

## NATIONAL GRANTS NOT ENOUGH FOR PROVINCE

9 November 2012



TOO SLOW: MEC of agriculture Msebenzi Zwane speaks to bursary holders in the province.

**Agriculture MEC Msebenzi Zwane says the province has to rely heavily on investment opportunities for development as they only receive conditional grants from the national department.**

According to Zwane, R84m had been allocated by the national department to help them with agro-processing, food ponds, mechanisation and Mohoma Mobung, which were some of the projects the department had established.

Zwane said their partnership with China and other foreign countries was what they relied on to ensure they developed the Free State into an economically viable province.

Zwane recently launched a mechanisation project with nine tractors and machinery delivered to the Feloane Trust, a village in the rural area of Thaba Nchu.

This, according to Zwane, was an initiative that would boost farmers and help them become exporters of products.

“What we are trying to do is turn the consumer into a producer of products while also ensuring they do not sell raw materials but process them and sell to other markets in the province and internationally,” he said.

Zwane added that agro-processing had become a snail-pace programme with little economic benefits and its activities had been challenged by the lack of innovative techniques and financial backing to create economic growth.

Zwane, however, said agro-processing had proven viable in the Reitz and Xhariep districts where fish hatcheries became a good investment opportunity in the province.

According to him, some Brics countries have found fish hatcheries very profitable, namely China and Russia.

“It takes time negotiating with foreign countries but the fruits of the investments have proven worthwhile,” he said.

Zwane said although land restitution had only given 30% of the land back to their original owners, they could not state how much land was allocated in the province.

This, according to him, prevents them from pushing the issue of food security further and promoting development in poor communities. “The issue of land restitution is the role of the national department. We just sit in committees at the national level,” he said.

Zwane also spoke about those who had not produced after benefitting from agricultural land and supplements.

“Before we can declare farms unproductive, we bring in skilled farmers, business people and mentors who help them. If after the intervention we see no progress, we hold people accountable,” he said.

[Source: [www.thenewage.co.za](http://www.thenewage.co.za)]