



rural development & land reform

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Rural Development and Land Reform
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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MEDIA RELEASE

MINISTER LAUNCHES THE FREE STATE FARMER PRODUCTION SUPPORT UNIT AS PART OF THE STIMULUS PACKAGE

26 APRIL 2019

The Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR), Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, today (26 April 2019), launched the Free State Farmer Production Support Unit (FPSU) in Makholokoeng– Harrismith.

Addressing the jubilant farmers and the community, the Minister said: “We are here today, in the spirit of Thuma Mina, to also hand over post-settlement support offered from different programmes of the Department to the cooperatives that are here as part of the stimulus package that we also pledged our commitment in line with the President’s call”.

“FPSUs are one of the key pillars on which the Agri-parks programme is founded. Agri-parks have been put forward by the Department as smallholder farmer/ cooperative-led rural development networks achieving the national goals of inclusive rural development and integration, employment creation, poverty eradication and inequality reduction,” said the Minister.

“The FPSU is a rural outreach and capacity-building unit that links farmers with markets. Its broad tasks include primary collection, some storage, some processing for the local market and extension services including mechanisation. The FPSU is located at the beginning of the agricultural value chain and facilitates access to inputs, services and facilities for the benefit of the small scale emerging farmers.”

“This is the post-settlement support that the Department provides to ensure farmers’ operations are not hampered by lack of resources and to ensure that they run viable businesses and that the support is being advanced to all the nine cooperatives of 135 farmers. Our aim is at boosting recovery plan to ensure food security, create contribution to production as result and therefore, alleviate poverty,” said the Minister.

“The Department has invested over R50 million for machinery, equipment; construction of the facilities for packaging potatoes and beans and production inputs for the farmers in and around Makholokoeng and establishment of further FPSUs across the country. In Free State we have prioritised Makholokoeng in Thaba-Mofutsanyana and Ficksburg. For the entire country, we have identified two FPSUs per district municipality, per province, across the country totaling 88 FPSUs.”

“Ours was a colonisation of a different kind and, therefore, our goal and objective are to reverse the ugly legacy of apartheid and its economic injustices,” concluded the Minister.

The Chairperson of the cooperative, Mr Letsholo Makgalemela, thanked the Minister and the Department for the support they have received. He indicated that it will be easy to farm with the new machinery that the Department has bought for them. He said that it was a challenge previously for them to do their farm operation because of lack of funds for hiring tractors but now, with the new machinery, they were happy because they would be able to feed their families.

The main concept to the Makholokoeng FPSU is to provide essential and efficient farmer support services and training to developing farmers in the Makholokoeng area. These support services and training will focus on the agricultural commodities and input requirements identified in the farmer-needs assessment and are also based on the main commodities identified in the Thabo Mofutsanyana Agri-Park's Master Business Plan, which are dairy, dry beans, vegetables and apples. Additionally, the FPSU will also incorporate private sector businesses, forums, unions and other stakeholders to assist with training and providing support services.

The main facility of the FPSU is the logistical Centre. This Centre will provide all logistical needs identified, i.e. setting up of the mechanisation unit, pack house and training workshop facilities. The mechanisation unit involves the provision and renting of farming equipment and vehicles for use by the farmers in the area.

The Rural Infrastructure Development (RID) branch constructed the Makholokoeng FPSU Pack house inclusive of a potato as well as dry bean packaging machinery. R 8, 750 million was spent for the design and construction of the pack house. During the construction phase, 15 temporary jobs were created.

The Department, through the Branch: Rural Enterprise and Industrial Development (REID), has since bought mechanisation; equipment and production inputs to assist the farmers around the FPSU, i.e. in a radius of about 50 km to increase their production. The fertilisers and chemicals were procured for R9, 99 million and dry-beans seeds worth R19, 19 million.

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