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## FARMER ORGANISATIONS AND UNIONS READY TO WORK WITH DALRRD

# DEPUTY PRESIDENT MASHATILE PLEASED WITH EASTERN CAPE MODEL

Mphahlela M Rammutla and Thabile Mehlomakhulu

The Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Paul Mashatile, showered Eastern Cape with praise as the torchbearers in implementing Government's 2019 District Development Model (DDM).

Mashatile went on his first official visit as the deputy president to Eastern Cape to check progress on the government's District Development Model, which was announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2019.

He said that the province is on the right track in addressing the key functions of the model. He urged the other provinces to emulate Eastern Cape to change the lives of the residents and create opportunities for employment and business.

The aim of the development model is to ensure collaboration in service delivery across the three spheres of local, provincial and national government. The deputy president's oversight visits were part of Government's efforts to improve the functioning of municipalities.

While addressing a business meeting in East-London, Mashatile said that even though there are loadshedding challenges in the country, the province is turning the tide. Mashatile was on a two-day visit in the province to monitor the implementation of the model.

The deputy president said underspending by provincial governments hinders the delivery of services to communities. "Let us get implementation right. You will see things happen. However, if money is not being spent, it is returned to Treasury, then you cannot complain about money. Let us use the resources we have to achieve our goals."

Mashatile and his entourage also visited Ncera Macademia Farm in East London, a productive farm that was funded by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development to benefit the communities and traditional leaders. When addressing the community after the event, Mashatile emphasised the importance of partnerships between government, traditional leaders and the business sector to ensure communities reap the benefits of the macadamia farms and to avoid infighting.

In Lusikisiki, Mashatile lamented the rising crime rate and the lack of service delivery in the area. He said the implementation of the municipal District Development Model to provide services will include other sectors.

*Deputy President Paul Mashatile addressing business forum at Lusikisiki during his visit to monitor the progress of DDM implementation*

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# DEPUTY PRESIDENT ENGAGES WITH YOUNG AND EMERGING FARMERS

*An exhibitor explaining how her products work during the deputy president's visit to Cedara*

Samuel Kgatla

The Deputy President Paul Mashatile recently engaged with young and emerging farmers of KwaZulu-Natal at Cedara College. The intention of the outreach programme was for the government to provide initiatives and programmes to support these farmers and to respond to the concerns facing the communities. The deputy president was accompanied by some ministers, deputy ministers, premiers and mayors.

They started by visiting Cedara College of Agriculture to see activities and programmes such as production of cannabis, seeds and seedlings, animal feed, livestock breeding, and indigenous chicken production, amongst others, jointly with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Agricultural Research and Training Institutes.

Concerns raised by young and emerging farmers included a lack of mentorship, shortage of harvesters to help farmers during harvesting, no market access, bad roads leading to the farms, no proper follow-up on government-funded projects and red tape procedures making it difficult to access government resources.

In response to the farmers' concerns, the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Thoko Didiza mentioned that they were a caring government and that was why they saw a need to engage with the young farmers. "We are listening to each other, and the issue is how do we become agile when there are problems. Government cannot afford to help the same farmers time and again. Farmers must use the advantage of entities like Agriculture Development Agency (ADA), which is an a entity that assists farmers. It is the entity of our department to assist farmers. Let us look at what that we can do. Land is not a problem, but accessibility is difficult. We are here to hold your hands," she said.

The deputy president said he was very impressed to see young farmers doing well and that meant they were taking responsibility to be leaders. "Farmers must help each other and we are here to work with you. Your partnership with us is going to help to develop this country. You make things happen and you must see us as partners. This is what we call the District Development Model (DDM). We, as government, can only succeed when all the spheres work together. If we work together, we will succeed. We pull our resources and plans together. I want to see you succeeding as young farmers so that the country can have food security. We must produce more food in the country. Let us grow what this country allows us to grow," he said.

*Minister Didiza and Minister Nzimande had an interesting discussion with the lab technician at Cedara*

*Young livestock farmer from Cedara*

# FARMER ORGANISATIONS AND UNIONS READY TO WORK WITH DALRRD

Samuel Kgatla

The farmer organisations and unions are ready to work with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) to fix things in the sector. They met with DALRRD Minister Thoko Didiza at NAMPO agricultural show on 19 May 2023 in Bothaville, Free State. Bad Roads and stock theft across the Lesotho border remain the biggest challenges for farmers in the province. The Minister was accompanied by Free State MEC for Community Safety, Roads and Transport, MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae and the Free State MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Teboho Mokoena and senior leaders of government.

The main purpose of the engagements was for all parties involved to find sustainable solutions on issues affecting farmers and unions in the province. It was also aimed to solicit inputs on how to grow the agricultural industry and to resolve challenges within the sector. The National African Farmers' Union (NAFU), National Emergent Red Meat Producers' Organisation (NERPO), the African Farmers' Association of South Africa (AFASA), the Black Agricultural Commodities Federation (BACF), South African Grain Farmers Association (SAGRA), Grain SA and AGRI-SA were some of the unions and commodity organisations present during a fruitful meeting with the leadership of government departments.

Chief Executive Officer of BACF, Dr Moshe Swartz, urged government to work together with them to address challenges faced by farmers and commodity organisations. "We must improve on how we do things in order to move the industry forward. We need solid and proper strategies to help farmers. My plea and prayer are that we should not work in a disjointed manner, but address issues in a systematic way," he said.

Minister Didiza pleaded with farmer organisations and unions to work with the department to address challenges faced by the sector. "You are playing a crucial role in the sector and you must never be afraid to initiate things by yourself and ask government for assistance. We need to work with other role players to address issues of bad roads to farms and stock theft across the Lesotho border. You are the most important stakeholders in the sector and we must continue working closely with you," she said.

In conclusion, the farmer organisations and unions suggested that government must have an open line of communication with them, trained horse policemen to deal with Lesotho border crime, prioritisation of roads leading to farms and fighting against stock theft.

*DALRRD Minister Didiza with Free State MEC Mathae and Free State MEC Mokoena during their engagements with farmer organisations*

*Minister Didiza had a fruitful engagement with farmer organisations at NAMPO*

*Learners came in numbers during this year's NAMPO*

# COMMUNITY CELEBRATES LAND HAND OVER

Mphahlela M Rammutla

The Dipati and Doornkop communities in North West were elated when they received the title deeds to their land at the handover ceremony presided over by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Mrs Zoleka Capa.

This land handover follows the successful claim by the communities for 1 817,9061 hectares of land, which was restored through the Commission on the Restitution of Land Rights' land claims process.

Deputy Minister Capa gave the Dipati Community and Doornkop individual plot owners plenty to smile about when she handed over the title deeds and 127 pregnant heifers in the JB Marks Local Municipality in North West.

In addition to this, the deputy minister also handed over farming equipment in the form of a 65 Kw tractor, a three-ton cattle trailer and a 2 500-litre firefighter and scraper.

The chairperson of Dipati Communal Property Association (D-CPA), Majombosi said that his community will pursue farming like their forefathers did before the dispossession. "At Dipati, we intended to establish a research centre for various crops and livestock. We want this place to be a key point that attracts people who are interested in breeding Bonsmara studs as we are currently partnering with a very experienced farmer who has been breeding Bonsmara for forty-two years," concluded Majombosi.

While giving the keynote address, Deputy Minister Capa said her department needs to provide educational and technical support to the newly-crowned owners of the Doornkop and Dipati farms as they have lost farming skills during the era of dispossession of their rightful land.

*One of the beneficiaries of Dipati CPA was excited after receiving a title deed*

"Our beneficiaries are not oriented and trained to actually use very important land, they must acquire the skills to avoid underusage of resources that comes with land. Beneficiaries must not be tempted by the money because it will be gone, but land will be there tomorrow and another day," appealed Deputy Minister Capa.

The Dipati Community land claim was lodged at the Office of the Regional Land Claims Commissioner in North West on 13 December 1998; the land claim comprises of 35 households, the original dispossessed persons, while others are direct descendants of the dispossessed individuals.

The deputy minister told the community that they will receive further support of R11,45 million as financial compensation for 702.4879 hectares of land. Of this estimated amount, each of the 35 households will receive R315 000.

Among the dignitaries who graced the handover celebration was North West Agriculture MEC, Desbo Mohono, who pleaded with the title deeds recipients not to sell their land, no matter what challenges they might face. She decried the poor state of communal property associations, saying that they are destroying what is given to the people and that the infighting among CPAs must come to an end. "The province has potential of being the food hub, we are an agricultural province," concluded the MEC.

*Deputy Minister Zoleka Capa with one of the beneficiaries of title deeds of Dipati CPA at Doornkop*

# "MOSEKA PHOFU YA GAABO GA KE A SWA LENTSWE"

Mphahlela M Rammutla

"Moseka phofu ya gaabo ga ke a swa lentswe". This is a Setswana proverb loosely translated as "one must fight persistently for what rightly belongs to him or her". Mr Sam Molakeng is the embodiment of this proverb for his relentless pursuit over more than two decades for the restoration of his community's land.

*Chairperson of Dipati CPA receiving a check on behalf of the CPA*

After many visits to the Office of the Regional Land Claim Commissioner in North West (RLCC-NW) with questions, Mr Molakeng is a happy man as he finally lays his hands on the title deed.

Molakeng, who is personally known by departmental officials for his persistence, thanked the government for keeping its promise to restore their land during the handover event held at one of the restored portions of property owned by the community, Doornkop farm in the JB Marks Local Municipality.

The attendees and dignitaries of the title deeds handover ceremony were taken on a trip down memory lane when Mr Molakeng, a beneficiary and chairperson of Doornkop Individual Plot Owners, relayed the unfortunate incident that took place in Doornkop on 30 November 1978 when the late Afrikaner right winger, Eugene Terre'Blanche, forcefully took their land and livestock.

"Doornkop is a farm filled with stones, but if you look around now the stones have been removed. Our parents were hard workers. Our parents had individual plots, farmed, took care of livestock (sheep, goats, donkeys and cows) and had 20 boreholes. Doornkop had 20 operating boreholes that our fathers dug themselves. Terre'Blanche, with an evil heart, closed them down with stones. He threw the stones inside the boreholes. As I speak they are no longer working," said Molakeng.

The Doornkop Individual Plot Owners claim was lodged in 1993, consisting of 122 plots that are now restored.

Plot owners were decorated farmers with farming enterprises such as poultry production, cattle production as well as crop production at the time of dispossession. Mr Molakeng broken-heartedly said, "What has broken the hearts of the residents of Doornkop is that he took all livestock and killed some…it hurts….it is painful to remember that I don't want to go there…"

"Now we got the title deeds that we have been waiting for and we have plans in place, the priority is to create employment for people who are not working, especially in the neighbouring villages. And we will be fighting food insecurity through using the produce in our plots. We farm crops, livestock and more sunflower," Molakeng said.

The deputy minister said, "It was unfortunate that the Doornkop community had to suffer that during the dispossession. It is for that reason we are here: to restore your land and your dignity." The minister said her department will soon return to the community to monitor the operations' progress on the restored land.

Though Molakeng was still troubled by the evil deed done by the White supremacist Eugene Terre'Blanche (leader of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB)), he believes that his community will return to its former glory and take their place as a known agrarian community.

*Doornkop Dipati CPA members received a check from Deputy Minister Capa.*

# THE OBP PRIORITISES VACCINES TO PROTECT THE NATIONAL HERD

*Dr Jacob Modumo, Head of Sales and Marketing at OBP briefing the media about dispatch and distribution of vaccines*

Rony Moremi

The interim Chief Executive Officer of the Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP), Mr Luvuyo Mabombo says that panic about the shortage of vaccines is often caused when clients cannot find the vaccines on the market. Speaking at a media briefing held on 25 May, he said: "There is a challenge in the interface between the client point of sale and the OBP is developing an app to address this challenge." He added that the OBP focusses on vaccines that are important to farmers.

Dr Jacob Modumo, the Head of Sales and Marketing at OBP said that the reason why there was an interruption in the production of vaccines is that they had challenges with an equipment breakdown, which led to product supply challenges. "It is impossible to fix the equipment and produce vaccines at the same time; this is to ensure that quality is not compromised. He informed the media that experts from the European Union attended to the breakdown of equipment and new equipment is also being procured. The facility is also being upgraded and a new vector protected facility is being built," he added.

In response to questions on what informs the OBP about the need for vaccines, Mr Mabombo informed the media that the OBP does not produce its vaccines on hearsay or reports in the media, they receive disease outbreak reports from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) and confirmation of the disease from the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) Diagnostics Laboratory. He added that the OBP also relies on its close working relationship with organisations such as the National Animal Health Forum (NAHF) and veterinary working groups to anticipate vaccine demand. Other indicators are the sudden increase in demand.

Dr Modumo presented the product portfolio and the process it takes to produce a vaccine and making it available on the market. He said that unlike other vaccine manufacturers, the OBP produces vaccines from raw material with 99% coming from South African suppliers. The process takes an estimated total time of three to four months. He gave an example of the Rift Valley Fever (RVF) vaccine, which takes approximately six weeks to produce. Viral vaccines take up to two months from production to the point of sale. He said the whole process is done in-house to ensure that there is no compromise in quality. "Any form of disruption in this process will have an impact when it comes to releasing the vaccine," he continued.

Responding to reports about the shortage of the bluetongue vaccine, Dr Modumo said that 7 000 units of the bluetongue vaccine have been distributed and the African horse sickness vaccine is being distributed ahead of time before the vaccination commences in mid-June.

Regarding the perception that the national herd would be endangered if the OBP does not have the vaccine, Dr Modumo said that there are other vaccine manufacturers such as MSD that produce similar products. He added that the OBP prides itself on the uniqueness of its strains, quality of its products and that farmers trust its products. He added that the OBP has a strong stance on quality, which is befitting for a facility that is a European Union vaccine bank. The facility is also working on Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) certification and being a global company accepted internationally. The OBP can produce 150 million doses of vaccines annually and its product portfolio boasts with up to more than 50 veterinary vaccines. It also has a footprint in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

*Mr Luvuyo Mabombo, Interim CEO of the OBP updating the media on the state of animals vaccination and vaccine availability in South Africa*

# THIS YEAR LANDCARE DAY CELEBRATED AT MAMAILA VILLAGE UNDER THE THEME: "FORESTS AND HEALTH"

Matsepo Malatswane

The LandCare Programme focuses on the management of land degradation, including soil, vegetation and water degradation. The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) uses LandCare Day to make the public aware of the daily challenges of land degradation. Deforestation, veld fires, overgrazing and non-protection of wetlands are the major contributors to land degradation, therefore the need to educate communities on the necessity of using natural resources in a sustainable manner for the benefit of the current and future generations. LandCare focus areas that need protection are SoilCare, WaterCare, VeldCare, Junior Care (in-school and out-of-school), as well as Conservation Agriculture.

The department visited the Mamaila Community LandCare Project. This community-led project, which represents 436 local farmers who mainly farm with livestock, secured a chipper machine for fodder through the LandCare Programme from the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (LDARD). This followed their challenge of encroachment by alien plants, occupying the huge amount of grazing space for their livestock.

The Badisa Re Timeletswe, which is a non-profit organisation (NPO) based in Ga-Mamaila Village in Limpopo, was the focal point of the celebrations. The project specialises in animal production with a total of about 4 000 cattle shared among farmers. The project was established in 2017 with the aim of restoring degraded veld primarily used for livestock production and to eradicate some of the communities' social ills such as unemployment, inequality and crime (particularly livestock theft).

This project has received R5 million funding from LandCare over a five-year period since 2017. The main activities were clearing problem plants such as Dichrostachys cinerea (Sickle bush) and Lantana camara (Lantana) and fencing grazing camps for veld restoration. Project beneficiaries were trained on chainsaw operation and the application of herbicides. Certificates were issued for completing the training courses. Some participants are now self-employed, utilising the skills and experience they obtained from the project. Previously, the project beneficiaries used to clear sickle bush and the remaining biomass was burnt. There was a need to reduce greenhouse gas emission.

LDARD took the project beneficiaries on an exposure visit to Northwest, a farm near Thabazimbi,. It was discovered that farmers in that area were running a profitable livestock farming business using sickle bush as fodder. Upon arrival, the project beneficiaries were given small samples of feed to test with their livestock. Several meetings were held with farmers as the project beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Most beneficiaries attested that their animals seemed to enjoy feeding on sickle bush.

A team of extension and advisory officers from LDARD collected samples from the plants and sent them to the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) for laboratory analysis to determine the nutritional value. Local farmers contributed to the funding of the laboratory test.

The project beneficiaries requested financial support from the LandCare Programme to purchase a chipper machine. This machine would then be used to create fodder from the cleared sickle bush biomass and there is a possibility of creating full-time job opportunities. Fodder is dried under the shade, packaged into 50 kg bags and sold.

The Limpopo MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Thabo Mokone, encouraged the beneficiaries to get more land to plant more sickle bush. "Do not completely eradicate the plant in some of the places where you are clearing the sickle bush, as it is supposed to grow and be used again," advised the MEC.

# NW DEPT: AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT MAKES STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS TO PRIORITISE NATURAL RESOURCES

*The technical team at the workshop, discussing ways to prioritise natural resources*

Matsepo Malatswane

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development's Directorate: Land and Soil Management is embarking on initiatives to raise awareness on natural resources management, with an emphasis on rangeland resources, soil resources, and water resources and wetlands. At a two-day technical workshop in Rustenburg, hosted by the North West Department of Agriculture and Rural Development on 8–9 March 2023, strategic sessions were held with different entities and spheres of government in order to highlight the progress thus far and pave the way for prioritising interventions of natural resources management.

The technical team explored ways in which natural resources conservation programmes could assist in reducing soil erosion, enhancing water supplies, usage of water saving techniques and improving water quality.

Ms Lydia Bosoga, Director: Land and Soil Management emphasised the importance of the services of water, soil and veld for the agricultural sector.

Ms Bothoboile Pule, Chief Director: Natural Resources in the North West Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, delivered a message from the Head of Department and said that they are aware that the province is hosting the Natural Resources Strategic Plan.

She added that she looked at the LandCare Framework and into the LandCare goal of optimising productivity and sustainable use of natural resources leading to greater productivity, food security, job creation and a better quality of life for all.

Ms Pule said that since LandCare is community based, we must ask ourselves how each project could assist the community, if implemented. She added that skills and capacity building are important to enable officials to implement the projects effectively. "What we have now, in the case of land size, needs to be sustainably utilised because it will never increase. Research and technology innovation should assist us to develop and use the land effectively," continued Ms Pule.

Ms Pule indicated that global warming is a challenge, not only in North West, but worldwide. It affects South African exports and the programme needs to address that challenge. She further said that electricity and energy resource challenges in the sector require collaboration of national, provincial, district and local spheres of government to develop strategies that will be used to resolve all the challenges brought on by climate change.

*Ms Bothoboile Pule, North West Chief Director: Natural Resources presenting the Natural Resources Strategic Plan*

# CONSERVATION SOUTH AFRICA'S BENEFICIAL CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

Ndivhuwo Thenga

Conservation South Africa (CSA) has been implementing the Conservation Agreements (CAs) Model with communal livestock farmers in the rural landscape of the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Reserve (KCBR) in Mpumalanga, South Africa since 2018.

CAs are proving to be beneficial to the restoration of communal grazing lands, while improving rural economic and climate resilience in those areas. According to Ms Matome Matlabo, an intern in the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development's (DALRRD), Directorate: Animal Production based at CSA's Office in Acornhoek, the objective of the CAs model is to restore communal rangelands through the implementation of good rangeland management practices by small-scale rural livestock farmers. Ms Matlabo delivered a presentation about CSA's work on the implementation of CAs with rural communities in the KCBR during the National Agrometeorological Committee (NAC) meeting held in Upington, Northern Cape.

CSA is an independent affiliate of Conservation International that is legally registered as a Section 18A Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) in South Africa. CSA's mission is to restore and maintain critical landscapes in South Africa's biodiversity hotspots for the long-term benefit of people and nature. They work with communities, government, and the private sector in the management of Africa's rangelands and oceans to promote planet-positive economies that support food and climate security, and biodiversity conversation.

CSA implements this work at three demonstration landscapes in four provinces, namely the Namakwa Demonstration Site in Namakwa District Municipality of the Northern Cape, the Umzimvubu Catchment in the Alfred Nzo District Municipality of the Eastern Cape, and the Kruger to Canyons Demonstration Site located on the western border of the Kruger National Park straddling Limpopo and Mpumalanga. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) website, the KCBR is located in the north-east of South Africa. It encompasses the Kruger National Park and other national and provincial nature reserves such as the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve. The KCBR also forms part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA), a conservation area linking South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, covering approximately 3,5 million hectares. It is one of the largest conservation areas in the world.

The KCBR also contains vast areas of communal rangeland that comprise three main vegetation biomes, namely Afromontane forests, lowveld Grasslands, and Savanna. CSA implements the restoration of communal rangelands by negotiating incentive based CAs with rural communities who utilise local natural resources to derive or supplement their livelihoods. In terms of these agreements, resource users agree to undertake conservation actions that promote sustainable use of natural resources in exchange for a negotiated benefit package. The provision of the benefit package is subject to verification of compliance by both parties to the agreed conservation actions, which is monitored on a regular basis.

The four pillars of the CAs are conservation actions, benefit package, monitoring, and penalties. Conservation actions include the implementation of planned grazing, collective herding, participation in rangeland restoration activities, monitoring of rangeland condition, infrastructure maintenance, and understanding the importance of healthy rangelands and links to the One-Health concept. These conservation actions prevent overgrazing, soil erosion, land degradation, and contribute to the increased understanding and implementation of sustainable natural resource use.

By implementing these conservation actions, smallholder livestock farmers receive benefits such as livestock vaccinations, and access to mobile livestock auctions, which are organised by CSA together with Meat Naturally Pty, where they sell their animals and earn an income. If non-compliance has been detected through the monitoring of activities, penalties can be imposed, which may include a warning, or a reduction or a suspension of benefits. Since 2018, eight CAs have been implemented, ranging from 12 to 36 months, with a total of 401 smallholder livestock farmers having participated in these agreements. The impact of these agreements on participating communities includes enhanced governance systems, enterprise development, improved access to markets, improved incomes, livelihoods, and enhanced resilience to climate change.

# CELEBRATING PLANTS, PROTECTING THEM AGAINST PESTS AND DISEASES

*Farmers were provided with information about keeping plants healthy during the International Day of Plant Health.*

Rony Moremi

It is unimaginable to think of a world without plants. Plants provide up to 90% of oxygen and up to 80% of food. In recognition of the vital role of plants in life on earth, the International Day of Plant Health reminds the world of the importance of plants and how to keep them disease and pest free. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), pests destroy up to 40% of global crop production.

It was a day of song and dance in celebration of the International Day of Plant Health (IDPH) at the Agricultural Research Council-Vegetables and Ornamental Plant Institute (ARC-VOPI) in Roodeplaat on 12 May 2023 when farmers and officials joined in song, declaring the importance of plants. South Africa started celebrating the IDPH last year since it was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 2022 as a legacy initiative of the 2020 International Year of Plant Health.

The day aims to raise global awareness and encourage communities on how protecting plant and crop health can help to end hunger, reduce poverty, protect biodiversity and boost economic development. This year, the IDPH 2023 was celebrated under the theme, “Plant Health for Environmental Protection”.

The event was attended by farmers from various districts of Gauteng and farmers from Mopani District in Limpopo. Farmers were encouraged to practice good sanitary and phytosanitary measures on their farms to prevent the spread of plant diseases and pests.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Thoko Didiza, also committed to strengthening surveillance and control of plant diseases during her Budget Vote delivery on 9 May 2023.

Jan Hendrick Venter, DALRRD Director: Plant Health at DALRRD, spoke about the impact of plant pests and gave an example of the late blight that caused famine in Ireland between 1848 and 1860.

Dr Nthabiseng Motete, ARC Group Executive: Crop Sciences, said that the ARC was committed to the protection of the sector and supporting farmers. She gave an example of a Limpopo farmer who was assisted by the ARC diagnostic services and was able to succeed and is now employing 600 seasonal workers. “We want to make you so rich that you do not mind paying for our services,” commented Dr Motete, encouraging farmers to consult the ARC for diagnostic services. Dr Fahimeh Jami said that the ARC received 5 200 samples last year and has a turnaround time of 10 days.

“We need you; we need to be smart in farming,” said Marium Mlungu, Chairperson of Women in Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and a farmer in Gauteng. She said that during her visit to China, she learned of a biological method of controlling pests through the makou ducks, which feed on insects, slugs and snails. She had bought the ducks and used them to control pests on her butternuts and that year she had her best butternut harvest ever. She also encouraged other farmers to strengthen and tighten biosecurity measures on their farms.

Ms Mlungu thanked the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Environment for supporting farmers with chemicals for controlling pests such as the fall armyworm (FAW). As the chairperson of WARD, she said that when they visit farmers, they will be able to help them do diagnostics on their plants with the brochures and information that the department gives to them. She said, “The information by these departments in the form of brochures are important in educating farmers about doing diagnostics on their plants, because, by the time we do applications, damage has already been done.”

# ENSURING FOOD SAFETY FROM THE FARM TO THE FORK

*Regular inspections are held to check the safety and quality of food*

Rony Moremi

**"Food safety is not a privilege but a right and we all bear the responsibility of protecting this right"**

This is what the Gauteng MEC of Health and Wellness, Ms Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko informed the community of Atteridgeville at Lucas Moripe Stadium during the World Food Safety Day commemoration on 7 June 2023. The MEC together with the representative of the World Health Organization, Dr Owen Kaluwa and officials from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Department of Health, the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS) and the City of Tshwane visited Banareng Primary School feeding school programme. The aim of the visit to the school feeding programme was to observe the implementation of food standards. The City of Tshwane environmental health inspectors also carried out inspections at a local butchery and a retail store to observe the implementation of food standards.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and estimated 420 000 people die every year from contaminated food and over 600 million people fall sick every year because of foodborne diseases.

In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution to proclaim 7 June the World Food Safety Day (WFSD). This year, the World Food Safety Day was commemorated under the theme, "Food standards save lives". The theme aims to promote awareness of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) as it celebrates 60 years since its establishment in 1963. Codex Alimentarius Commission is a food standard setting body to ensure food safety and quality. Its mandate is to protect consumer health and ensure fair practices in food trade. The CAC has 236 standards comprising of 84 guidelines, 56 codes of practice and 126 contaminants in food and over 10 000 quantitative standards on food additives, and maximum residue limits.

According to WHO, food safety is an assurance that food will not cause harm to the consumer when it is prepared and/or eaten according to its intended use. The aim of the day is to create awareness on preventing, detecting, and managing foodborne risks, contributing to food security, human health, economic prosperity, agricultural production, market access, tourism, and sustainable development.

Food safety is a shared responsibility between governments, producers and consumers. Everyone has a role to play to ensure food is safe and healthy. Through the World Food Safety Day, the World Health Organization works to mainstream food safety in the public agenda and reduce the burden of foodborne diseases globally. Food safety is everyone's business because the government, consumers, and the industry as well as traders all have a role to play in matters of food safety. The government is responsible for food legislation and law enforcement, consumers must apply safe food practices in the homes while the industry and traders must apply good manufacturing practices.

Mr Billy Makhafola, Director, Food Safety and Quality Assurance highlighted the importance of the DALRRD and the Department of Health working together, "The DALRRD understands that keeping food safe is a complex process that starts on the farm and ends with the consumer. The partnership of the department with the Department of Health is imperative for the promotion of food safety and protection of consumers".

From the farm to the fork the Departments of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), Health and Trade, Industry and Competition ensure that food is safe for consumption. The DALRRD is the custodian of the Agricultural Products Standards Act 119 of 1990, Fertlisers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act 36 of 1947, Meat Safety Act 40 of 2000, GMO Act 15 of 1997 and other related guidelines. DALRRD is also the focal point for sanitary notifications on exports. While the Department of Health is responsible for the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act 54 of 1972. The department is responsible for the control of the sale, manufacturing, importation and exportation of foodstuffs, cosmetics, and disinfectants.

# INTER RESEARCH CONFERENCE OF THE ARC

Mercia Smith

*Ms Lerato Lekhuleni from the ARC: Tropical and Subtropical Crops showing dried litchi to Ms Matodzi Paswana*

The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) recently hosted its first Inter-Campus Hybrid Research Conference at its head office in Hatfield, Pretoria. Held under the theme: "The heat is on: the weird and wonderful research in the ARC", the conference brought ARC scientists and researchers together to share knowledge with their epistemological peers and encourage collaboration to bring about new ideas that can take the ARC to the next level.

The conference also served as a platform for sharing research findings and developments that can assist the country in dealing with some of the challenges in the agricultural sector such as food shortages and the electricity crisis in the country.

*Ms Paballo Letlojane from the ARC: Grain Crops Institute explaining the different diseases found on wheat to Mr Melusi Dube*