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# Emerging farmer produces the best

By Mojalefa Patrick

The Greenfingers Agro-Processing project on the outskirts of Bloemfontein, in Bloemspruit area, produces the best bottled beetroot and mouth-watering relish made from freshly harvested tomatoes.

This project was started by the owner, Mpho Ntema, back in 1995 when she moved to the smallholding area. With 8.75 hectares of land, Ntema knew she could make something of the land she had available.

"It takes a brave, courageous and bold woman, willing to work hard and make the most of what they have in hand. Farming requires one to rise to the challenges", said Ntema.

She has planted cabbage, onions, spinach and beetroot and sells her produce to the informal market. Her passion to produce food prompted her to do more with the vegetables she harvested.

Being a good cook was an added advantage, as she found it easy mix recipes and produce delicious relish from tomatoes she grew in her backyard and the beetroot into sweet and sour bottled beetroot. It comes as no surprise that she scooped an award at an Agro-Processing competition run by the Department of Trade and Industry in 2014.

Her journey to making it in the



industry got better following the support of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The department has supported her with a structure with equipment for agro-processing.

She was also assisted with a shade net, irrigation system and hydroponic tunnels to the tune of more than R2 million rand.

"I am excited because today after so many years I stand tall and come to witness what government has been promising to the people that government operate within limited resources and people should be patient. I

can proudly confirm that good things come to those who wait, based on the fact that I hailed from a very downtrodden and disadvantaged family," she said.

She added that she was under the impression that only middle class people are considered but, through the department of Agriculture and Rural Development's commitment and dedication to improve the lives of the people in rural areas, she has renewed hope," Ntema said.

MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Oupa Khoabane, on last week Friday, at Martindale Farm owned by

Mpho Ntema, indicated that Operation Hlasela program seeks to strengthen and support service delivery initiatives to better the lives of the people of Free State.

"The department will continue to remain critical in a noble quest to deliver quality services to the people in farming and rural areas, not only to the specific people but to the entire province. This is a covenant we have entered into in 1994, with voters of this country. We understand that we carry the hopes and aspirations of the masses. This platform gives an opportunity to sharpen our programs to advance the lives of the people," MEC said.