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**Rural, Environment and Agricultural
Development**
North West Provincial Government
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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MEDIA RELEASE

Att : ALL EDITORS
Media Houses

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JERICHO SEEDBANK HANDED OVER TO BRING NUMBER OF SITES TO THREE IN SA

The North West Department of Agriculture and Rural Development with the National Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development have handed over Seedbank site to Kgosi Mamogale and Jericho local community. This is the third site for the national department since the efforts to establish the sites has begun. The other sites are Gumbu in Limpopo as well as Sterkspruit in the Eastern Cape. This initiative which seeks to conserve indigenous seeds started in 2017 and has drawn 16 members together to manage the community projects they now have termed Jericho Community Seedbank project.

To date, the Jericho local community are on a dedicated assignment to collect and conserve seeds that they get from the local community. An office structure has been set up to conserve and maintain a different range of crops species, clear marks are made to indicate the name of the seeds as well as the donor and the date of donation. This is to have a footprint for the team to gauge the progress since the establishment of the site.

Community Seed Banks are local groups who gather together to conserve and maintain locally adapted seeds. The practice assists to prevent the erosion and ultimate disappearance of seeds within the community. The effort allows members of the particular community easy access to seeds and well the ability to control and manage crops populations. Community Seed Banks and

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technical support provided by government will allow members to improve seeds conservation technologies, increase access to diversity, apply crop improvement practices and explore seeds production and marketing opportunities.

Mr Julian Jafta of the National Department of According to Chief Director at the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development indicated that the love for seeds security as displayed by the Jericho community prompted the Department to persist in establishing the initiative and training the members of the community on saving seeds.

He emphasised that the as one of government priorities, agriculture is meant to stimulate economy and food security is at the centre as rural communities are considered. He added that with good management of Seed Banks, communities can be able to plant and begin to produce foods out the seeds that they bring gather. Julian urged the Jericho community to manage the Bank well as "custodians and protectors of natural resources". He pleaded with the Local Council to formalise the support for the Seed Bank by including it in the Municipality Local Economic Development Plans.

Ms Arlene Dikolomela, District Manager of Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Bojanala, who going forward will oversee the projects appreciated the National Department's efforts and committed to ensure that the Department through Agriculture Extension and Advisory services will manage the project. Dikolomela equally emphasised that Seed Bank should contribute to Food Security within the local community.

At the beginning of the project two years ago, the Deputy Chairperson of the group Ms Magdaline Mabiletsa said they were about 42. Eventhough many had since left leaving the team to only 16, Mabiletsa said the love for farming and seeds security kept the remaining team together. She said those who are there are passionate about their work and pride themselves with the wealth they have. She emphasised that the project is their pride as it is one of those that will benefit many generations to come. She extended an invitation to community members to donate seeds and to participate in the work of the project.

Jericho Seed Bank was established in partnership with Bioversity International, an international global research organisation that believes that agricultural biodiversity nourishes people and

sustains the planet. Bioversity has also assisted the Jericho community with trainings and representative of the Organisation, Mr Ronnie Vernooy has committed that the organisation will be available to technical advises to the project whenever needed.

Pictures:

5552: Jericho Community Seed Bank ready to collect and secure a variety of crop species

5248: Bioversity Wheel demonstrates the seeds that the community possess and assist to identify the need to include other crops

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