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## **The department will spend an estimated R400m on extreme worse sections of 70 roads in the province...**

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The department will spend an estimated R400m on extreme worse sections of 70 roads in the province focusing on culvert replacement, re-gravelling, pothole patching and resealing of both gravel and tarred roads. Departmental Head, Pakiso Mothupi, said most of the roads were dirt economic roads whose bad condition has affected the haulage of agricultural products in all four districts of the province. He added that this has also affected food security and the sustainability of farming activity in the affected areas.

“We are trying to come up with a recovery plan to address the maintenance backlog of our road network as a short term intervention. This is while we are finalising a road maintenance strategy that will serve as a bigger and long term plan to make sure we address the backlog and keep the newly upgraded roads in good condition. Mothupi said the department has deliberately set aside most of budget for dirt roads routes as most of them were in bad shape and adversely affected the delivery of agricultural produce and other farming activities.

“By focusing on these roads we will also be contributing to the concrete of Agriculture, culture and tourism (ACT). We urge our community members and motorists to exercise patience as the maintenance term contractors appointed by the department will be working on some of our roads between November and December this year to make sure that these hotspots are trafficable,” Mothupi said.

Agri North West General Manager, Naude Pienaar, said their organisation welcomed the decision taken by the department to include more agricultural routes in its plans. “The current condition of these roads has had a devastating effect on the profitability of farming. Suppliers have in the past refused to come get products from farmers, citing the bad conditions of the roads leading to agricultural businesses as a hindrance,” he said. Pienaar said the roll-out of the projects would come as a relief to farmers, including those in the Bray area in Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati district who have been the most affected.

“Our only other plea is for the department ensure that there is quality assurance in the work that will be done and to have regular blading of the farming roads,” Pienaar said. Mothupi indicated that the department will also draw up a schedule for blading of all dirt roads in the province and avail it to community members and recirculate road forums where community members and businesses can assist government to identify priority roads that need urgent attention.

**ENDS**

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