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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



MINISTER STEENHUISEN CHAMPIONS AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION IN BERLIN, GERMANY



Minister Steenhuisen and Minister Niyontso led the South African delegation at the 17th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture.

Prince Mtshweni and
Joylene van Wyk

Minister John Steenhuisen's visit to Berlin for the 17th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA), the 11th Germany-Africa Agribusiness Forum, and the Agriculture Ministers' Conference emphasised South Africa's commitment to agricultural innovation and sustainability.

As South Africa assumes the G20 Presidency, the minister emphasised the country's leadership in advancing global food security and fostering inclusive agricultural growth. At the Agriculture Ministers' Conference, he outlined plans to leverage

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Minister during a panel discussion on challenges of Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems in South Africa and Southern Africa on the Ukudla Initiative.

the G20 platform to prioritise bioeconomy initiatives, strengthen trade, and promote climate-smart agriculture.

Speaking at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) panel discussion under the theme: “Using Biomass Sustainably and Ensuring Global Food Security”, Minister Steenhuisen stressed the potential of bioeconomy to address food insecurity while building environmental resilience. He highlighted South Africa’s advancements in utilising biomass and renewable energy to support sustainable agriculture and called for frameworks that ensure smallholder farmers benefit from these innovations.

At the 11th Germany-Africa Agribusiness Forum, the minister participated in a panel on the Ukudla Initiative, a transformative Southern African programme focusing on empowering smallholder farmers and developing sustainable value chains. He underscored the importance of regional collaboration, market access, and infrastructure development, drawing significant interest from German agribusiness leaders eager to invest in the initiative.

Minister Steenhuisen’s engagements in Berlin showcased his vision for South Africa’s G20 Presidency, which is driving investment in agriculture, promoting sustainable practices, and addressing food security challenges across Africa. His focus on bioeconomy initiatives, infrastructure development, and empowering youth and women reinforced South Africa’s role as a significant global player in agriculture.

His visit sought to further demonstrate South Africa’s commitment to transforming food systems through collaboration and innovation, ensuring a resilient and inclusive future for agriculture.

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM—DAVOS, SWITZERLAND

Minister Steenhuisen was also part of the South African Delegation that accompanied President Cyril Ramaphosa to the World Economic Forum (WEF) where South Africa’s views on the bioeconomy were discussed, including its readiness to adopt advanced agricultural technologies and practices that aim to position it as a leader in these fields.

He emphasised the importance of market access to ensure sustainable and profitable farming. Additionally, he highlighted South Africa’s efforts to safeguard the global agricultural sector and food security, underscoring the need for profitable markets for South African farmers. He reiterated South Africa’s commitment to the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan, which aims for inclusive growth in the sector, creating jobs, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

The opportunity was also used to present the country’s vision for its G20 Presidency, outlining a path towards a more equitable and sustainable future. Minister Steenhuisen stressed the importance of strengthening global partnerships and leveraging South Africa’s G20 Presidency to drive agrifood systems, enhance food security, and find investment opportunities in the agricultural sector.



Minister Steenhuisen interacting with delegates at the Green Week Exhibition tour.

SA FARMERS PLANTED SLIGHTLY MORE GRAINS THAN INITIALLY INTENDED



The preliminary planted area for wheat is 505 300 ha, of which an estimated 368 000 ha or 73% is planted in the Western Cape, 49 000 ha or 10% in the Free State and 38 000 ha or 8% in the Northern Cape.

Ndivhuwo Thenga

South African farmers have planted slightly more grains than they intended at the beginning of the summer crop season. According to the Crop Estimates Committee (CEC) media statement issued on 28 January, the preliminary area planted for maize currently stands at 2,646 million ha, which is a slight increase of 0,38% from 2,636 million ha planted the previous season and also 0,23% more than the intentions to plant figure of 2,640 million ha released in October 2024. The preliminary area estimate for white maize is 1,600 million ha, which represents an increase of 2,89% or 44,950 ha compared to the 1,555 million ha planted last season. Regarding yellow maize, the area estimate is 1,046 million ha, which is 3,24% or 35,000 ha less than the 1,082 million ha planted last season.

The preliminary area estimate for sunflower is 552,000 ha, which is 4,35% or 23,000 ha more than the 529,000 ha planted during the previous season. Soya bean plantings show a decrease of -2,43% from 1,150 million ha to 1,122 million ha. Ground nut plantings currently stands at 46,175, which represents a double digit increase of 12,08% from 40,000 ha. Sorghum plantings have decreased by 6,18% or 2,600 ha, from 42,100 ha to 39,500 ha, compared to the previous season. A total of 45,500 ha of dry beans have been planted, which is an increase of 15,04% compared to 39,550 ha planted in 2024.

The Free State, North West and Mpumalanga provinces remain the leading maize producing areas with 1,245 million ha, 540,000 ha, and 524,000 ha, respectively, while Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Northern Cape have planted less with 6,000 ha, 9,000 ha and 1 500 ha. When it comes to sunflower seed production, Free State, North West and Limpopo are leading with 275,000 ha, 185,000 ha and 85,000 ha, respectively. Farmers in some grain producing areas are now praying for follow-up rains during mid-February to prevent crop losses. Some of these plantings likely occurred

outside the typical optimal window because of some regions' unfavourable weather conditions at the start of the season. In these areas, there will be a need for follow-up rains through to March, when the crops will likely pollinate.

For winter crops, the planted area for wheat is 505,300 ha, of which an estimated 368,000 ha or 73% is planted in Western Cape, 49,000 ha or 10% in Free State and 38,000 ha or 8% in Northern Cape. The expected production in Western Cape is 1,067 million tons (55%), which is 1,69% or 18,400 tons less than the previous forecast of 1,086 million tons. In Northern Cape, 296,400 tons (15%) are expected to be produced, which is an increase of 1,30% or 3,800 tons more than the previous forecast of 292,600 tons. In Free State, the expected production is 225,400 tons (12%), which is also an increase of 1,10% or 2,450 tons more than the previous forecast of 222,950 tons. It should be noted that SA remains a net importer of wheat because local production is insufficient to satisfy local demand.

The production forecast for barley remains unchanged at 377,050 tons. The area planted is estimated at 100,700 ha, while the expected yield is 3,74 tons per ha. The expected canola crop is 287,445 tons, which is 2,71% or 8,000 tons less than the previous forecast of 295,445 tons. The area estimate for canola is 165,750 ha, with an expected yield of 1,73 tons per ha. The CEC is scheduled to release the revised area planted and production figures for summer crops for 2025, as well as the final production estimate for winter cereals for 2024 on 27 February 2025.



MINISTER NYHONTSO HANDS OVER TITLE DEEDS TO FARM DWELLERS AND LABOUR TENANTS



Minister Mzwanele Nyhontso handing over a title deed to a CPA in KwaZulu-Natal.

Samuel Kgatla

There was joy and excitement in the Mgunqulovu District in the north of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) when the Minister of Land Reform and Rural Development, Mr Mzwanele Nyhontso handed over titled deeds to labour tenants and farm dwellers granting them ownership to agricultural land.

Thirteen title deeds were handed over during a ceremony held at Ekupholeni Village on 19 December 2024, in KZN.

Minister Nyhontso handed over 1,844 ha of land to six communal property associations (CPA), two family trusts and five direct transfers to individuals in equal shares of the farms. The title deeds were given to beneficiaries of NM & QA Ngwane, Zabalaza Mshengu Trust, Birnamwood, Fair Fax, Funukwenza CPA, Welgevonden, Shayamoya CPA, Ngubane Family Trust, Ithubelihle CPA, Siyakhula CPA, Qalabusha CPA, Five Star CPA, Glumuzi Zondi and Dumisani Malunga.

The properties for the farm dwellers and labour tenants were purchased by the department, working together with the uMgunqulovu District, as part of government's efforts to secure tenure rights for people who live on farms, as provided for in the Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act, 1996 (Act No. 3 of 1996) and the Extension of Security of Tenure Act, 1997 (Act No. 62 of 1997).

There are two pieces of legislation with a particular focus on labour tenants and farm dwellers or farm workers. The Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act 1996, (Act No. 3 of 1996) provides for an opportunity by people who meet the definition of labour tenant to apply for protection of their land use rights but further

give them an opportunity to apply for land acquisition. The Act had placed a cut-off date of March 2001 for lodging applications and to this date, KZN received 11,446 applications. Of this 11,446, 5,987 have been settled with 5,729 outstanding, where land was acquired, and tenure secured permanently.

Ms Zibeleni Margaret Dlamini, a farm dweller from Welgevonden Farm praised the department for finally delivering on its promise of giving them title deeds. "This is unbelievable, and it was a long journey, but we are now smiling with title deeds in our hands. I want to thank everyone who helped us to get the title deeds and this just shows that our government is really working," she said.

Minister Nyhontso strongly advised the land beneficiaries to never opt for financial compensation because land ownership is the first requirement when applying for any land reform support from the government.

"Look after the land from government and we are making a meaningful difference in changing the economy of the rural areas and specifically the poorest and most vulnerable. I raised the concern of post-settlement support and specifically, the viable and financially sustainable use of the land in all the title deed handovers I have attended. There is a belief that if the land is returned and rural areas developed, then we would have solved all the problems faced by our people," he concluded.

LOCAL FARMERS TO BENEFIT FROM FARMER PRODUCTION SUPPORT UNIT



Minister Mzwanele Nyhontso during the official opening of Noodsberg Farmer Production Support Unit.



The Noodsberg Farmer Production Support Unit was officially handed over by DALRRD.

Samuel Kgatla

There are significant benefits in store for farmers in the sugar cane sector and other agricultural commodities from the Noodsberg Farmer Production Support Unit (FPSU). Small-scale sugar cane growers and farmers from various sectors across the agricultural value chain within the uMshwathi area will receive production support, which is expected to improve production, stimulate the rural economy and benefit the surrounding community members.

The FPSU was officially handed over by the Minister of Land Reform and Rural Development, Mzwanele Nyhontso in December 2024 at Ekupholeni Village of KwaSwayimane area under uMshwathi Local Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal.

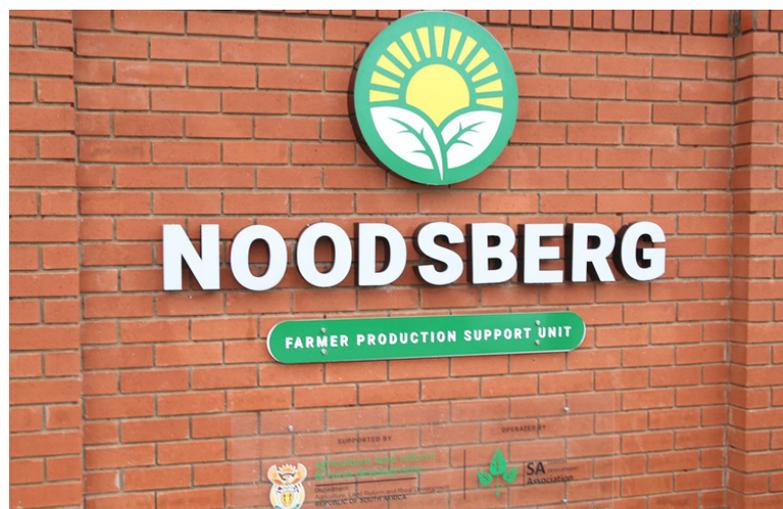
In his keynote address, the minister commended the community and the stakeholders for building the Noodsberg FPSU. He also stated that the support that is offered to the Noodsberg FPSU will enable small-scale growers to improve their farming practices, provide training and capacity building to the community with the objective to strengthen their enterprises. The minister also urged the department's officials to offer support to the farmers who require land and agricultural support.

The FPSU is located within uMgungundlovu District Municipality in Ward 4 of uMshwathi under Gcumisa Tribal Authority. DALRRD, through support of the Directorate: Rural Infrastructure spent R34 million for the construction of the building. The department appointed South African Farmers Development Association (SAFDA) as an implementing agent of the FPSU. The partnership is guided by a service level agreement signed by both parties. Furthermore, the partnership culminated in the establishment and construction of six FPSUs in KwaZulu-Natal.

The facility comprises storage and input sheds, a mechanisation shed, manager's residence, guard house, farmers' hall, pump room, administration offices and ablution facilities. The FPSU has already started to change the lives of the people of uMgungundlovu

District. The impact of the FPSU in improving production of sugar cane is evidenced by the increase in the tons of harvested cane delivered by small-scale growers to both Noodsberg and Eston Mills. More than 800 jobs have been created through planting activities operated within the FPSU operations. A further 12 jobs were created as FPSU staff were hired to coordinate and implement the FPSU operations. Moreover, 1,953 individual growers generated a combined income of R152,955,876,50 supplying sugar cane to the Noodsberg and Eston Sugar Mills in November 2024.

Mr Muziwemali Thusi, Chairperson of the Noodsberg farmers, said that they were thrilled to see government handing over the FPSU and praised SAFDA for their involvement in making sure that the building is complete. "This FPSU is going to help us a lot and today we have a workplace, a place to put our animal feed, fertilisers, and chemicals. The good thing is that we are also going to host our meetings in this building. We are going to look after this FPSU," he promised.



The Noodsberg FPSU is going to assist local KZN farmers.

BILATERAL MEETING FOR THE REAFFIRMATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA AND THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY



The South African team with the Zimbabwean delegation that attended the bilateral meeting.

Rony Moremi

As the 2027 African Union Border Programme (AUBP) deadline for the signing of a treaty looms closer, the South Africa-Zimbabwe Joint Technical Committee is clearing all uncertainties to reaffirm the South Africa-Zimbabwe international boundary. In 2023, the Joint Technical Committee from South Africa and Zimbabwe met to digitise the border along the Limpopo River in Harare, Zimbabwe to determine the middle of the river which is the international boundary between South Africa and that country.

The committee reconvened in October 2024 to conduct a reconnaissance study of South Africa-Zimbabwe common international boundary from Shalimpo to Pafuri tripoints. The purpose of conducting the reconnaissance study was to visit sites along the Limpopo River, particularly islands and unclear riverbanks that could not be verified during the earlier desktop study. This included a physical inspection of areas that could not be clearly defined using the satellite imagery.

This exercise is work in progress towards the drafting of the international boundary treaty between the two republics. "The treaty must clearly define the international boundary between South Africa and Zimbabwe as the middle of the river from Shalimpo tripoint to Pafuri tripoint," said Mason Sibanda, Surveyor-General in Limpopo emphasising the importance of resolving all potential ambiguities.

The findings of the research on properties along the Limpopo River revealed that there are three farms on the Zimbabwean side and one farm on the South African side of the boundary, which extend to the middle of the Limpopo River. The effect of the international boundary on these properties will be analysed in the next bilateral meeting. One of the recommendations from the bilateral meeting was that extensive research should be conducted at the Regional and British Archives to determine the existence of any historical maps and diagrams that were referred to in historical correspondence on the Limpopo River boundary during the joint research exercise.

The South African Joint Committee was tasked by the bilateral meeting to begin the drafting of the international boundary treaty between the two countries. This draft will be shared in the next bilateral meeting, which is scheduled to take place in Zimbabwe this year. The drafting process will require participation from all stakeholders of the South African Joint Committee. The Office of the Chief Surveyor-General especially welcomed the participation of stakeholders such as the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), Branch: Economic Development, Trade and Marketing, Border Management Authority and The Presidency in the reconnaissance exercise.

DALRRD SUPPORT PROPELS SMALL SCALE PRODUCER TO COMMERCIAL FARMER

“We want everybody to know that it is possible for a black child to become a commercial farmer. Agriculture is not a sociality but economic activity,”

The Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development, through its Land Development Support Programme has created a new commercial farmer in Lephalale area, in Limpopo. Raymond Ngoepe credits the department for his transition from small holder farmer to successful commercial farmer status in a short three years from 2021 after receiving support from the department.

Sharing his story of success during a farm visit by department officials, Ngoepe also detailed some of the challenges he experienced including when he first arrived at the farm which was a mere vacant lot with a single borehole. “I moved onto this farm on 01 July 2016, the farm was just an empty land with one borehole, but due to my passion for farming, which led me to resign my permanent job at the mine. I took occupation of the farm and invested all my energy and wisdom to what one can see today. I used all my savings to ensure the farm is in this condition today. I have built myself a farmhouse, bought almost 166 cows amongst many other resources to ensure I am hands-on,” said Ngoepe.

He added that, “2019 to 2021 was a tough year due to the covid 19 pandemic, however, things changed for the better when the department provided me with financial support in the year 2021. Through this support I was able to move from small holder farmer to commercial farming.”

Situated in Witpoort, under the Waterberg District, the 1888,44-ha farm Trading as Bakone Ko Old Jeff (Pty) Ltd, was acquired through the department’s Land Redistribution Programme and is under a 30-year lease to Ngoepe.

The farm produces chickens and Bonsmara and is thriving due to financial and material support received from DALRRD in the form of the assisted purchase of Bonsmara cows, tractor, scrapper, trailer (2500 litres firefighting equipment), fuel tanker, bradding material, solar system, boreholes, drinking troughs and mentorship. Ngoepe sells his best cattle and calves at the Baltimore Auction and Vleissentraal Auctioneers in Lephalale.

Though Ngoepe’s success came from the livestock operations, he says he has plans to expand his business to venture into crop production in the next planting season. He has already begun de-bushing a few hectares to prepare the soil.

Obed Makgoale and
Mphahlela Rammutla

Dr Siggibo Mfuywa, the district director for Waterberg indicated that the department is very proud of Mr Ngoepe’s progress, he said the department has spent a total of R4,390,590.00 on purchasing the farm and purchasing of cattle and other farming equipment, infrastructure, and supplies.

“We want everybody to know that it is possible for a black child to become a commercial farmer. Agriculture is not a sociality but economic activity,” explained Dr Mfuywa. He further stated that the purpose of the visit is mainly to take note of the progress, celebrate and create awareness about the important role played by government through land reform programme.

Ngoepe is contributing significantly to the local economy of Lephalale Villages such as Mongalo, Shongwe and others through his sale of chickens and livestock. Local job seekers are also benefitting from his efforts as he currently employs three permanent employees and two seasonal employees. The department is in a process of officially handing over the title deed to the newly emerged commercial farmer, Mr Ngoepe.



Raymond Ngoepe, a commercial farmer, explaining to the media and department officials how he manages to breakout of the emerging farmer cycle.

"MY DREAM IS TO BECOME A COMMERCIAL FARMER," SAYS MORUDU



Mr Malesela Piet Morudu, a farmer in Lephalale breeds cattle such as Limousin, Boran and Bonsmara.

**Obed Makgoale and
Mphahlela Rammutla**

Approximately 90 km away from Lephalale, the vibrant town under the Waterberg District Municipality, is where you will find the hard-working farming couple, Mr Malesela Piet Morudu and his wife, Morongwa.

The success of the Morudus is one that could change the mindset of many aspiring farmers and youth who may have thought farming does not have lucrative proceeds. This couple is able to compete and even outbid top commercial farmers at auctions with their top quality cattle breeds such as Limousin, Boran and Bonsmara.

The couple started from humble beginnings in 2003 with only five cattle on hand while being employed as farm workers on the very same farm, Tabana, which trades under African Cattle Farm. The Morudus are now proud lessees of the property allocated to them by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development after acquiring it in 2017. The pair signed a 30-year lease agreement with the department.

When they took over the farm, they had about 68 cattle. Despite not receiving any funding or pre-settlement support, they continued to develop, maintain and pay the property's rent. Judging by the good quality of their livestock and good condition of the farm, the Morudus represent a success story of land reform.

The farm had experienced overgrazing under the previous owner over the years; however, the pair has replanted the natural grass as part of rehabilitating the farm. Additionally, they had to do maintenance and repairs on and construction of infrastructure such as water reservoirs, dams and cattle kraals.

"Even though the conditions on the farm were not favourable, I appreciated the good work done by government in buying this farm for me, and I did not feel discouraged. I told myself that this farm is mine. Therefore, I worked very hard to improve this place. I have spent a lot of money from my pockets knowing clearly that I am doing all these good things for myself," said Malesela. To save money spent on electricity consumption, the Morudus came up with the brilliant idea of buying a solar system and today, the 1,577,13 ha farm relies on it for power supply. The farm employs two permanent and two seasonal workers.

Malesela is encouraging emerging Black farmers to do away with the tendency commonly known as "office farming", as he strongly believes that hard work is the key to the success of every farmer. "A farmer must always be on the farm to succeed. One should avoid running a farm through a phone call. My wish is to become a commercial farmer and do more," he concludes.



Mr Malesela Morudu of Tabana farm in Lephalale showing off his cattle during the farm's tour.

DALRRD'S SPATIAL PLANNING AND LAND USE MANAGEMENT HOSTS NAMIBIAN DELEGATION TO SHARE INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE



Some officials with the Namibian delegation on the last day of the meeting.



Mr Tobias Pendapala Newaya from Namibia during discussions.

Qhawe Ntuli

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development's (DALRRD) Branch: Spatial Planning and Land Use Management (SPLUM) hosted a high-level delegation from the Republic of Namibia's Ministry of Urban and Rural Development in Cape Town.

The delegation of five members of the taskforce team travelled to the city to benchmark the National Spatial Development Framework (NSDF), a cornerstone of SPLUM's strategic planning.

According to Ms Nontuthuzelo Ntshabele, Chief Director: Spatial Development Planning, the two-day meeting aimed to facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity building between the SPLUM team and the Namibian Ministry. "We are here to share the journey that the provinces have taken on their Provincial Spatial Development Framework, and also learn from them," said Ms Ntshabele.

In his opening remarks, Deputy Director-General (DDG): Spatial Planning and Land Use Management, Mr Clinton Heimann said, "The department is honoured to host the Namibian delegation. We are here to share our experience of NSDF and our challenges and how we dealt with it, so that you (delegates) can navigate on your (delegates) NSDF easily. The task of establishing the NSDF is both challenging and rewarding. South Africa has walked this path, striving to create a balance between economic growth

and social inclusivity. We are also looking at our environmental sustainability."

The delegates were eager to learn from South Africa's successes and challenges in implementing the NSDF, a comprehensive framework guiding spatial development and land use management. There were three provinces represented in the meeting, namely Western Cape, Free State and Northern Cape who all shared their provincial spatial development frameworks. The NSDF was also presented with a special focus on technical overview and implementation framework.

Ms Zouna Meades, Director: Spatial Development Frameworks, presented on the NSDF's history, objectives, and key components. "The NSDF is a critical tool for coordinating spatial development across sectors and spheres of government. It ensures that our urban and rural areas are planned and managed in a sustainable, equitable, and efficient manner," explained Ms Meades.

Leading the Namibian delegation, Mr Tobias Pendapala Newaya, Deputy Director: Town and Regional Planning from the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development, said that they came to South Africa to have a dialogue with the team of experts that was involved in the development of South Africa's NSDF, with the aim to get assistance and advice.

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“The NSDF is a critical tool for coordinating spatial development across sectors and spheres of government. It ensures that our urban and rural areas are planned and managed in a sustainable, equitable, and efficient manner,”

“As the Namibian taskforce, we came here so that the experts can assist us to have a well-crafted document, which is going to be a national document for Namibia. We gathered a lot of information that is going to assist us when we start our own NSDF compilation. We heard from the experts how SPLUM’s strategies have been implemented, what challenges are there and how to overcome them,” said Mr Newaya.

In conclusion, DDG Heimann told the gathering, “We look forward to working closely with Namibia, not only in South Africa, but also on the continent, in the United Nations Geo-spatial Information Management expert group for the region. Together we can strengthen the relations in Southern Africa, in general.”

Mr Newaya also pointed out that his ministry would like the DALRRD town planners to visit Namibia with the aim of assisting them and for them to see how they do things in Namibia. The department is still in the process of crafting the agreements.

In terms of the proposed way forward, Ms Meades mentioned that the department is considering an MoU or MoA with Namibia, covering issues pertaining to spatial planning and land use management, including the SPLUMA, Special Data Infrastructure (SDI), drone technology and NSDF. “We can assist Namibia with NSDF development. We will continue supporting them and country to country learning,” she said.

This successful engagement marked the beginning of a fruitful partnership between the department (SPLUM) and the Namibian Ministry of Urban and Rural Development, paving the way for future collaborations and mutual growth.



Ms Zouna Meades, Director: Spatial Development Framework, presenting the history of NSDF.



Delegates had an opportunity to ask questions.

YOUNG AGRO-PROCESSORS EXHIBIT AT AFRICAN AGRI INVESTMENT INDABA



Ms Bokang Lehloenyane the owner of Wa Rona Food Enterprise with her traditional sorghum-based porridge drink called Wa Rona Motoho wa Sebele.



Young Agro-processors with DALRRD officials.



Exhibition visitors had an opportunity to taste different sauces from Lethogonolo Leserwane of Thok's Veggies (Pty) Ltd.

Qhawe Ntuli

Eight young agro-processors showcased their products in Cape Town, Western Cape, during the prestigious African Agri Investment Indaba (AAIL) held from 18 to 20 November 2024 at Cape Town International Convention Centre (ICC).

The young processors hail from remote rural areas in KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Limpopo, Gauteng, and North West. Their involvement in the sector helps not only to improve the lives of their families but also those of their communities through job creation, among other things.

According to the Deputy Director: Sector Transformation—Programmes Support, Mr Mathatsi Selokane, the department asked each provincial department of agriculture (PDA) to nominate one participant in their respective province.

“DALRRD was relying on the provinces to select the youth, as they know them better than us. Then DALRRD was responsible for their traveling and accommodation costs. This was the first time that young producers were exposed to such an event,” said Mr Selokane.

Peo—The Seed had an opportunity to talk to some of these young processors to learn more about them and their products.

Ms Bokang Lehloenyane, the owner of Wa Rona Food Enterprise from Welkom in Free State, produces a traditional sorghum-based porridge drink called Wa Rona Motoho wa Sebele. She started her business in 2021 after struggling to find employment. “The department assisted me with manufacturing plants in the form of a container. That helped me a lot because I managed to increase my production volumes. I supply Spar in Welkom and other small supermarkets and petrol stations. I have applied to supply Checkers; I am still waiting for their response,” said Ms Lehloenyane.

Another young person from Estcourt in KwaZulu-Natal, Mr Nkanyiso Mnguni of Nova's House (Pty) Ltd, started producing chillies in his backyard and selling to neighbours and hawkers. Unfortunately, during the lockdown in 2020, sales for fresh chillies dropped drastically. Then, he had to develop a plan to get rid of his chillies. “I decided to try and process chillies into sauce. That was a great move for me because I got a market for my sauce. My first sauce was chilly chutney. Since then, we have had four different types of sauces, but chilly chutney is still the best seller,” said Mr Mnguni. He also pointed out that they supply 10 supermarkets under the Macksons group in KwaZulu-Natal.

Cont. from pg 12

“Some of these young agro-processors are also involved in primary production, as subsistence, smallholder, or even commercial farmers, which helps with job creation. As they become successful, they help us promote and attract other youth to join the sector,” said Mr Seloane.

Young processors were not only exhibiting, they were also building strategic relationships, exploring innovative ideas, and tapping into new markets across Africa.

Other processors who produce sauces included Ms Katlego Suze of Lemme Chew Foods & Bevs PTY LTD in Gauteng; Mr Lethogonolo Leserwane of Tlhoks Veggies (Pty) Ltd from Northern Cape; and Mr Neo Mohlala of Mizpah Farming Project in Mpumalanga.

Mr Vhutshilo Netshiongolwe from Limpopo owns Mukapuzza (Pty) Ltd., a plant-based breakfast cereal and convenience food company that uses indigenous ingredients such as baobab fruit, sweet potatoes, marula nuts, and traditional dates. While Mr Kgosietsile Setlhabetsi of Motlopi Coffee from North West uses roots of the Motlopi tree, which is indigenous. He claims that his coffee can support the healing of various diseases, including epilepsy, haemorrhoids, sugar diabetes, and hypertension.

Among the mentioned processors was Mr Mlungisi Bushula from SA Fine-Tuned, a business that is involved in rehabilitating alien invasive jungles and converting them into commercial timber plantations, managing commercial forest plantations, harvesting, and supplying timber raw material and semi-processed timber products, in Eastern Cape.

Most youth were thrilled to showcase their products and share their stories. The platform has opened doors for them to access new markets and grow their businesses.



Nkanyiso Mnguni of Novas House (Pty) Ltd with his produce.



Young Agro-processors also had an opportunity to sell their products to delegates.



Agro-processors interacting with delegates.

DLRRD PROVIDING RESOURCES TO NURTURE YOUNG FARMERS



Mr Phori Ntsane and Mr Selby Rambuda, a Senior Project Officer, responsible for the farm.

There is an African idiom that says: “A child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth”. Contrary to the saying, the Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development is embracing the country’s youth by empowering them to become prosperous in their lives’ endeavours.

Phori Ntsane is one such vibrant youth. He enthusiastically told me that he has always aspired to become a commercial farmer despite his humble upbringing. The department’s youth orientation has given impetus to his dream of becoming a farmer because he now has a long-term lease for a State-owned farm. His involvement with the department dates back over 12 years when he enrolled as a National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) participant in 2012.

The 39-year-old Phori mentioned that the intensive training programmes that he enrolled for as a NARYSEC participant prepared him for the many and steep challenges that becoming a farmer required him to overcome.

His intensive training provided him with an opportunity to undertake international travel to a fellow BRICS member country. In 2015, as a NARYSEC participant, he was part of a study tour to China where he learned about unconventional vegetable production methods.

“This is where I learned how to innovate as a farmer. The Chinese taught us to maximise every resource at our disposal when farming without complaining about the availability of land,” he recalled vividly.

The NARYSEC development programme exposed Phori to other diverse training courses including Plant and Poultry Production, Community House Building, Business and Financial Management, as well as Small Enterprise Development.

Now that he has been allocated a 77-ha farm, which is the remaining extent of Portion 8 of Vaalfontein Farm in Sedibeng District, Phori mentioned that the training he got during his time as a NARYSEC participant is now paying off. The farm, which was allocated through the Directorate: Gauteng Strategic Land

Themba Hleko

Acquisition (SLA) and is under the supervision of the Directorate: Property Management, has a four-bedroom house in fair condition with an electric fence, three worker’s rooms, two closed sheds and an open shed; seven makeshift pig sties with drinking nipples and a makeshift but equipped chicken house with a carrying capacity of 3 000 to 4 000 chicks per cycle; three boreholes, two windmills, two dams and three kraals with feedlots and handling facilities.

The excitement on his face said it all. He mentioned that he had led a community food garden before where the land was shared with other farmers in Rietspruit.

“I think my exceptional work at the food garden paved the way for me and the department noticed my potential; that is why I think it played a role for me to be allocated this farm,” he said.

“You see, there are structures on the farm that need to be revamped. I am going to revamp them myself, NARYSEC taught us how to build structures,” he indicated. Phori’s farm is suitable for mixed farming and, drawing from his previous training, he will be able to double as a poultry, crop and livestock farmer with ease. During the interview with PSSC: G News, his agricultural jargon and know-how kills any doubts that he is indeed a competent farmer.

He is currently planting vegetables on the farm and selling broiler chickens and, like a true business minded farmer, he has already prepared 17 ha of land to plant soya beans and cayenne chilly.

All the crops he intends to plant already have buyers waiting for harvest. “You see, I have an agreement with AGT Foods Africa, they are not only going to buy all the cayenne chilly we plant, but they are also going to conduct an incubation training that will show us how to produce quality plants according to their market standards,” he indicated.

The SLA is currently in the process of establishing full restoration of water and electricity as well as installation of a solar system. Ntsane mentioned that his farm will be at the most productive the sooner these resources are restored.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PLAYS A VITAL ROLE IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT



Learners from Social Employment Fund (SEF) getting experiential training at Camel Estate Farmer Production Support Unit.

Zodwa Dickson

Infrastructure development is an important factor in agricultural development, affecting production costs and access to markets. The Directorate: Rural Infrastructure Development (DIRID) of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) has made progress in the West Rand District by equipping the Camel Estate Farmer Production Support Unit (FPSU) with infrastructure that will assist local farmers to improve their levels of production.

The Camel Estate FPSU is situated in the Mogale City Local Municipality, and it provides much-needed support to local farmers who use its facilities to reach their production levels. DALRRD, the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD) and the Mogale City Local Municipality have combined resources to ensure that the FPSU functions optimally. This initiative aligns well with the goals of the District Development Model to improve the quality of services to communities by bringing together all three levels of government to improve service delivery.

DALRRD, through its Directorate: Rural Infrastructure Development, has erected 20 hydroponic tunnels with irrigation systems and water tanks, a diesel generator, a borehole, a fence, high mast lights and a storage container.

Ms Dinah Boikanyo, an Agri-Parks manager from GDARD, said that apart from providing expert advice and training to farmers at the FPSU, her department also supported farmers with tomato, red pepper, and yellow pepper seeds. Ms Tshepang Shuping, a project manager at Mogale City Local Municipality, mentioned that

the municipality provided the land on which the FPSU is built, as well as security services to safeguard the facility.

Ms Mathapelo Khabi, who heads iNtsika ye Mnotho, one of the small medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) that have leased 20 hydroponic tunnels, said that the production inputs that were made available to them and the expert advice from the Agri-Parks manager have helped them reach their targets. "I am happy here at the FPSU; before, I used to work in a backyard where I live in Hekpoort, and the volumes were small. Today, I can produce more vegetables thanks to the FPSU," she said.

Currently, she employs permanent and temporary workers from the community. Furthermore, there are 12 learners from the Social Employment Fund (SEF), which is a presidential initiative aimed at tackling unemployment through strengthening training partnerships with a wide range of social and civic partners to enable employment opportunities for the youth. Additionally, there are four Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) learners who are under learnership training.

The aim of establishing FPSUs is to provide smallholder farmers with farmer support by allocating a one-stop shop of farming resources like machinery and cold storage facilities within a 30-kilometre radius. These FPSUs also provide outreach and capacity-building opportunities that are used to link farmers with the markets.

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Ms Tshepang Shuping adjacent to the 80 KVA diesel generator provided by Rural Infrastructure Development (RID).



The hydroponic tunnels with irrigation system erected by RID.



A clear view fence provided.

MINISTER NYHONTSO ENGAGES WILDEBEESFONTEIN EVATON CLAIMANTS: A STEP TOWARDS RESOLVING LONG-STANDING LAND DISPUTES



Minister Nyhontso addressing challenges faced by Wildebeesfontein Evaton land claimant groups.

Sibusiso Lubisi

The Minister of Land Reform and Rural Development, Mzwanele Nyhontso, accompanied by officials from the Office of the Regional Land Claims Commissioner in Gauteng, met with Wildebeesfontein Evaton land claimant groups at Saul Tsoetsi Sports Complex on 23 November 2024, to address their challenges regarding their land claims.

The minister was acting at the request of community members to engage the communities on the challenges they have so that these issues can be unlocked for the land claim to be processed and settled.

This land claim was lodged by the late Mr Sandi Tuis September on 19 December 1998 and the late Mr Dumisa Coan Qupe on 29 December 1998 on behalf of Evaton Wildebeesfontein community.

Mr September submitted this land claim in his then capacity as the Chairperson of the Evaton Wildebeesfontein Stand Owners Association. He also lodged his individual family claim for Evaton stands.

The land claim was approved as valid by the Regional Land Claims Commissioner in respect of portions 4 (RE) and 5 (RE), 9, 15, 23 and 25 of the farm Wildebeesfontein 536 IQ, but currently known as Portion 62 of Wildebeesfontein 536 IQ located in Sebokeng Unit 8 and Portion of Sebokeng Unit 7 situated in Emfuleni Local Municipality, Gauteng.

According to investigations, the claimed extent is 150.91 hectares and the value of the land at the time of dispossession was estimated to be R25,500.00.

According to research by Dr Adriaan Fischer, the beneficiaries of this land claim comprise all previously dispossessed stand owners of Evaton Township, Evaton Small Farms and Evaton Extension.

There are those who submitted their individual claims in respect of their individual stands and some have been settled through financial compensation and alternative land. Some are still outstanding for settlement.

There are multiple community organisations who purport to represent the Wildebeesfontein community. However, a Land Claims Committee (LCC) was elected, which is currently the legitimate structure representing the claimants since 2017.

The land claim was also dismissed as non-compliant for other portions of the farm Wildebeesfontein and also for any farms beyond the farm Wildebeesfontein whereas the committee insist on the validity of their claim in those areas.

Minister Nyhontso told the community that these issues need to be resolved and they are going to be resolved.

"It is not going to work for us to fight amongst ourselves. We need all the different committees to come to the office with all the relevant documents so that there is a sit-down to go through the paperwork with legal representation, discuss the issues so that we can have a way forward," said Minister Nyhontso.

At this point, there is no legal representative allocated for the claimants and it must be noted that the referral has been served on Legal Aid South Africa (LASA).

HEALTHY SOIL FOR FOOD–WORLD SOIL DAY 2024



Agricultural Research Council and Department of Agriculture scientific technicians having a look at the soil survey demonstration.

Matsepo Malatswane

Last year's World Soil Day was celebrated on 5 December 2024 at the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) in Roodeplaat, Pretoria with focused attention on the importance of healthy soil and advocating for the sustainable management of soil resources.

The theme for 2024 was: **“Caring for Soils: Measure, Monitor, Manage,”** which underscores the importance of accurate soil data and information in understanding soil characteristics and supporting informed decision-making on sustainable soil management for food security.

One of the speakers of the day, Dr Johan Van der Waals, Technical Director at ReallPMSouth Africa, an agriculture company that deals with soil analysis, stated that South African soils were very vulnerable to extreme conditions, such as erosion, and presented with low resilience and recovery capacity. Tillage and unsuitable agricultural practices posed a major threat to soil health and the sustainability of agriculture and food production in the country. The sustainable management of soil was, therefore, of fundamental importance.

Dr Van der Waals's role is to provide guidance on the integration of soil chemistry, plant nutrition and biologically based pest control strategies for a wide range of commercial crops and fruit. He gave a perspective on soil health and biology management and monitoring in South Africa. He ended his talk by saying, “You cannot do anything without understanding the soil.”

An in-field soil demonstration on the different types of soil was showcased by the ARC and the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development led by Dr van der Waals. He went on to explain the importance of identifying different types of soil, to sustain food security. What was impressive was a soil survey APP created by the ARC, which will be used by scientific technicians to identify types of soil and give analysis of the health and biology of the soil.

Possession of the soil APP would come in handy to farmers when soil analysis is needed. ARC scientific managers were happy with the APP as it will assist on the roll out of the long-term soil assessment manual that they are working on.

MINISTER STEENHUISEN ENGAGES COMMODITY FARMER ASSOCIATIONS

Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, held an introductory meeting with commodity farmer organisations at his Pretoria office, to engage on challenges and opportunities in the sector.

In his address to the farmers, Minister Steenhuisen said, “We are looking forward to engaging with you frankly and openly. We want to create an enabling environment that will make it easy for you to be able to do what you do best, which is farming, and at the same time provide a regulatory environment that makes sure that we extend the scope of opportunities for your businesses overseas and the continent.”

The minister also outlined and explained the seven priorities of the department which seek to, among others, address the challenges facing farmers. “We believe there should be a strong partnership matrix in the sector. The Department of Agriculture needs to make sure that those partnerships happen for the sector to grow,” said the minister.

“We must beef up biosecurity in the country and make sure that we become synonymous with the highest level of biosecurity and open more markets for the produce and products, expand, make an impact to our prices, and be able to prevent some of these terrible disease outbreaks that have crippled many in our sector,” added the minister.

Organisations representing various commodity farmers, including red meat producers led by Chairman James Faber, raised challenges that are facing primary producers such as animal diseases, foot-and-mouth disease/brucellosis, predation, vaccines, stock theft, export of genetic material and imports from neighbouring countries, among others.

The Eastern Cape Communal Wool Growers Association will work with the department for five years to lobby role players from the promotion of best practices by farmers for improved reproduction and production; develop a sustainable secondary product to wool by 2027; organise for the establishment of district communal breeding schemes in all five districts by 2029; and organise and facilitate infrastructure development for wool sheep farming under communal areas.

Mr Wandile Sihlobo from the South African Presidential Economic Advisory Council said that there has been significant progress made since 1994 and the major catalysts of South African agriculture over that period are: the adoption of new production technologies, better farming skills, growing demand (locally and globally) and favourable trade policy. He further emphasised that policy considerations for agriculture in the Government of National Unity is biosecurity, agricultural products standard, registrar for Act



Minister Steenhuisen, DG Ramasodi, DDG Serage and Members of South African Agri-Initiative (SAAI).

Innocent Mhlanga

36, agricultural exports, water, rural crime, roads and municipalities and state entities.

The African Farmers Association of South Africa has made a few suggestions, which include the regulation of abattoir payment cycles, which they believe will improve capital for individual farmers. They also suggested the revival of the Agricultural Research Council to function optimally; the creation of an atmosphere of trust and respect to all; management of Agri-parks by district municipalities with farmer boards, which will be overseen by the department with quarterly meetings planned for markets. Moreover, they suggested the establishment of fodder bank through government schools and colleges' farms to identify farmers with potential to plant silage and fodder for government to purchase 60%.

The end goal by the minister is to ensure that support is channelled speedily and effectively to ascertain that they are sustainable in their production practices. The provincial departments also have a role to play, especially collaboration with organised agriculture, to promote transparency and accountability of the conditional allocations received by provincial departments.

More meetings with stakeholders from poultry, horticulture and flowers, and cash crops are still to take place.