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Media Release

Respect small beginnings - MEC urges Mazista Community

07 December 2016

Mazista - The North West Department of Rural Environment and Agricultural Development (READ)'s partnership of food security efforts with Diageo Consulting, a private company specialising with consumer goods is a force to be reckoned with. The partnership which has brought the Mazista community confidence that they can own and produce from their vegetable gardens has attracted attention of many national stakeholders who are flocking in the area to learn more on the model. The Mazista project was launched earlier this year with a purpose of improving household food security for the community. At that moment the community welcomed three food security projects which were implemented at a cost of R2,4 million.

MEC for READ, Manketsi Tlhape led the project handing over ceremony held at Mazista (Kgetleng Local Municipality) on Tuesday, 06 December 2016. The event was attended by partners including the local municipality mayor, Councillor Onica Medupe, local council members and others private companies.

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To date the partnership has provided 60 households with mini-tunnels for vegetable production, as well as garden tools; a shade net structure for the vegetable garden; an extra shade net structure to expand vegetable production on site; an Irrigation for the new structure; and 1000 chicken layer unit, complete with layers and feed. The Department of READ continues to provide extension and advisory services to ensure sustainability of the projects.

Speaking during the ceremony, MEC Manketsi Tlhape emphasised that the projects showed a lot of potential and that needed to be attributed to the beneficiaries. Tlhape said reports that the Northern Cape Province as well as the National Department of Forestry and Fisheries are benchmarking shows that the model had made a positive contribution to food security. She further urged local communities not to despair.

She reiterated on the need for communities like Mazista to embrace opportunities as presented to them by the 5th Administration. "In his 2016 State of the Province Address, Premier Supra Mahumapelo emphasised on the need to boost villages, townships and small dorpiens economies. We need to see projects from Mazista being able to provide schools and clinics with their vegetable produce. We have seen potential and we know that with the commitment you can go to greater heights," she said.

Diageo representative, Viwe Soga said their company take pride in making a difference in rural communities. Soga reflected on how the helpless situation looked at the beginning. He emphasised that the company is delighted that the project has become a guiding beacon to others. In order to see more lives changed, Diageo has committed to ensuring that they will further help in other projects in the province and everywhere that are needed. "We would like to follow what the Premier refer to as a Biekie, Biekie Maak Meer and we would like to further embrace the provincial Saam-Werk Saamtrek philosophy," he said with enthusiasm.

The communal garden representative, Elsie Williams delivered a message of appreciation on behalf of the team. Williams pleaded with the partners to continue supporting Mazista community and to encourage other government departments to come on board. She called on the community members to embrace the opportunities and be patient as some initiatives may not yield immediate results.

Now that the Mazista communities are at a point of growing and selling their produce, MEC Tlhape said the food security outreach will move to the Derby area in the near future. She emphasised that the partnership's potential to change lives has made the department to commit to ensure that other neighbouring villages of Mazista are reached.

Photo:

8767 MEC Manketsi Tlhape and Head of Department, Dr Poncho Mokaila with members of Diageo team showing fresh produce from the Mazista Community garden

8889 Mazista community members came in numbers to the handover ceremony

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Issued by the Communication Services Directorate

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