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ANNA PHOSA'S JOURNEY TO COMMERCIAL LEVEL FARMING WAS FILLED WITH UPS AND DOWNS

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ANNA PHOSA'S JOURNEY TO COMMERCIAL LEVEL FARMING WAS FILLED WITH UPS AND DOWNS



Anna Phosa, a commercial farmer and the founder of Dreamland Piggery in Gauteng.

“ I tried many times before I could break out of the emerging farmer's category. I went from four pigs in 2004 to 50 pigs in 2006, and now I have a 300-sow unit,” said the renowned female commercial farmer from Gauteng.

Ms Anna Phosa, the founder of Dreamland Piggery and Abattoir located in Vanderbijlpark, Emfuleni Local Municipality, in Gauteng reminisced about how impossible it looked to attain the commercial status from her two-hectare plot.



Mphahlela Rammutla

Employees of Dreamland Piggery, a farm leased from the department.

Dreamland Piggery currently leases a 318-hectare farm through the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD). The business was established in 2004 for piggery production and currently has a state-of-the-art piggery abattoir that slaughters between 750 and 1 000 pigs per week. The farm also produces maize and has a mill which is used for feeding the pigs.

Before drawing the attention of the agricultural sector with her successful enterprise, Anna Phosa was an unknown entrepreneur who made a living from her small vegetable farming business which operated on her two-hectare plot. After starting out in vegetable farming to earn extra income, Phosa went to a farmers' networking event in Zuurbekom in 2004, which proved

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to be a turning point for her venture. Although pig farming was not something she was familiar with at the time, she bought four pigs, believing in the possibility of successful commercial farming.

“I discovered that there was farmers study group that was in Zuurbekom in Westrand, that’s where I came across pigs. One member of the group had pigs and that’s where the love of pigs developed. After a discussion and seeing how clean the pigs were, we bought four pigs from him,” revealed Ms Phosa.

She adds that she went into farming with a passion and acquired knowledge along the way. “In my case, I was not born a farmer, I never went to study any farming or agricultural profession. My parents were domestic workers with no agricultural background.”

“I had challenges of insufficient skills—we just bought pigs with no prior knowledge and skills. We also had a funding challenge; we could not source any loan from any bank; lack of funding compelled us to dip from the family savings to keep the farming operation running. When things were difficult, we used to feed the maize to the pigs and this resulted in the animals not growing,” explained Anna.

This situation continued until she received proper piggery production training from the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), an initiative of the DALRRD. Ms Phosa was also introduced to interventions of the department, such as the agricultural extension and research services and farmer settlement support. She later received infrastructure and equipment including a piggery structure, borehole and fencing and since then she has never looked back.

Her success and hard work was finally acknowledged when she won the Gauteng Female Farmer Award in 2006 for her exceptional work in the agricultural sector. This accolade has opened doors to many partnerships with corporates giants like Pick ‘n Pay, Ackerman’s Foundation and major banks in the country.

“I then had an opportunity to meet with Pick ‘n Pay, Ackerman’s Foundation and Pick ‘n Pay Enterprise Development, who assisted me with the funds. Getting a formal market in 2008 was a turning point for Dreamland Piggery’s success,” said Ms Phosa.

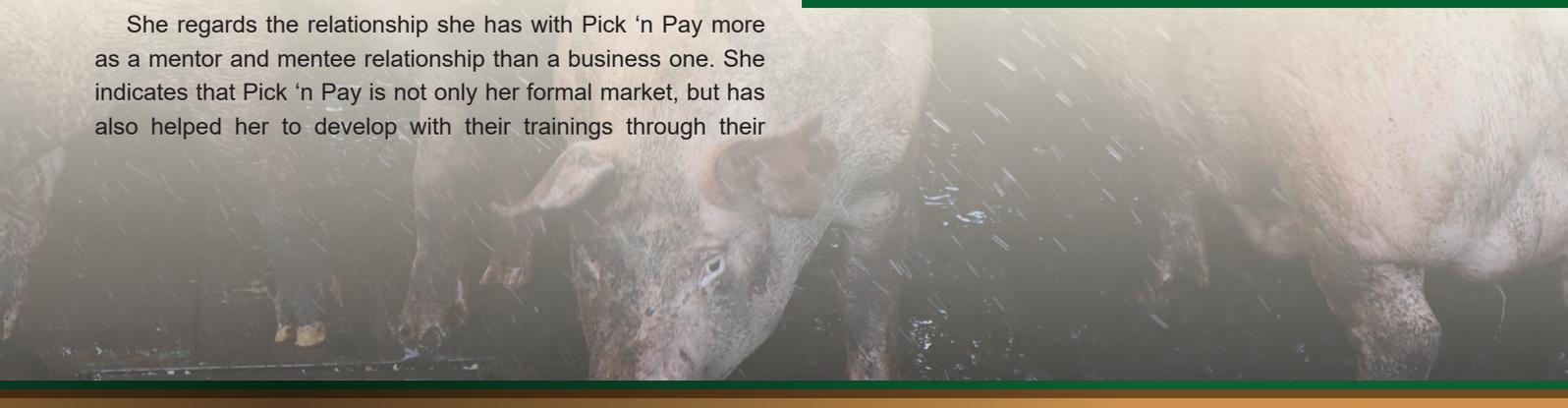
She regards the relationship she has with Pick ‘n Pay more as a mentor and mentee relationship than a business one. She indicates that Pick ‘n Pay is not only her formal market, but has also helped her to develop with their trainings through their

Enterprise Development Initiative.

To date, Ms Phosa is the only black female commercial pig farmer in South Africa and has won numerous accolades along her journey. Dreamland Piggery supplies big retailers such as Pick ‘n Pay, Spar Group (Gauteng Northern Region) and other meat wholesalers. Her company employs 45 permanent workers and 10 seasonal workers.



The carcasses of pigs at Dreamland Piggery’s state-of-the-art abattoir.



SUBSISTENCE FARMER HELPS COMMUNITY DESPITE MOUNTING CHALLENGES



Tshifhiwa produces primarily cash crops, including different varieties of spinach, baby marrow, green pepper, okra and sweet potato.



The produce is sold at the Tshwane Fresh Market and to Spar in Mamelodi, Soshanguve and Central Waltho.

Mercia Smith

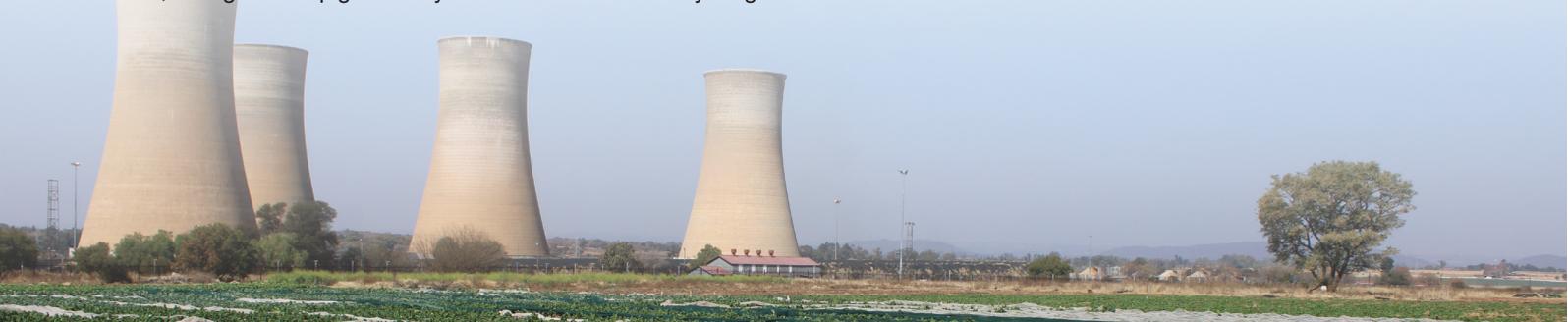
“When we hear of a funeral or an orphanage that is struggling, we donate vegetables, even if we do not have much, we always share what we have with other people who are in need; we are who we are because of other people,” declared Tshifhiwa Emmah Mutavhatsindi, a Gauteng-based subsistence farmer struggling to keep her business afloat.

Farming on a four-hectare property at the Rooiwal Agripark, north of Pretoria, Tshifhiwa produces primarily cash crops, including different varieties of spinach, baby marrow, green pepper, okra and sweet potato. Unable to afford modern mechanisation, she resorts to old-fashioned labour-intensive farming methods. She utilises her hands optimally from preparing the soil to sowing, weeding, spraying and harvesting. Although it is hard work, Tshifhiwa said that she loves farming and would not choose any other method. “From a young age, I helped my father in our vegetable garden at home. I like to see plants grow. We use some harvests for ourselves while sharing part of it with the neighbours,” she adds. In 2007, the farmer identified vacant land near a river in Soshanguve where she lived with her husband. The land was used as a rubbish dumping area. Tshifhiwa says that she cleaned the area and started to plant sweet potatoes, which fortunately thrived, and she was able to sell the vegetables to the community. However, after just a few weeks, a neighbour’s pigs destroyed the field and ate everything.

The municipality then offered her a bigger portion of land and in 2008, she recruited people to help her, which she says was a very difficult process as most people would quit after working just two days, complaining that the work was too hard. She also registered Faranani Sechaba Trading and Projects Primary Cooperative during that time.

In 2009, Tshifhiwa won first place in the subsistence farming category of the Female Farmer of the Year Competition. She reinvested her prize money into expanding her farming enterprise. Her husband, Takalani, resigned from his job in the security sector business and joined his wife in the farming enterprise.

In 2011, she started to farm at Rooiwal, next to Rooiwal Power Station and Rooiwal Waste Water Works. Owing to problems with operations and maintenance, the treated effluent from the wastewater treatment works, which is sub-standard, continuously discharges sludge into the Apies River, making it impossible to use the water from the Apies River for irrigation purposes. There is one borehole in the Rooiwal Agripark, but it is not sufficient to serve all the people farming there. They use drip irrigation for the four-hectare farm as it is the most efficient irrigation water application system to deliver water precisely and uniformly.



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Tshifhiwa has suffered a few setbacks, including three types of worms attacking her spinach and a cold front that disrupted the supply chain for agricultural products, leading to delays and potentially higher costs for farmers. Plants grew low and close together to protect themselves from the wind by trapping pockets of air. The cold front that passed over Gauteng during the second week of July wreaked havoc with the spinach, causing it to grow slower. It delayed the harvesting time by two weeks, resulting in Tshifhiwa losing Boxer Superstores as a client. Once you lose a client your reputation suffers and word spreads fast that you are not reliable. It is very difficult to uphold your reputation in the market because clients just turn to other suppliers.

Out of desperation, she bought second-hand shade nets at an auction, which they just pull over the plants at night. This also helps to retain the moisture in the soil.

To control pests, they use chemicals and a mixture of garlic, onion, chillies, and vinegar. Chicken and kraal manure are used to fertilise the soil, and this is applied two weeks before planting. When Tshifhiwa struggled to buy mustard spinach seed, she just started to produce her own seed. This saved her a lot of money.

The produce is sold to the Tshwane Fresh Produce Market and Spar in Mamelodi, Soshanguve and Central Waltloo. "Our biggest challenge at the moment is water, and I also want to work toward getting a Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certificate," said Tshifhiwa. GAP are practices that address environmental, economic and social sustainability for on-farm processes and

result in safe and quality food. Advine, Tshifhiwa and Takalani's daughter, studies Plant Production at Hygro Training College in Delmas and assists her parents on the farm. Tshifhiwa employs nine full-time people. She also wants to build five rooms on the property to afford students an opportunity to do the practical part of their studies on the farm.



Tshifhiwa gets support from Rooiwal Farmer Production Support Unit.



Tshifhiwa farms on four-hectare farm at Rooiwal Agripark.

"IF YOU HAVE KNOWLEDGE, LET OTHERS LIGHT THEIR CANDLE IN IT"



Farida Mula, the young livestock farmer.



Farida Mula's cattle which she sells at auctions.

Innocent Mhlanga

Young, energetic and vibrant are some of the words that can be used to describe Mrs Farida Gigi Mula who, at the tender age of 25, has achieved much more than most of her peers in the agricultural sector. Mula owns a cattle farming business on a 723-hectare property in Mpumalanga, which was allocated to her by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development through the Proactive Land Allocation Strategy (PLAS) in 2020.

Farida says she hopes to increase her staff complement of four workers as production increases so that more people from the surrounding areas can be employed.

Before the department allocated her the farm Kaalbooi on a 30-year lease in 2020, Farida Mula had been leasing land from private owners since 2014. Despite the remarkable progress she has made as a young farmer, Farida says that it has not been smooth sailing since her family moved onto the farm. She adds that although she is grateful for the support that the department has given her, a lot still needs to be done to ensure the improvement of production and further achievement.

"There are many challenges such as a lack of electricity on the farm, which then necessitates the use of a generator, especially in the home and this comes with unbudgeted expenses," she says.

In addition, according to Farida, the cattle kraal and handling facilities are not user friendly, and this makes it difficult to vaccinate the animals and separate them accordingly for

grazing. The other challenge, she says, is a lack of adequate fencing, which makes it difficult to control the grazing land and the rotation of the animals.

As part of trying to empower herself with further knowledge on the agricultural sector, Farida involves herself with farmers' organisations around the country, and has developed good relationships with other experienced farmers for knowledge harvesting purposes.

She pleads with the department for assistance with, among others, state veterinary services because the private veterinary services are a high-cost item. She also needs the services of animal specialists who will be able to assist and guide her regarding the reproduction of the animals. The roads that lead to the farm are in poor condition and the overall infrastructure on the farm needs refurbishment and upgrading.

Remembering her childhood and how she developed a love for farming, Farida recalls how she would join the employees whenever her father assigned them to do a specific task on the farm. "The only part that I did not understand was lack of remuneration. All the employees would be paid except for myself, instead my father would pay me with a cow every year, I did not understand the logic at the time, but my dad was slowly instilling in me the love for the farming business," she concluded.

SON CALLS ON DALRRD FOR SUPPORT TO HONOUR MOTHER'S DREAM OF OWNING A DAIRY FACILITY



Mr Khayelihle Nene in the middle with the members of Masibumbane Yoghurt and Amasi Production.



Mr Khayelihle Nene says he will fight to keep his mother's dream alive and make her proud.

Jabulani Malinga

Khayelihle Nene, a young resident of Greytown in KwaZulu-Natal, is determined to keep alive his mother's dream of running her own dairy production business which will create jobs and improve the lives of her family members and the community. His mother had sought assistance from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) before she passed away earlier this year.

Ms Ntombifuthi Ncengwa from Mbulwane, a settlement located on the outskirts of Greytown in KwaZulu-Natal, had already started to produce maas, also known as amasi (fermented milk product) and yoghurt from her home when she fell ill.

She registered her company, which she named Masibusane Yoghurt and Maas Production and hired five female workers to assist her with preparing and packaging the products. They sold their products to local supermarkets.

In February, Ms Ncengwa unfortunately passed away after a short illness. Her passing came as she was in the process of establishing a relationship that was going to elevate her business to a higher level. She had already submitted her documents for funding and was awaiting a reply from the department. "We heard from other local businesspeople that they had received grants from the department, however, my mother could not follow up on the application she had made because she was hospitalised during that time. She eventually passed away," said Khayelihle.

Khayelihle has vowed to continue with the business as a way to honour his mother and ensure the success of the enterprise which feeds families in Mbulwane. He said that he had already made contact with a departmental representative stationed in

Greytown to see if they could change the business registration certificate to be under his name, or form a cooperative with the females that were working with his mother. "I spoke to an official from agriculture in Greytown. So, I am waiting for feedback from him," he said.

The business suffered a setback following the passing of the owner, however, the remaining ladies say that they also want to continue where Ncengwa left off. "We trust Khayelihle and believe that since he is still young and energetic, he will be able to access most of the things that we cannot reach ourselves," said Ms Ntombifikile Msomi, one of the five females involved with the business.

The other members, Ms Nompilo Mdlalose, Ms Silindile Ngubane, Ms Sizakele Nene and Ms Nomfundo Nene also pledged their support to revive the business.

They said that they would be happy if the department could provide them with machinery and equipment to start working. They mentioned that they need refrigerators, big pots, pasteurisers, containers for packaging and a grant to buy milk since they do not have milk-producing cows.

"If we can get a bit of assistance from the department, we will be able to revive our business and continue to supply the local markets as we were doing previously. We would also like to venture into producing other dairy products when the business picks up," said Ms Msomi.

COROMANDEL TRUST—A SYMBOL OF LAND REFORM SUCCESS

Ndivhuwo Thenga



Grain harvesting machine at work.

Twenty-two years ago, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) purchased a farm 20 km south of Lydenburg along the Lydenburg/Dullstroom road, for the Coromandel Farmers Trust. The Lydenburg/Machadodorp road runs through the farm, and a small portion of the farm lies east of this road. The farm was purchased through the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) Programme for an amount of R15, 650 000. In the 1960s, Coromandel was owned by the late Sydney Press, the founder of clothing retail store, Edgars, before it was sold in 1997.

The trust has 248 beneficiaries who worked and lived on the farm for more than 40 years. They applied and obtained a R28, 776 000 loan from the Land Bank, which was used to contribute towards the purchase price of the farm, buy tractors, other farming equipment, and production inputs that include seeds, fertilisers and agrochemicals.

PRODUCTION

The Coromandel Farmers Trust farm produces blue berries, maize, wheat, soya beans and livestock for beef and dairy. The farm currently boasts a population of 200 cattle, of which 100 are dairy cows and the other half is for beef production. These were provided by the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs (DARDLEA)'s Masibuyele Esibayeni Programme. Dairy production is currently the main activity on the farm, producing on average 60 000 litres of milk per month, which is sold to both formal and informal markets in Lydenburg, Dullstroom and in Polokwane.

FARMER SUPPORT

Support to the project has been through the department's Recapitalisation and Development Programme (RADP). To date, the trust has been allocated an amount of R11, 893 923. These funds have been used for both operational costs and production inputs. Maize is planted on 550 hectares (ha) of dry land and 110 ha are put under irrigation. Soya beans are planted on 530 ha of dry land and 110 ha is irrigated, while wheat is also planted on 110 ha. In the previous financial year, the project has managed to harvest 1 200 tons of soya beans and 3 700 tons of maize. In terms of markets, the project is currently supplying all grains to Afgri in Lydenburg. Milk is sold to Moodrift Dairy and the blue berries are sold at the Johannesburg Fresh Produce Market.

JOB CREATION

The project currently employs a total of 55 permanent workers. With the recently allocated RADP funds, the project was able to maintain the existing 55 jobs opportunities and create a further 60 casual work opportunities for the locals. The department has also placed interns who are agricultural studies graduates at the farm to equip them with practical hands-on experience to improve their chances of employment.



Grain packaged and ready for the market.

APPLAUDING DALRRD FOR BRINGING HIS FARMING DREAM TO LIFE—A YOUNG FARMER HOPES TO TRANSFORM LABOUR TENANTS' LIVES

Mphahlela Rammutla



Mantsengwane tending to his cattle on the farm.

“It is likely to fail if transforming the agricultural sector is a simple case of handing over a piece of land and expecting the beneficiaries to start farming.” This is the view expressed by Jean Mantsengwane who was awarded a State farm that had been abandoned and vandalised. Mr Mantsengwane, who is the founder of Inguzi Lasemzansi Pty., is a land reform beneficiary who was awarded the Doornhoek Farm, measuring 728,1174 hectares in extent by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD). The property was acquired in 2014 through the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS).

The young farmer says that he is eager to start the real production and he applauds the DALRRD's intervention through the land development support programme, through which he received financial support amounting to over R4 million. He used the funds for his cattle production (56 cattle and two bulls), infrastructure development, machinery, implements and equipment. The land development and support programme will further support the fencing project, demarcation of the grazing area and improve the state of the roads. These he noted were the key challenges on the farm.

Inguzi Lasemzansi is a farming enterprise based in Thaba Chweu Local Municipality in the Ehlanzeni District, Mpumalanga. Its operations include establishing a Beefmaster or Bonsmara crossbreeding herd and crop production. Mantsengwane currently sells his cross-breed at auctions. He plans to open an abattoir and butchery on his farm in the near future. He admits that there is more money in a carcass than a live animal.

He employs two permanent workers on his farm. The employees are labour tenants who had been residing on the farm for many years before his arrival. Driven by what he calls his love

“As young black farmers, we come to add value and betterment to our people who are formally known as labour tenants. For me, coming here was not about taking over, but to better their lives and restore the economic activities of the farm, regardless of the conditions.”

of transforming the lives of other people, he allocated the labour tenants 10 ha of land for their livestock. He adds that when he arrived on the farm, the labour tenants had only 10 cows, today they have around 30 cows that are eligible to be sold at the auction.

“As young black farmers, we come to add value and betterment to our people who are formally known as labour tenants. For me, coming here was not about taking over, but to better their lives and restore the economic activities of the farm, regardless of the conditions,” said Mantsengwane proudly.

Mantsengwane, who is also an emerging farmer with vast experience on breeding and crop production, cautioned that receiving the land was not a litmus test for success as every farm comes with challenges.



Mantsengwane's employees are labour tenants who had been residing on the farm for many years before his arrival.

DALRRD JOINS BOTSWANA IN REAFFIRMATION EXERCISE OF THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRY



South Africa, Botswana, Namibia tripoint.



Reggie Hammond, land surveyor engaging with Moses Kgwalalala, chief surveyor from Botswana.



South African veterinary fence.

Rony Moremi

In fulfilment of the African Union Border Programme (AUBP) objectives, the South Africa-Botswana joint technical team met from 24 to 28 June 2024 to perform the digitisation of the international boundary between South Africa and Botswana.

This entailed marking out the boundary using aerial imagery and Geographic Information Systems software to determine the middle of the Limpopo River, which is the boundary between the two countries from Marico/Madikwe to tripoint SHALIMPO. Reggie Hammond, land surveyor at the Branch: National Geomatics Management Services (NGMS), explained that delimitation is performed when determining the territory of countries containing a river boundary. "The exercise for the boundary is done in two parts because the boundary between South Africa and Botswana is the longest boundary between South Africa and any other neighbouring country, spanning across North West and Limpopo," said Reggie.

The strip of the boundary that the team delimited is from Madikwe to the tripoint SHALIMPO (where South Africa, Botswana, and Zimbabwe meet). The name SHALIMPO is derived from the Shashe and Limpopo Rivers, the two rivers are the meeting point of the three countries. The technical team still needs to perform physical inspections at the areas where the middle of the river could not be determined from the aerial imagery.

Once it is confirmed where the middle of the river is, the team will develop coordinates that define where the international boundary is between South Africa and Botswana. After the reaffirmation exercise is completed, the two countries will therefore sign a treaty that defines their shared international boundary.

Reggie further explained that the boundary between South Africa and Botswana begins at Union's End, at a tripoint named

SABONA (where South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia meet). He then explained that the monument for SABONA has been built to mark the boundary at the tripoint. The reaffirmation exercise includes incorporating the SABONA and SHALIMPO tripoints into a treaty defining the South Africa-Botswana international boundary.

From 17 to 21 June, the technical team was in North West for an inspection of the strip stretching from Mabule/Daly's Pan to Ramatlabama, where 300 beacons will be constructed marking the international boundary between South Africa and Botswana.

Moses Kgwalalala, chief surveyor from the Botswana Department of Surveys and Mapping, said that the technical team started with inspections in 2014, and met again in 2017 to develop a plan for the reaffirmation exercise of the South Africa-Botswana international boundary.

The areas to be reaffirmed are the Ramatlabama to Mabule stretch and Marico to SHALIMPO stretch.

The lack of clarity on the international boundary can lead to misconceptions by the communities living along the international boundary to believe that the two veterinary fences for South Africa and Botswana mark the boundary and that the middle of the fences is no man's land. "There is no concept called no man's land; you are either in South Africa or in Botswana," explained Moses.

Both Reggie and Moses emphasised the importance of other stakeholder branches and departments in forming part of the international boundary reaffirmation team in order to resolve issues of veterinary and international boundary fence maintenance. They pointed out that the fences on the Botswana side of the international boundary have been constructed and are being maintained whereas the fences on the South African side of the boundary need construction and restoration.

DIRECTOR-GENERAL RAMASODI APPLAUDS PARTNERSHIP WITH UNIVERSITY TO NARROW SKILLS GAP IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR



Agricultural economics third year students from University of Limpopo participating during the symposium on agricultural economics.

Mphahlela Rammutla

The director-general of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi, has welcomed the prospects of narrowing the skills gap in the agricultural sector through partnerships with institutions of higher learning. The director-general was addressing a group of third-year agricultural students from the University of Limpopo during the Agricultural Economics Symposium held in Pretoria in early July.

“We need to commit ourselves towards narrowing the gap. We need to normalise the engagements with universities and organise symposiums such as this one with universities. We need to be able to have a discourse on matters affecting the sector, under particular themes,” appealed Ramasodi.

The Chief Directorate: Sector Capacity Development of the department, which was part of the organising committee of the symposium, says that the agricultural sector faces challenges owing to the scarcity of a range of knowledge and skills. This has been supported by a recent study conducted by DALRRD on priority skills and occupations that are in demand.

Ms Lebogang Botsheleng, the Chief-Director: Sector Capacity Development said that the study identified 13 scarce and critical occupations in the sector and pointed to the need to build capacity around these prioritised skills to address the shortages or scarcity.

This chief directorate has, over the years, initiated human capital developmental programmes such as the External Bursary Scheme, which targets young people who are interested in following a career in one of the prioritised careers in agriculture and rural development, and the Career Awareness Programme,

which focuses on promoting agriculture as career.

Ms Botsheleng further noted that the University of Limpopo was one of the few institutions in South Africa offering a programme called BSc Agricultural Economics. This programme trains future agricultural economists and is known to contribute immensely to addressing skills shortages in the sector.

The symposium’s panel consisted of agricultural economics experts, international trade analysts and officials from the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) who shared the practical aspects of their fields with the novice students.

The DALRRD and University of Limpopo Symposium was held under the theme: “Public-private partnership in promoting training, research and interest in Agricultural Economics: A prioritised study field in the sector”. The rationale behind the theme was that the symposium will provide a platform for DALRRD and the University of Limpopo to advance their mutual interests.

Director-General Ramasodi, who is also a graduate of the University of Limpopo where he obtained his Bachelor of Science in Agriculture degree, noted that there is a remarkable gap in terms of the youth knowledge, skills and education in the agricultural field that needs to be closed. One of the agricultural economics students from the University of Limpopo, Evance Nkoma, said that his expectations were fulfilled as he got the chance to meet real economists and analysts who have first-hand experience.