

Khoabane sees opportunity in wool

By: Staff Reporter

Free State agriculture and rural development MEC Oupa Khoabane says rural communities in and around Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality have potential to grow the wool industry and supply major companies around the country if they take the rearing of sheep seriously.

Khoabane said this when he officially launched a sheep shearing project at Bofulo Trust in Thaba Nchu a fortnight ago.

Facilities at the R2.5 million project include a shearing shed, sheep handling equipment and a variety of tools to repair the windmill and the water reservoir. The department has also assisted with 205 merino ewes and eight merino rams.

"This is a flagship project to grow the wool industry and sell the wool to the informal as well as formal market in order to promote the economy and the sheep farming in the Mangaung Metro Municipality", said Khoabane.

There are 10 beneficiaries who are already working on the project. The farmers are among a select group established to work on sheep and goat value addition projects in the district.

"The modernisation of the sheep business of Bofulo Village will put the project on a higher trajectory following the support provided by the department. It is very crucial, especially for young people from this area to realise that business and job opportunities in the agricultural sector need dedicated.

"That will allow more opportunities to unfold because the success of projects such as this one can attract clothing and blanket factories to come on board and open their businesses near to Bofulo village in order to save transportation costs. It is now up to you to think bigger in order to improve the local economy and save your profits for investment," said Khoabane.

He promised continued assistance to the farmers to allow them to gain more experience and become established farmers.

"We will also assist them going forward by rendering advisory services as well information sessions through our extension officers to ensure that this project sustain and enhance the lives of the people of Bofulo village because this village has also been selected for the production of wool as part of the sheep and goats value adding projects.

"Other villagers, especially those who depend on livestock farming and backyard vegetable gardens, must also come together and share experiences and skills in order to sustain their projects so as to be able to provide for their families," said the MEC.

Khoabane also launched a goat milk project at Woonhuis Farm, about 30 kilometres outside

Botshabelo which is run by Jacob Cangiso.

Cangiso hopes to start producing cheese from goat milk soon.

"The structure for the milking of goats is equipped with various machinery. I can't wait to start turning the milk from goats into cheese," said Cangiso.

"The department also assisted me with a cooling facility, where I'm able to store vegetables after harvesting. My market for vegetables is the Bloemfontein Fresh Produce Market," he added.

Cangiso was also presented with a set of keys for a new vehicle that he will be using to transport vegetables to the market.

At another project at Khumo Farm outside Thaba Nchu, the owner, Robert Thekiso was assisted with a feedlot for his livestock.

"We are presently targeting formal and informal markets around the Mangaung Metro. At this stage we market our business through word of mouth.

"We don't employ the advanced strategies yet, but with the assistance and support of the department we will definitely achieve our goal. This project has the potential to expand and employ more locals," said Thekiso.