

GOVT BOOSTS SMALL FARMERS WITH LIVESTOCK

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Equipping emerging farmers ... Agriculture MEC, Mosebenzi Zwane says government is determined to empower small scale farmers

The cash injection to rural farmers is expected to contribute to the growth and long-term sustainability and financial viability of farmers in the area

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) has put forward R2.5-million to empower small-holder farmers in the southern Free State town of Zastron and has acquired livestock for them.

The provincial government has allocated R152-million to uplift the farming sector in earmarked municipalities in the province, by establishing auction banks, fencing, livestock, seeds and farming equipment.

The cash injection to rural farmers in the Xhariep District is expected to contribute to the long-term growth, sustainability and financial viability of farmers in the area. In addition, the agriculture department has handed out 381 Bonsmara cattle, known for their economic value, and sheep to 15 emerging farmers.

The MEC for Agriculture, Mosebenzi Zwane, urged the farmers to use the aid by government to grow their livestock.

He said the department trained the farmers because it wanted them to grow and open doors for other aspiring farmers, and reduce their dependency on government.

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“We want to recruit women and youth in the province and involve them in the farming sector, thus making a meaningful contribution to their communities. People must stand up and use their hands to earn a living. Farmers must be passionate and work hard to gain knowledge and use it. The cattle must reproduce and the people must not remain poor but must be empowered.”

“You cannot remain idle and expect government to come and aid you. You must use what you have received, increase it and grow as farmers. The cows are not yours until you make full use of them according to expectations of the department,” said Zwane.

Zwane warned that the livestock must not be used in celebratory events such as weddings and traditional ceremonies, and said government wanted to see the growth which will also reduce the need to purchase cows from Lesotho.

The MEC further pointed out that it was not in the Free State’s nature to sit down and wait for investors to come in and create employment.

“Let’s go back to the land and eat from it. Let’s go into farming and make a success of it and contribute to the overall economy of the province.”

“Agriculture is the only hope. Everyone who is hungry and jobless, I’m here to say, let us change Zastron and the entire province. Let us not just be the food basket of the country but be job creators in the country.”

Beneficiaries of the project were selected from the department’s existing emerging farmer’s database, which also stipulates their needs and status.

One of the recipients, James Daliwe of Ncaseka Trust, said they appreciated the aid offered by the department. He said they started their farm by acquiring a plot of land before buying a few goats, sheep and cattle. Daliwe added that it was not all smooth sailing, as they did not know who to turn to for assistance when they encountered problems.

“Our vision has always been to move forward working collectively; we want to increase our livestock so we can grow and sell it in bulk every year. So, this is going to help us a lot; the breed of cattle we received from the department is different and more valuable than the ones we have. No not only do we now have diversity but have means to move forward.”

Daliwe received 11 Bonsmara cattle, a breed known for its high beef quality and economic viability.

He said the Ncaseka Trust wants to grow and have its own farm where it can produce its own fodder for the livestock.

Other beneficiaries included Nkosana Daniel and Esther Ntlangeni, of Ntlangeni Trust, who have 10 cattle and 53 sheep. They aim to use the additional livestock from government to achieve their dream of going commercial.

They said they appreciated the trust shown by government in their dream and vision to grow.

“The Bonsmara breed we got is so valuable that it will boost our prospects on the market.”

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