribute a further 11,500 pairs of shoes at an estimated cost of N\$4.6 million, focusing on Ohangwena, Kavango East, Kavango

West and Kunene, it said.

Kavango East is expected to receive 4,000 pairs in 2027, compared to 2,500 in each of the other targeted regions, as it currently records more than 14,000 barefoot children, the highest number nationally, according to the initiative.

The final phase in 2028 aims to reach another 10,000 children in Ohangwena, Khomas, Kavango East and Hardap. This phase carries a total allocation of N\$4.4 million, with an equal distribution of 2,500 pairs per region, Project Never Walk Alone said.

The organisation said the continued lack of shoes affects school attendance and children's confidence, adding that fundraising efforts will be intensified to meet the planned targets.

It also appealed for broader private-sector participation, noting limited contributions from the fishing and mining industries to date.