

**Nomination of Mota Samuel Lesoli for the Academic Excellence Awards for his PhD(Pasture Sciences) work (Graduating 18 May 2012; University of Fort Hare, Alice)**

**Nominated by: Dr. Sikhhalazo Dube**

**PROFILE**

He studied Diploma in Agricultural education at Lesotho Agricultural College/National University of Lesotho completed in 2000. Mota obtained BSc in Agriculture (Animal production) in 2006 and MSc in Agriculture (Pasture Science) in 2008 at the UFH. He joined Fort Cox College of Agriculture and Forestry as a Senior Lecturer in 2008.

Mota Lesoli registered for PhD programme at the UFH in 2008. For his thesis, he carried out a research on social and biophysical factors and indicators of rangeland degradation, and evaluated vegetation restoration techniques. He found that there are social factors such as lack of skills, lack of individual/community obligation and lack of effective policy for rangeland management, and biophysical factors such as uneven grazing distribution pattern are responsible for rangeland degradation. Rangeland degradation was characterised by poor forage productivity and vegetation cover, high soil unconfined compressive strength (UCS) with low hydraulic conductivity. Physical characteristics of rangeland degradation included the occurrence of terracettes, pedestals, rills and gullies. Low-lying areas were grazed severely and therefore more degraded. Restoration performance of the techniques depends on the ability for the microsite to collect and store water, and introduction of plant propagules. From this thesis, five papers were presented in the Grassland Society of Southern Africa (GSSA) congresses, five manuscripts are at different stages of review in peer-reviewed journals. To his credit, Mota has published 27 peer-reviewed papers in Journals and conference proceedings. He is the member of Council of GSSA.

All external examiners were impressed with the quality and value to the rangelands science derived from Mota's PhD work, particularly the restoration aspects of the work.

**Title of Dissertation:**

**Characterisation of communal rangeland degradation and evaluation of vegetation restoration techniques in the Eastern Cape, South Africa**

Supervisor: **Dr Sikhhalazo Dube**  
Co-Supervisor: Dr Nomakhaya Monde