Minister Didiza encourages Free State CPAs to take good care of their land

By Jabulani Malinga



Minister Thoko Didiza addressing the media outside the llanga Estate Conference Centre in Bloemfontein.

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Minister interacts with passionate North West women farmers

By Samuel Kgatla

The minister interacted with rural women with the view to identify and address their challenges

he Minister for Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza, interacted with passionate women farmers in agriculture, agro-processing and agribusiness at Kgora Training Centre, Mahikeng, in North West on 11 March 2022. The idea of engaging with women in the sector was started by the minister when she recently engaged with some farmers from Gauteng. This has taken place in other provinces and many women really appreciated the opportunity. The minister was accompanied by Deputy Minister Zoleka Capa, MEC Desbo Mohono, Director-General Mooketsa Ramasodi and other senior management staff of the department.

The purpose of these engagement sessions was for the minister to interact with rural women with the view to identify and address their challenges in advancing the focus areas of the 66th Commission on Status of Women. The engagement coincided with President Cyril Ramaphosa's post State of the Nation Address (SONA) Imbizo on 12 March, and also with the 66th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW), which was scheduled to take place at the UN Headquarters in New York from 12 to 23 March 2022.

Women showcased their honey, hemp, crops and

other products. They were also given a chance to share their expertise, experiences and challenges and how they would want the department to assist them to do well in the sector. It is through these kinds of engagements that women farmers are given a voice to directly interact with the department.

Founder and CEO of Inyama Yethu, Nomathemba Langa, thanked the minister for making time to meet with them in the province. Inyama Yethu is a meat processing, wholesaling and retailing company located in Brits.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation representative in South Africa, Dr Brave Ndisale, congratulated the minister for having such an engagement. She said the world can only end hunger and poverty when gender inequality in agriculture and agroprocessing is addressed.

Minister Didiza said that, as a department, they want to ensure that rural areas become hubs of activities so that young people will not go looking for jobs elsewhere. "Our extension officers will work with you so that there is a system in place. Government recently went on a drive to recruit 10 000 extension officers to help farmers. Farmers need to come on board in terms of their own contributions such as refilling fuel for tractors, helping to fix broken machinery and offer drivers, among other things," she said.

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DALRRD minister continues with Back-to-School Campaign

By Samuel Kgatla

The Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Thoko Didiza, continued her Back-to-School Campaign at Hammarsdale in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) on 7 March 2022. The minister together with Illovo Sugar South Africa visited the public schools, Ukhozini Primary School, Intando Primary School and Ingede Senior Primary School in the province to conduct the Back-to-School Campaign. Moreover, the minister and Illovo Sugar donated gardening equipment and shoes to needy learners at the three schools. Both donated 580 pairs of school shoes to KwaZulu-Natal pupils in the spirit of caring for and protecting children.

The Back-to-School Campaign is a government initiative aimed at encouraging all stakeholders to participate in promoting teaching and learning in schools. The minister studied at Ukhozini Primary School before proceeding to other schools. As part of this visit, she and her team engaged with the district, school management, teachers, parents, school governing bodies, civil society, and the leadership of

Illovo Sugar on how they can assist these schools. Didiza said they view the visit as an important intervention in promoting and motivating learners to stay in school.

The minister encouraged learners to persevere and respect their teachers if they wanted to succeed at school. She also told learners about the importance of agriculture. "The clothes you are wearing are products of agriculture. Agriculture is everything, but education is important, my children, and I think it must be your main focus. You can be whatever you want to be with an education and that is why I visited you today as I also studied here at Ukhozini. Today, I have remembered my school to see how things are. We welcome the collaboration between the department and Illovo Sugar South Africa to extend a helping hand to learners at the various schools around KZN," she said.

In conclusion, the minister called on more organisations in the private sector, such as Illovo Sugar South Africa, to raise their hands because the government is not in a position to close every gap and to meet every need.

Tshepo Marumule from Illovo Sugar said they will continue to work with government and help the schools in need in the province. He added that Illovo is committed to building a thriving South African community, and that education is an important part of that.



Minister Thoko Didiza donating farming equipment to Ukhozini Primary School Hammarsdale.

Minister Didiza inspires female farmers at Farming in Heels Summit

The Minister for Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Hon. Thoko Didiza, inspired a lot of young female farmers to pursue a farming career. She mentioned this during the Farming in Heels Summit held at the Burgers Park Hotel in Pretoria. This summit is aimed at attracting young women into farming. It was attended by various stakeholders in the sector, including financial institutions and young passionate female farmers who are thriving.

Female farmers dealing with crops, livestock, bees, hydroponics, poultry, pig and meat processing and the South African Agri Academy were given a platform to present and showcase their products at the summit. The Department of Trade, Industry and Commission, the National Empowerment Fund and the Land Bank enlightened farmers on available funding models.

The traditional wedding presenter and media personality, Kamohelo Bombe, encouraged women to start farming while still young. She spoke from experience as she has been in the farming sector for a while, has learnt to live with failures and enjoys her

successes in the industry. This former shift presenter grew up in a home where farming was the only option to survive; her mother, aunt and grandmother were tomato farmers and handed down their skills. When Kamohelo moved to Soweto, she had the idea of bringing what she had learned from her mother and grandmother to the big city. Bombe is a broiler farmer and also plants crops. Kamohelo has now been awarded a 21 ha lease for a farm in Pretoria. She is currently running agricultural workshops and training young people in agriculture.

Minister Didiza said she is excited to see the venue packed with passionate and potential farmers. "Farming in Heels just shows that people can still be beautiful while being farmers. These days, you can farm whatever you want and still look sexy. Our intention as the department is to make agriculture look sexy and more appealing to upcoming farmers. Even those who like wearing heels should also feel comfortable every time they want to join the sector. We will support our female farmers with everything," she said.



Ms Thoko Didiza talking to female farmers at the Farming in Heels Summit, held at Burgers Park Hotel in Pretoria.



Minister Didiza encourages Free State CPAs to take good care of their land

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By Jabulani Malinga

Minister Thoko Didiza, together with Deputy Minister Nokuzola Capa, had an engagement with Communal Properties Associations (CPAs) at the Ilanga Conference Centre in Bloemfontein, Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality.

The engagement which was held under the theme: "Let's Grow South Africa Together" aimed to solicit inputs on how to grow the agricultural industry and to resolve challenges within CPAs. Minister Thoko Didiza said that it was important for government to continuously engage with the people. "It is important that as government, time and again we engage our people in order to understand their concerns." she said.

The minister also urged CPAs to take care of the land they own, this is because the issue of land ownership in South Africa continues to be a thorny matter. She said that those who own land should appreciate the value of the asset at their disposal. By doing

so, they will be destroying the negative stereotypes around the governance of CPAs and land ownership.

Present in the engagement were 31 CPAs from around the Free State. These CPAs were given an opportunity to talk to the minister, her deputies and the leadership of the department regarding their challenges and other matters in a closed session.

During the closed sessions, CPAs expressed the challenges they face on a daily basis which hamper their productivety. Challenges such as infighting, lack of machinery and inputs, theft and intimidation were highlighted.

One such case was brought forward by the Phomolong CPA who said that, because their land was on the borderline of Lesotho, criminals from there have cut their fence and stolen their livestock. The CPA is run by young female beneficiaries who have taken over from their grandparents and parents who, have since passed away. They would like to be productive, however criminals are a constant threat to them, and they fear for their lives.

Deputy Minister Nokuzola Capa noted that such cases are of concern to the department because they have moved beyond just theft but now have elements of gender-based violence. She said that there is a need to call upon other departments, such as SAPS and the Department of Social Development for assistance to curb the crime and protect the CPA members and their property.

The visit by the minister, deputy ministers and other senior officials of the department to the Free State is part of the broader departmental initiative to have a series of engagements with CPAs and farmers' organisations country wide. These engagements, which started in North West in March will move to other provinces as well.



Minister Thoko Didiza and Director-General Mooketsa Ramasodi during the engagements with CPAs in Bloemfontein.

UMgungundlovu land claimant succeeding in his endeavours

By Matsepo Malatswane

Through the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP), people living in rural communities have been given the opportunity to overcome poverty. Rural development successor, Mr Tham Mhlong, is one of the claimants of the UM-gungundlovu land settlement. This landscape also comprises of land that is governed by the Ingonyama Trust. Mr Mhlong is situated at Bizana and Port Edwards, along the wildcoast in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape.

The UMgungundlovu land claimant families were forcibly displaced in the 1970s and they were placed in the Mzamba communal area. The UMgungundlovu community lodged its land claim in 1995 after years of verification and negotiations. Mr Mhlong, in his quest to fend for himself, saw an opportunity to start farming and a fishing business. Mr Mhlong through his passion for fishing was able to start up his own trademarked deep sea fisheries academy, which he runs with his son Zukile Mhlong. The academy provides learners with the skills and tools need-

ed when they want to start out in the fishing industry. This deep-sea academy provides certificates such as Pre Sea Training. This course is intended for teaching trainees who have not previously served abroad a ship to prepare them for working as deckhands. It also offers a wheel skipper course on how to manoeuvre a boat.

The department assisted Mr Mhlong with funding as part of the CRDP and gave him a tractor. His tractor is used to pull a variety of farm implements for ploughing, planting, cultivating, fertilising and harvesting crops, and can also be used for hauling material, transportation, training and catching fish.

Tham Mhlong owns a fishing boat that he uses to catch fish which he sells to the local industry. He has also tackled youth unemployment in the community. He currently employs four youths on his boat. He also runs a restaurant at which he sells the very same fish that he catches. Mr Mhlong is a very resourceful man; he has a vegetable garden and also sells vegetables to the community. The potatoes are also used in his restaurant which he runs with his family,

mainly with his children

Mr Mhlong was one of the first black people to receive a fishing permit with the assistance of the department. The department bought the permit for him from a former fisherman, who was also Mr Mhlong's boss at that time. The department saw it as an opportunity for Mr Mhlong to grow his business with an effort to nurture his passion for fishing and in the long term for his business to prosper. He has since acquired a license to sell his fish to the market every day. There is currently a major market for different types of fish that are in demand, such as linefish, cracker, record and lobster.



Mr Tham Mhlong, on the left, with his son Zukile in front of the tractor he received from the department.





By Innocent Mhlanga

This LandCare project is a community-based and government supported programme with aiming to optimise productivity and the sustainable use and management of natural agricultural resources. It was conceptualised in 1997 and rolled out in all nine provinces of the country; it is currently one of the government's key programmes with a number of economic, social and environmental opportunities.

The focal point of the LandCare programme in the Eastern Cape is to deal with conservation, reclamation and restoration of the agricultural natural resources under various intervention areas, such as VeldCare, SoilCare, Conservation Agriculture, WaterCare, JuniorCare, awareness, capacity building and poverty reduction through job creation.

The All Saints Project has great potential to succeed because of the beneficiaries' capabilities and enthusiasm and the project has been producing crops since its formation. A total of 357 ha arable land was fenced prior the establishment of the Conservation Agriculture system because the land had been used for maize production in a monoculture cropping system under intensive soil tillage, with improper fertiliser application over the previous 20 years, resulting in lack of soil cover and low organic carbon content, which ultimately lead to degradation and soil erosion.

The intervention helped in minimising soil tillage, crop rotation, as well as permanent soil cover (Conservation Agriculture), resulting in improved soil health and sustainable soil management. It has also

improved food security in communities and the sustainable use of natural resources like soil and water in the area.

Currently, the project is doing maize production on 30 ha using conservative agriculture practices and 10 km of arable land have been fenced, with the aim to eventually increase the fencing from 30 ha to 120 ha. The fencing was done by the community, which created about 22 jobs. Equipment, such as the boom sprayer, no till planter and tractor was bought at a cost of R480 000 to advance the project to a larger scale.

This project has been funded since 2013 with R6,114 054 and is currently funded with R1,285 527 through the LandCare Conditional Grant.

The social benefits of this project are the awareness it creates on sustainable soil utilisation and the management thereof: the economic benefits will be the reduction of production costs, improved food security and more generational income; and the environmental benefits will be improved soil cover and soil health.

Other awareness campaigns on soil conservation have been conducted from 2014 to 2017, and schools around the All Saints Project were involved. Various stakeholders, which include municipalities, research institutions and government departments, took part and addressed many issues, such as symptoms of degradation, sustainable utilisation and management of arable soils.



The Chevy Chase community LandCare project

By Innocent Mhlanga

The main focus of this project was the eradication of alien invasive plants, which has since progressed into a prospective business development with the aim to rehabilitate the natural resources and in the process ensuring food security for the community.

The community requested assistance from the former Department of Rural Development and Agrcir-eR to rehabilitate their grazing camps by eradicating 277 ha of wattle and revegetate the cleared areas with suitable grass species to improve the grazing veld; land of 139 ha in the northern area and land covering 138 ha in the southern area were identified for that purpose.

Since the community was in support of the idea of a forestry project on its land, they quickly organised itself to form a Forestry Steering Committee, and in late 2010 a soil survey was conducted to determine the forestry potential of the site. It was found to be a moderate to high potential site to grow especially snow-tolerant eucalyptus and pine trees.

The project is located in the Elundini Local Municipality on communal land at which these project sites are on rural homesteads, where subsistence farm-

About 50% of the population in the area is unemployed and 32% of the economically active people earn below the poverty line. They are elementary unskilled workers who depend on social grants, so with limited knowledge, the community members tend not to understand the grazing systems and the consequences of overgrazing and overstocking and they are unable to control invasive alien species. Another disadvantage is that the custodians of the land, the traditional leaders, do not enforce the correct land

management practices like veld management sys-

tems and Conservation Agriculture practices.

ing and cattle grazing are part of the daily activities.

Therefore, the spread of the alien invasive plant spe-

cies, such as black and silver wattle, is a serious con-

cern for the Chevy Chase project.

Though all processes were adhered to, the wattle on the boundary proved to be a hindrance because it was spreading out of control, even in the presence of snow in the area. This does not help as this plant or species is not snow tolerant and this is evident enough that it is better to plant Eucalyptus, Gum or pine trees, which are resistant to snow. The removed wattle is beneficial to the community as it is used to

make charcoal and it is also sold as fire wood to the community and outsiders.

It is also sold as pulpwood to NCT in KwaZulu-Natal, firewood to the community and surrounding areas and also as tomato poles. The generated income is used for maintenance of equipment, implements, fuel and other daily running of the project.

Presently, wattle has also encroached on streams and riparian areas and has reduced the amount of grazing land available to the community, and once cleared, it will be kept free of alien plant species and those areas will be made available to the community for cattle grazing purposes. A fence



The spread of the alien invasive plant species, such as black and silver wattle, is a serious concern.

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The removed wattle is used to make charcoal and is also sold as fire wood.

↓ The main focus of the Chevy Chase community LandCare project, is the eradication of alien invasive plants.

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will be erected through the Comprehensive Producer Support Programme (CASP) or funding, and that will help in greater control of livestock and management of veld fires and practices.

The community prioritised the northern 139 ha area to be eradicated first; the activities started in 2014, however there was no funding for the following two years. Funding was secured from a Land Bank grant in 2016/17 and it has been in operation to date.

Since the beginning of the eradication and revegetation of the area, to date, about 31,72 ha have been established with suitable grass species like Weeping love grass (*Eragrostis curvula*), Smuts finger and Rhodes grass. Since then the grass has matured and seeded for three seasons. The established grass camps have been made available for grazing to the livestock owners. The regrowth of wattle is treated with follow-up procedures, such as chemical sprays, hand pangas and brush cutters.

In the 2019/20 financial year, the DRDAR introduced the community/project to conservation agriculture practices, fenced the arable lands and planted 27 ha of maize with a no till planter. The total maize harvested equals 20,8 tons, of which 18,4 tons were bagged and sold to the BKB and community members and the other 2,4 tons were used as animal feed. The intention for the current 2021/22 season

was to plant 30 ha of sugar beans, 30 ha of maize and the other 30 ha for pasture. However, owing to procurement delays for fertiliser delivery, only 21 ha maize could be planted.

The community has decided that, as soon the commercial plantings start operating, they will be managed by it with the assistance of the RFD and IDC. When the timber has matured, it will be processed and further income will be generated and additional jobs will be created. The created wealth will also establish this project as a flagship example of the agroforestry industry, among other things.

Considering all aspects of the area, the conditions of the available natural resources makes Chevy Chase a climate-smart agriculture project contributing to the two industries of agriculture and forestry (Agro-forestry).



Competition Commission to start probe into South Africa's fresh produce value chain

The Competition Commission is to start a probe into South Africa's fresh produce value chain, and has singled out small-scale and black farmers as particularly vulnerable to "market features which impede, distort or restrict competitiveness."

The Commission calls it a "large-scale or nothing" dynamic in Mzansi's fresh produce industry. That is why it is launching a probe into the fresh produce value chain and "market features which impede, distort or restrict competitiveness". The farmers who welcome it most are the ones singled out by the com-

mission itself: small-scale growers and black farmers trying to upscale.

The 21 national fresh produce markets across the country are key points to be investigated. The Commission says that it will put the price-setting mechanisms and the role of agents under the microscope, along with the information-liquidity-pricing dynamic, price dispersion across different markets nationally, market and agent fee determination, and onward logistics and logistics fees, including any price discrimination.

Eating two or more apples a day to keep the doctor away



Not only are apples delicious but they are also proven to be good for us. According to a recently published study, by Birgit Wassermann, Ahmed Abdelfattah, Henry Müller, Lise Korsten and Gabriele Berg the microbiome and resistome of apple fruits alter in the post-harvest period. The benefits are not diminished by storage.

Lise Korsten, a professor and co-director of the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security at the University of Pretoria, says the study shows that the well-described beneficial microbes are prevalent on apples. "From other studies, several species have been described as benefitting the gut microbiome contributing to health and wellness. So the old saying, an apple a day keeps the doctor away, is actually so true. In our paper, we showed these populations are prevalent on our locally-produced appels, she said".

"It has also been shown in other studies that these core favourable microbiome populations enhance nutrient absorption in the gut and one can therefore draw parallels between fresh apples favouring a healthy gut microbiome versus other food products, such as processed food, often devoid of healthy microbes and therefore not contributing to the maintenance of a healthy gut," Korsten says.

Tru-Cape's Henk Griessel is Quality Manager and responsible for ensuring the best quality fruit is packed into Tru-Cape bags. "As people passionate about apples and pears any studies that can help promote eating more apples and pears, specifically, and more fresh fruit and vegetables in general, is a good thing. However, what this study also suggests is that the growing trend favouring plant-based eating is also more than only a fad. Science now shows us that we get more from eating raw and fresh fruit and vegetables than only the sum of their nutrients and that the positive role the microscopic organisms play in our gut microbiome is increasingly important for our health tor away", Griessel ends.

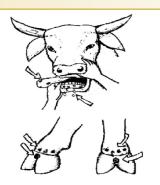
Foot and Mouth disease

Is a serious disease that spreads easily. It is caused by the virus that is found in all body fluids such as saliva, urine, faeces and milk.

- Animals get this disease when eating or breathing in the virus from these body fluids.
- People can also spread the virus by unclean clothing, shoes, hands and car tyres.
- It affects mainly cattle, pigs, goats, sheep and other cloven-hooved animals, including wildlife such as buffalo and antelope.

What are the signs?

- Blisters and sores in the mouth (gums, lips and tongue), are raw and painful, making it difficult for the animal to eat and often causes drooling.
- Blisters and sores between the toes and where the hooves join the skin can cause the animals to limp and not want to walk around. Sometimes they may lose their claws or hooves.
- Cows can develop sores on their teats. This results in a sudden drop in milk production.





Note:

People cannot get sick from Foot and Mouth disease



- It is a trade sensitive disease and has a severe negative impact on the economy of the country.
- It is a controlled disease in terms of the Animal Diseases Act 1984, (Act No. 35 of 1984).
- Though it does not kill affected animals, owners lose money due to a sudden drop in production.

Where does Foot and Mouth disease occur?

In South Africa, buffalo in the Kruger National Park live with the disease but show no signs. To stop the disease from spreading, there are several control measures, which include separation of infected animals, vaccination, inspections and movement controls.



Feel free to contact your nearest state / private veterinarian / animal health technician for further information



For awareness and promotion contact: Directorate: Food Import and Export Standards

Animal Health

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What to do when animals get the disease?

If you see any signs of Foot-and-mouth disease in your cattle, immediately contact your Animal Health Technician or State Veterinarian.



Foot and Mouth disease

54th NAMPO Harvest Day presented over five days

The 54th NAMPO Harvest Day, planned to be presented for the first time over five days to allow for reduced capacity, will showcase agriculture's latest technology, machinery, innovations-, and productivity solutions all on one platform. The 2022 theme "Experience It!" is an invitation to the agricultural industry and the public at large to experience the biggest agricultural show in the Southern Hemisphere, first hand.

"Grain SA is delighted and thankful that the adjusted regulations will enable NAMPO 2022 to be hosted, and furthermore that we are capable of doing it successfully at 50% of the park's capacity, under the adjusted regulations," Dr Dirk Strydom, Grain SA's Marketing, NAMPO and Research Coordination Lead said. "The NAMPO Harvest Day has always been an asset to agriculture and its people and it would be good to welcome everyone back to this showcase after the two-year disruption."

Grain SA is committed to implementing appropriate and necessary measures and action plans in relation to the requirements of Government to host this event. "The health and safety of visitors, exhibitors, staff, sponsors and the entire agricultural community during the NAMPO Harvest Day remain paramount and the organisation will be further guided by current best practice to ensure all appropriate and required health and safety checks are in place facilitating the hosting of a successful and valuable event to all involved," Dr Pieter Taljaard, CEO of Grain SA said.

"Adhering to the newly announced regulations, the NAMPO Harvest Day will welcome visitors who comply with the current required regulations of being fully vaccinated and in possession of a valid vaccination certificate or unvaccinated but in possession of a valid certificate of a negative COVID-19 test, obtained not more than 72 hours prior to entering the park," Toit Wessels, Assistant Manager: NAMPO confirmed. Presenting the Harvest Day will pro-



vide a much-needed injection to the local economy after its two-year hiatus, with many small business owners relying heavily on the income made possible as a result of this agricultural platform. Furthermore, the economic importance of NAMPO to the corporate, medium, and small businesses from all over South Africa participating in the show cannot be underestimated.

"While we might have to do some things a little differently, our aim is still to present a diversified agricultural trade exhibition of world standing, benefiting the broader agricultural value chain," Strydom said.

