



## Office of the Premier

North West Provincial Government  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Ga-Rona Building  
Private Bag X129,  
MMABATHO  
2735

## COMMUNICATION SERVICES

Tel: +27 (18)388-3705

Fax: +27(18) 388-3157

E-mail: [Bsetswambung@nwpg.gov.za](mailto:Bsetswambung@nwpg.gov.za)

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **A boost for agriculture as land beneficiaries get equipment**

**Lichtenburg:** Premier of Bokone Bophirima Supra Mahumapelo believes the handing over of tractors and other agricultural equipment worth over six million rand to the beneficiaries of De Paarl farm near Lichtenburg under Ditsobotla Local Municipality, will go a long way in uplifting agriculture as one of the economic drivers of the province.

Premier Mahumapelo was part of the handover ceremony which was organised recently by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform for residents of De Paarl farm, who are the beneficiaries of 4 500 hectares of land restored to them through the land claim processes.

Mahumapelo was joined by Deputy Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform Mcebisi Skwatsha and MEC for Rural, Environment and Agricultural Development Manketsi Tlhape.

Residents of De Paarl farm who were workers from different areas with different backgrounds, were removed from their land in 1948. The land claim was lodged in 1996 by one of the elders on behalf of 37 families and their land was restored to them in 2002. A total amount of R39, 862,950.00 was spent to secure the land and an extra R14, 528, 386. 51 was spent to ensure sustainability and development.

The farm owners were unable to cultivate the land due to lack of agricultural equipment and they have since leased the farm out to the local commercial farmers, who have now

plated maize, sunflower and potatoes on the farm. Premier Mahumapelo said the handing over the equipment will contribute towards the growth of the sector.

“As part of Rebranding, Repositioning and Renewing Bokone Bophirima, we have adopted Agriculture as one the important sectors which must transform and grow so that it contributes immensely to the economy of our province. We will continue to support our farmers so as to deal with the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment” said Premier Mahumapelo.

Agriculture is the only sector apart from mining in which the Bokone Bophirima is acknowledged to have a comparative advantage over other provinces. The agricultural sector produces 13% of provincial GDP and provides jobs for 18% of the labour force in the province.

Commercial farmers who have leased the land are on a joint venture with the De Paarl Communal Property Association (CPA) to impart important agricultural skills to the beneficiaries.

“We must also thank the farmers who have vowed to assist and mentor this community in the spirit of Saamwerk-Saamtrek, so they can master crop and cattle farming. We can only realise our dream of more efficient agricultural sector if we work together” said Premier Mahumapelo.

From the 4 500 hectares of land restored, 800 is an irrigation land, 3000 hectares are dry land while 700 hectares are grazing land which has many portions of Brazilian grass. Beneficiaries also have 162 cattle.

Deputy Minister for Rural Development and Land Reform, Mcebisi Skwatsha has applauded the beneficiaries for choosing to take the land rather than opting for money.

“Thank you for choosing the land not the money. With land there is life, with land you are able to produce food and become commercial farmers. With land you can create jobs and secure a better future for generations to come. With all the machinery you received today, you are now business people and no longer beneficiaries” remarked Minister Skwatsha.

The farm has created 20 permanent job opportunities while 40 locals are employed seasonally. The members of the De Paarl Communal Property Association as well as ordinary beneficiaries will be taken through the intensive workshop to empower and ready them for large scale farming.

Thereafter, managers of Kokoana Farming Enterprise, a company which runs all the affairs of the farm and managed by the beneficiaries, will also go on a strategic plan to come up with a 5 year development plan for the farm.

**ENDS.**

**Issued by the Office of the Premier – Bokone Bophirima Province**

For enquiries, contact

Mr. Brian Setswambung

Provincial Head of Communication

Office of the Premier

North West Provincial Government

Cell: 076 012 4501

E-mail: [bsetswambung@nwpg.gov.za](mailto:bsetswambung@nwpg.gov.za)

[www.nwpg.gov.za](http://www.nwpg.gov.za)