



## A United & Prosperous Agricultural Sector

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# AgriBEE showcasing in Free State

By Mercia Smith

The showcasing of AgriBEE in the Free State Province marked another achievement in the efforts of the Department of Agriculture to transform the agricultural sector. At the Gala dinner Ms Lulu Xingwana, Minister for Agriculture and Land Affairs, brought the audience into the loop of what is happening with regard to the AgriBEE Charter development process and finalisation.

In May last year the Minister received the Charter and the two indicative scorecards, one for large enterprises and the other for small enterprises. To ensure that the Charter is compliant and that it presents a balanced approach for mutual results for the diverse sector, consultations with the Department of Trade and Industry were held.

The Department of Agriculture has to see that the sector pulls in the same direction and address issues that will transform and improve the sector in a stable manner. Therefore Black

Economic Empowerment as a business imperative will grow the economy into a competitive one, while ensuring long-term socio-economic stability.

The AgriBEE showcasing event was recommended in the AgriBEE reference document. As the process moves forward this event will rotate to all provinces to create awareness and to recognise specific provincial initiatives.

Objectives for the showcasing event were to:

- i Showcase good practices or success stories for setting standards and benchmarks for future efforts,
- ii Alert on challenges and pitfalls which other initiatives should avoid or address,
- iii Create awareness and encourage various stakeholders to participate in initiating and supporting Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment projects and to ensure that

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*Ms Lulu Xingwana, Minister for Agriculture and Land Affairs and Ms Priscilla Sehoole, Chief Communications Officer at the Department of Agriculture.*



# Keboes a success with AgriBEE

By Keitumetse Mmushi

**W**hat do you get when a management team promotes empowerment of farmworkers in a venture that creates job security, job creation, a carefree retirement and financially secure career?

The answer to the question lies in the name: Keboes Fruit Farms. Their main source of income is from exporting various table grape cultivars to different markets in England and the rest of Europe. They have their own export company named New Vision Fruit, situated in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town.

New Vision Fruit does all the marketing and is directly responsible for the logistics involved in ensuring that the grapes reach their destination safely and on time. They also link up between the different foreign target markets. Some of the grapes produced are destined for the local market, wine distillers and others for raisin production.

Keboes' contributions to BEE include preschool care, medical care, provident fund, religious care and housing, amongst others. These are benefits that are available for workers and their families. Workers participate actively in the economic success of their farms and decision making at the highest level is very important to them.

For some time, Keboes has embraced employment equity and the plans are submitted to the Department of Labour as required. The company is focused on good corporate citizenship and

empowerment. Central to this focus is the desire to be part of creating economic stability and growth within South Africa. They have been in the Fair Trade Foundation where commission is earned and reinvested in rural communities in the Northern Cape and North West provinces. The company also holds an Investors in People Accreditation Certificate, that is in high demand.

Keboes Fruit Farms are a joint venture between Karsten Farms, Labour (IDC) and the Black Management Investment Forum (BMIF). Raap en Skraap was founded in 1997 as part of the Karsten Group, and later registered and transferred as Keboes Fruit Farms (Pty) Ltd.

It has one of the largest packing sheds for table grapes in the world, which serves as the packing and distribution centre.

Keboes Fruit Farms is a registered company and the farm consists of approximately 400 ha of table grapes, melons, sweet melons, a date production unit as well as a new Hoodia plant project. On average the company employs about 950 seasonal workers annually, of these 80 employees are permanent with 18 salaried staff members. Production units vary between 850 00 and 950 000 cartons of grapes each year, both export and local, with a total turnover of approximately R45 million.

The management wants to create trust and security in the company to create something visible for our people to the extent where they can create their own future by contributing to their own well-being, the company, province and country.



*Ms Beatrice Marshoff, Premier of Free State Province at the AgriBEE showcasing in Bloemfontein.*

## AgriBEE showcasing

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empowerment efforts are recognised by those involved in the sector.

Initiatives were showcased in Bloemfontein in the form of a workshop and exhibitions. The workshop brought together experts, farmers, agribusinesses, practitioners, specialists, fieldworkers, officials and other role players who were able to share their experiences and knowledge.

Exhibitors from industries, projects, Government, financial institutions and others increased awareness regarding goods and services rendered within the sector.

Ms Xingwana urged businesses and organisations to seize opportunities for partnerships towards shared responsibility, growth and wealth creation in the sector.

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# Drought poses a serious threat to farmers

*Drought is no doubt a disaster that has rocked the agricultural sector in the country.*

**D**rought originates from precipitation deficiency, resulting in water shortage for some activities such as plant growth or water for livestock and grazing. It is a natural hazard that differs from other hazards in that it has a slow onset and evolves over several months or years. It is also not easy to determine its cessation.

Crop farmers are predicting that this season's yield will be 28 % smaller than last year's as excessively hot and dry weather conditions take their toll on plantings. This is according to the farmers' union TAU SA, which conducted an internal survey showing that grain farmers in certain areas had already suffered losses of up to 50 % of their estimated crop yield.

The Directorate Agricultural Disaster Management (ADM) said that early warning National Agrometeorological Committee (NAC) Advisories of possible drought conditions in the country were issued from as early as September last year, to alert farmers of the impending crisis. Mr. Shumani Mugeru, head of the Early Warning Unit, said that the country has been in the grip of a drought since the end of the excessive rains of the 1999 to 2000 rainfall season. "A spike of bumper rains during the latter part of the 2005 to 2006 summer rainfall season was followed by the current poor agricultural season where mainly dry and very hot with rather humid conditions prevailed over the northeastern extremes, although some

rains fell in the south-east during the last couple of weeks", he said.

Drought is no doubt a disaster that has rocked the agricultural sector in the country. There are further economic complications. This may affect the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country, as agriculture is one of the contributors to the GDP. Mr Mawethu Sonkosi of Post-disaster Recovery and Rehabilitation said they are preparing to undertake visits to areas which show vulnerability to drought as one of the initial steps of Government intervention. The Directorate ADM is giving attention to drought mapping and adaptation strategies to assist farmers in coping with this situation.

Drought has largely affected areas in Limpopo, where drought-related livestock mortalities have so far been reported. Almost all the provinces in the summer rainfall regions of the country have been affected. In the Eastern Cape, where a transient shower was recorded, crops are also starting to succumb to the severe heat. Mawethu said that the department is working on long-term intervention and strategic plans to assist farmers. He stated that the most devastating condition about drought is that if it persists it can easily overlap to the neighbouring provinces.

Even though early warnings and monthly NAC Advisories are forwarded to the provincial departments of agriculture, it is not clear if the information is reaching the intended audience, in this case, the farmers. Mr Molatelo Mamadi of Information, Policy and Implementation, said that technology

transfer officers, at provincial level, fail to communicate these warnings to all the farmers, which often creates loopholes in the early warning system.

He said that they recognise the problem and are working on a probable solution that would ease the situation. "Our main focus is to develop a policy framework for disaster risk management. Therefore information dissemination becomes the prime factor in making sure the information sent out reaches the desired audience," he continued. Information disseminated includes plans on mitigation, adaptation and preparedness, should the actual disaster strike. He added that they conduct feedback visits, which revealed that most of the information sent to farmers is not received as intended.

The directorate also deals with other critical disasters such as floods, which soaked the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape provinces last August and veld fires which are induced by dry and windy conditions.

Mr Matiga Motsepe, the agrometeorologist from Early Warning and Climate Change said they recognise the problem of climate change and that efforts are being made on a global scale to curb the situation. As drought continues to deplete most of the country of moisture, one can only hope for good rains to alleviate the situation, which is currently a far cry as the rainfall and temperature predictions for the remainder of summer are hinting at the persistence of dry and very hot conditions.

# New technology to assist farmers

By Tshidi Baloyi

Farmers from all over South Africa gathered at the CSIR International Convention Centre in Pretoria for the launch of the Agricultural Marketing Information System (AMIS) on 02 March 2007.

For a considerable time developing farmers have been facing the challenge of accessing agricultural information. In order to combat this problem the Department of Agriculture has established the web-based AMIS. "To all the farmers who are here today, this is an intervention intended to assist you to become knowledgeable, competitive and profitable in the agricultural marketplace," said the Minister for Agriculture and Land Affairs, Ms Lulu Xingwana.

The system will enable these farmers and traders to make informed decisions about selecting crops to grow, when to harvest, to which markets the produce should be sent and whether or not to store. The department has already trained 12 provincial staff members on the use of the system.

The web-based system will be complemented by other technologies such as the cellphone, in the near future, to ensure maximum access by all. This will allow users of the system to easily download the information they require on their mobile phones.

During the launch the Director of Marketing, Billy Morokolo, gave a brief demonstration of how to use the AMIS website. To broaden the information base the system is hyperlinked to more than 60 other domestic and international sources of market information on field crops, livestock and horticultural industries.

"There will never be any growth, prosperity and competitiveness in agriculture if this link between production and commercialisation of



Photo by Justin Kennerley

*This is an intervention intended to assist you to become knowledgeable, competitive and profitable in the agricultural marketplace.*

agricultural products is compromised," said Xingwana. The Minister therefore called on all private sector suppliers of information to come forward and assist the department to continuously improve on what it has started.

According to Liako Moahloli, the Acting Chief Director for Trade and Business Development, the system is a big step in ensuring that farmers are informed timeously to enable them to plan effectively.

On behalf of the farmers, Ingrid Ditsebe, a farmer from Randfontein, stated "As farmers we will be able to access this information that has been missing. It will help farmers to plan and we hope it will reach farmers in the rural areas". Bigman Maloa, a provincial Head of the Department, said the system will only work if it offers relevant, timeous, accurate and consistent information.

The system offers the following types of information:

- i Daily price information on the qualities and quantities sold in the fresh produce market.
- ii Fresh produce market related information, including market fees and market agents.
- iii Information on fresh produce facilities and services available to the farmers with regard to storage and warehousing, cold storage, grading and repacking, etc.
- iv Commodity profiles and market related reports.
- v Information on grading standards and product quality specifications.
- vi Hyperlinks to other information and data suppliers.

The system can be accessed on:  
<http://www.agis.agric.za/mis>

# Land rights a living legacy

By Cilie Nortier

The newly appointed land claims commissioner for Gauteng en North West, Ms Tumi Seboka, recently shared her goals and views at a networking function in Pretoria.

Ms Seboka reiterated that her goal is to settle all outstanding land claims and this must be achieved and met by March 2008 for the Gauteng and North West provinces. This forms part of the bigger target of the commission nationally. In her view these settlements must be designed and implemented in a manner that will contribute to the sustainable, social and economic development off all beneficiaries. The restitution of land rights must contribute to growth and equity and reconciliation. These objectives can only be met if the commission joined hand across the spectrum with organised agriculture, land right activists, community groups and organisations, other departments as well as with national to local government to ensure all make their contributions towards total commitment.

Faced with meeting the target of legal settlement the quality part of the process cannot be ignored in the process of settling legal aspects land claims. Land rights and restitution must contribute to job creation and poverty alleviation. This can in her view not be done alone, one sector show, and the different stakeholders must take hands in

alignment aimed at a comprehensive and coordinated settlement support for successful restitution of all land claimants.

Ms Seboka announced that the commission is well on track, with almost all of the urban claims for the Gauteng and North West provinces being finalised. Only rural claims are remaining to be finalised. A total of 11 975 rural claims were received and 11 956 have been finalised, which leaves only 19 rural claims to settle until March 2008. In North West Province there are only 80 outstanding rural claims. A staggering total of 1 819 rural claims were settled. This performance is an achievement towards realising the commission's historical goals of empowering the people.

## Challenges facing the Commission

The remarkable progress in the implementation of land restitution was even alluded to by Thabo Mbeki in his State of the Nation Address. However, the commission has to overcome certain complexities. These complexities do not only revolve around personnel shortages but, amongst others, include unintended consideration of land needs for farm dwellers and workers, challenges relating to conflict and disputes resulting from the formation of legal entities in existing traditional authorities.

The commission also had to deal with the consequences of informal settlement on restored land and introducing claimants into new businesses of which they have no knowledge or are not interested in. This calls for capacity building until those claimants are ready to deal with the responsibilities that accompany the new project that was transferred to them as a result of restitution.

Another complexity is the monopoly of projects by opportunistic members of claimants. People emerged looking at maximising benefits for themselves as opposed to sharing in the collective benefits of the entire group as the claimant. The final complexity is the problem of untraceable claimants. This creates delays in settling the claim. The implementation cannot be complete because claimants cannot be traced.

The history of land restitution is very important for the commission and therefore they have decided to establish a memorial site in all nine provinces. This will serve as a form of remembrance and honour to those who have died during lodgement and dispossessing of land and for those who have obtained land through the restitution process.

"Land rights, a living legacy" is the slogan of the commission and it wants to keep this legacy alive for the next generation.



# Cultivar demonstration days informative



By Innocent Mhlanga

This year's Agricultural Research Council's (ARC) cultivar demonstration day took place in two provinces respectively on 28 February and 09 March, at the ARC-Grain Crops Institute in Potchefstroom North West and the Lowveld research unit in Mpumalanga. The sun was scorching hot in both provinces and it was not easy to tour the entire trial site but the few places visited were very informative to farmers, emerging farmers, researchers and other agricultural stakeholders because it gave them information that will enable them to deliver good products and even a satisfactory income. With every demonstrator trying to stick to the content of the presentation, background information such as the history, requirements, characteristics, benefits, future and the programme for 2006/07 was provided to assist everyone in understanding the full purpose of this cultivar day.

The first topic was dry beans, presented by Dr Andries Liebenberg. In his presentation he said dry beans are a valuable cash crop in rotation with maize and can increase maize yields on average by 10 % and the beans have the potential of adapting in the North West Province on deep soils on residual moisture. Planted early in January to escape high temperatures during flowering, the

common bean is well adapted to deep-drained soils in the cool high-rainfall areas of Mpumalanga and the Eastern Free State. With the present estimated production in South Africa at approximately half the consumption, and beans having to be imported every year, it is one of the profitable crops and owing to a shortage on the world market, high prices of between R5 000 and R5 500 per ton are presently being achieved.

The national cultivar trials are an important dry beans project; the demonstration that is planted for the invitation day contains the 25 cultivars (small white, red speckled, sugar and carioca) which are in this year's trial. There is also an advanced RSS breeding line with resistance to common blight and a large white kidney bean cultivar, of which the main aim is to demonstrate the well-known as well as newly released cultivars of dry bean seed.

Some of the entries have been infected with common bacterial blight (CBB) to demonstrate the level of resistance that has been obtained in the two resistant entries by means of breeding. Cultivars differ with respect to their yields, length of growing season, growth habit, size and canning quality.

The Cowpea and Bambara Groundnut Improvement Programme was the next demonstration, by Dr Joseph Asiwe as the

project leader. She said that this programme commenced two years ago, to breed for high, stable yield, different maturity groups as well as biotic stress resistance. This being a relatively new breeding programme, the ARC-GCI embarked on intensive evaluation and selection of germ plasm accessions introduced from IITA and other national agricultural programmes in order to meet the immediate needs of farmers and team population while awaiting the development of new varieties arising from the systematic hybridisation and improvement of germ plasm accessions. Several promising cowpea and bambara varieties with good agronomic traits such as high grain yield, dual-purpose and fodder types, pest resistance, and good nutritional qualities have been identified. This has been the result of intensive evaluation and selection.

Nemera G. Shargie, the sorghum/pearl millet breeding presenter/demonstrator, said in order to improve sorghum/pearl millet performance in a cropping system new technology packages encompassing all aspects of production are needed. In order to produce sufficient food, Smallholder farmers have to plant varieties/landraces that are adapted to stressful local conditions; they are low in grain yield and often non-susceptible to

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# Cultivar demonstration

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pests and diseases. The ARC-GCI Sorghum-breeding Programme conducts broad-based research to identify, characterise, evaluate and utilise the natural diversity of sorghum/pearl millet to develop open-pollinated varieties (OPVs) with improved traits. These traits can be abiotic (drought) and biotic (insects and diseases) stress resistance, wide adaptation, yield, weathering resistance and grain quality.

Sweet sorghums are used for fodder (silage), syrup, vegetable and mainly for bioenergy production. This crop is adapted to all types of soils, but prefers heavy soils with a high clay content, warm temperatures, 400 to 600 mm of rain. Planting is from mid-October to mid-December. Benefits of this crop are the social, environmental and economic returns on investment, making it a viable crop.

Commercially available maize and sorghum cultivars, submitted by various seed companies, have been evaluated under varying environmental conditions. Analysis of variance and stability analysis

are used in these trials. The results are published in annual and multiseasonal reports as well as on the ARC website.

Cultivar trials can never stop simply because any plants, and specifically domesticated crop plants, interact with their environment. The outcome of the interaction is varying yield on different farms. In the case of groundnuts, the outcome is even more complex as environment plays a major role in determining the quality of the crop. The cultivar evaluation places special emphasis on oleic acid that results in longer shelf life, better nutritional composition that assists South African groundnut farmers to compete better on foreign markets. This enhances diverse groundnut usage owing to the superior quality of oil in the nut which becomes part of "health oils" on the market.

Maize is by far the most important crop grown by smallholder farmers as it is a staple crop and mainstay of rural diets as well as a cash crop. Most of the smallholder farmers are resource-poor, struggling to buy hybrid seed, fertilisers

and other inputs. As a result, they grow mostly landraces and recycled seed of unknown origin under very low levels of management, and their yields are very low. The ARC-Grain Crops Institute jointly with CIMMYT-Zimbabwe is developing OPVs as an alternative to hybrids. These varieties perform well and are accepted by farmers, as some of them have been adopted by farmers in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces, and communities are growing certified seed with the assistance of the ARC-GCI.

Mr Francis Chegombo, who is an extension officer in the Hazyview/White River area, presented the cassava (*Manihot esculenta (mjumbula)*) cultivar. He said they are being described as the famine reserve crop because of the advantages: drought tolerance, easy propagation, recovery from locust damage, low input requirement, high yield (calorie/unit area), etc. Because it can produce more carbohydrates per ha than any other food staple, it is best when planted on ridges, mounded or flat, because it is easier to harvest when planted on ridges/mounds. Cuttings of 20 to 30 cm lengths are taken from healthy plants and planted vertically, at an angle or flat in a 10 to 15 cm optimal depth. The vertical plantings, however, will require or prefer light soil. Higher yields can be obtained when plantings are made as early as possible soon after the temperature rises in September and November in a 70 to 100 cm spacing between rows and plants.

The estimated yield on dryland can be 9 to 15+ /ha on farmers' fields, 25 to 45+ /ha on research plots and 60 to 80+ /ha under irrigation.

Although it is an easy cultivar, major problems can be encountered by the small farmer, such as lack of improved varieties, poor agronomic practices followed, African cassava mosaic virus, mealy bugs and a long growing season of 12 to 24 months.



# Save our atmosphere plant a tree

By Tshidi Baloyi

There is so much carbon dioxide building up in the atmosphere that natural systems can no longer recycle it all. Therefore, residents of Mabopane in the North West held a tree planting ceremony at the Botshabelo Recreational Park on 28 February 2007.

The ceremony was organised by the Total Facilities Management Company (TFMC). The company's contribution, together with the assistance of the Department of Agriculture, the Tshwane Municipality and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, resulted in 450 trees being distributed to residents.

This initiative was sparked by the current global concern about climate change. According to research planting a tree remains one of the most effective ways of offsetting carbon emissions. The residents of Botshabelo were urged to plant trees to assist in curbing carbon dioxide pollution.

Botshabelo Recreational Park is an RDP residential area that consists of stands of reasonable size, with sanitation facilities and access to clean water. However, because of the lack of trees no shelter is available from the sun and dust in the hot and dry area.

"A house is not a home without a tree," said Siyabulela Morris of Food and Trees for Africa (FTFA). Sego Motubatsi of TFMC appealed to the women of the community to take responsibility and take care of the trees. The company raised R23 000 during a Golf Day in October 2006, which was held by TFMC to buy and donate the trees.

During the event 18 members of the community received certificates for attending the TFMC Trees for Homes Workshop for Community-based Education. The workshop was held to educate the people concerning the planting and maintenance of trees. They will be able to use this knowledge in their community and also share it with the rest of the community.

The Trees for Homes Programme is an



innovative public greening initiative that contributes nationally to improve the quality of life and the environment, and address climate change.

In addition to reducing carbon dioxide, one of the major greenhouse gases and a primary contributor to climate change, the trees will be useful to improve water, energy, soil and noise management, food security (fruit and nut trees), enrich lives and create healthier and more sustainable communities. At the end of the ceremony a fruit tree was planted in the yard of one of the RDP houses near the park.

*Mr Siyabulela Marvis from Food and Trees for Africa planting a tree.*





# New leap to rodent control

By Keitumetse Mmushi

**O**n the surface, they are fast little hairy creatures and appear to be harmless but, in reality they wreak havoc everywhere they pass.

In terms of population growth, rodents are the most successful mammal group next to humans. It's no wonder then that they are so troublesome for farmers. Although many farmers understand the extent of problems caused by rodents, such as damage to field crops, stored and personal possessions, awareness about the level of damage is often underestimated.

People need to be provided with the true cost of sharing living space with rodents, in order to consider how much they can invest, in terms of traps, poisons and labour in controlling rodents. Such information can be disseminated by showing correct levels of loss and contamination as well as risk of diseases. An aspect often overlooked is that they transmit many diseases, and most of the time the symptoms are confused with that of other diseases where awareness is higher, such as malaria.

It has become apparent that studying those ecology and biology of rodent pests can lead to significant improvements in the way the pests are managed. Rodent management that is ecologically-based is seen as more sustainable, both economically and environmentally, than the traditional use of acute poisons.

A new agricultural research project has been initiated in South Africa. It aims to develop ecologically-based rodent management for the Southern African region. The development of Ecologically-Based Rodent Management for the Southern African Region project (ECORAT) is coordinated by scientists at the Natural Resources Institute (NRI) of the University of Greenwich in the UK and involves organisations from Swaziland, Tanzania, Namibia as well as rodent experts from Durban's Natural Science Museum and the Agricultural Research Council Plant Protection Research Institute.



The ECORAT project started with an inception workshop at the University of Greenwich in January 2007. Scientists from Swaziland, Namibia, Tanzania and South Africa were there to discuss and plan activities. At the meeting, Dr Steven Belmain of the NRI and ECORAT project leader said, "Both developed and developing countries continue to face growing rodent pest problems, and we have high expectations that the ECORAT project will help to reduce rodent pest problems for those most affected by them.

The current rodent control practices involve the use of rodenticides, but their poor application and adaptation to local

situations often results in treatment failures, leading to acceptance of rodent pests in the environment. Misuse causes health as well as environmental problems to both humans and animals and may not even reduce the rodent population, therefore having little impact on reducing the damage they cause. Other rodent management methods involving trapping and environmental management can be more appropriate for the rural agricultural institutions in Africa.

In the coming three years, the ECORAT project will be sponsored by the EU through the SADC's agricultural research and training initiative.

## Manual available from SAPPO

SAPPO's training manual for emerging producers will be available from the SAPPO offices in Pretoria by the end of February.

The comprehensive manual deals with various production matters such as breeding, feeding, housing, management, diseases, biosecurity, marketing, transport and slaughtering. It is richly illustrated with full-colour photographs. The manual was compiled by two veterinarians, Dr Jim Robinson and Dr Mary-Louise Penrith. Both have an extensive knowledge of pig production. The manual will soon be launched to the media. The 72-page manual costs R30 (VAT included) and can be ordered from Sally Bosman at tel. no. (0120 351 3920.)



# Training can improve farming

By Tshepo Seloana

**G**rootfontein College of Agriculture hopes to improve the farming industry through a short training course to farmworkers and farmers.

College principal, Strydom Schoonraad, said they decided to offer such a unique service to farmworkers because farmers were unable to train their workers because of a lack of money. They spend more on wages and salaries every month.

This was initiated recently after realising that other farmworkers still need some nurturing in terms of farming skills. The service to farmers is offered through a mobile unit, whereby farmers are taught on their respective farms.

"Our aim through this programme is to equip farmworkers with proper training. The farmer can rest assured after we've

trained the workers", said Schoonraad.

Furthermore Schoonraad stated that they decided to assist farmers because they were spending great sums on wages each month.

More important is to improve the farmers' production and profitability.

Through this initiative the farmworkers will know what to do and how to do it. They will also understand the motivation behind certain activities. This is an investment. The Grootfontein mobile unit is a "college on wheels".

Such a unit is fully equipped with all of the training equipment that is necessary. The moment farmers notice that their workers need further knowledge or skills, they contact us and complete a form stating their needs. We then contact the farmer and arrange a date for training.

The lecturer in question then goes to the farm with his mobile.

The mobile training units also focus on the production of small livestock, but also offer a few supporting courses. Popular courses include sheep and goat management and wool classification.

Workers are supported by courses on welding, windmill repairs, fencing and even marketing and others. The advantage of this initiative is that farmers and farmworkers receive training on their respective farms and that they are also able to do their chores while being trained.

"We want to develop more of these units countrywide", stated Schoonraad. This can easily be adapted to answer the needs of the grain industry. There is definite room for growth in the other fields of agriculture, " he added.

# Mafisa increases loan access

By Themba Mathebula and Keitumetse Mmushi

**G**ood news to emerging farmers is that they can expect to access loans of up to R300 000, once the Macro-agricultural Finance Institutions of South Africa (Mafisa) has finalised talks with leading funding institutions.

Mafisa is currently engaged in talks with the LandBank, Uvimba Finance, Postbank, Itaa, Khula and Mpumalanga Agricultural Development to ease procedural constraints for farmers when applying for funding. It further plans to act as collateral for farmers seeking funding from other financial institutions. Mr Daniel Kekana, Senior Manager for said that they are planning to increase the loan access for Mafisa from R100 000

to R300 000. "Now the farmers can buy the necessary services, increase the volume of production and in the process get a chance to grow."

Mr Kekana said that in the past farmers could not access funding from the existing funding institutions. The initial projected funding target was 2 000 farmers and now the number has almost tripled to 5 000.

To increase awareness about Mafisa's existence, the institution holds road shows, presents various workshops and places advertisements on television. So far Mafisa has only been launched in three provinces, namely Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. It is expected that by the end of June, the project should

be fully launched in all provinces.

Interested farmers should fill application forms obtainable from identified outlets and extension offices. The extension officer will assist in the completion of the form. The application will then undergo a screening and credit evaluation process. Under normal circumstances, the application will not take more than two months to process. Applicants are encouraged to comply with all regulations and ensure that all the requirements are met with. If farmers had previously been rejected upon application, they are encouraged to reapply provided they furnish all the required information on the post rejection report.

# FAO calls for a better way of feeding the millions

By Tshepo Seloana

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has suggested major reforms in the way food aid is managed and distributed.

According to the Director-General of the FAO, Jacques Diouf, they proposed that food aid should not be linked to profit dealings. In an attempt to resolve the problem now, all World Trade Organisation (WTO) members are required to ensure that food aid is not linked to commercial exports of agricultural products.

"In many cases food aid is used because it is the only resource available, not because it is the best solution to the problem. Increased and more flexible resources are needed to address food insecurity," said Diouf.

State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) said that almost all food aid donated by the USA is tied to domestic requirements for procurements, processing and shipping and other donors have similar requirements.

Some donors have stopped donating food aid in the form of products. Instead, they provide cash. According to the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) up to 15 % to 25 % of all food aid is now purchased in the country where it is needed.

SOFA pointed out that "such

transactions are generally 'untied', although donors may stipulate where purchases are to be made. This reduces the overall flexibility of the procuring agency, raising costs.

While food aid is relatively small in terms of the global food economy, it constitutes a significant share of the total food supply in individual countries in certain years.

To all intents and purposes there are three major types of food aid, programme, project and emergency.

Programme food aid is a contribution of food produced by a rich country to the government of a recipient country.

Project food aid is donated to support specific activities and projects, and is often related to promoting agricultural development, nutrition and food security

directed at programme such as food-for-work and school feeding.

Emergency food aid is distributed free to the food-insecure in times of crisis. However, this aid is expensive and slows intervention, especially when sourced in a donor country.

"Food aid must be demand-directed not donor directed" said Human Rights Director of the German Charity, bread for the World, Michael Windfuhr emphasising the necessity of a sound needs assessment of food-insecure and vulnerable groups ahead of distributing food aid.

The agency revealed that interventions aimed at rebuilding market infrastructure and restoring trade links can often achieve lasting improvements in food security without the need for massive food aid".



Photo by Justin Kennerley

## 4th WORLD CONGRESS OF RURAL WOMEN

About 2000 delegates from all over the world will descend upon South Africa during April 2007 for the 4th World Congress of Rural Women (WCRW).

The Congress, which will take place from the 23 to 25 April at the International Conference Centre in Durban, is hosted by the Ministry for Agriculture and Land Affairs in partnership with the South African Civil Society.

Delegates have been drawn from rural women, Government, international and intergovernmental organisations and civil society.

The WCRW is an event held every four years under various pertinent themes. It was founded in Australia in 1994 and was later hosted by the United States of America in 1998, followed by Spain in 2002. This year it is Africa's turn.

The Congress will afford rural women in particular, the opportunity to reflect on the progress made towards realising the Millennium Development Goals of the World Food Summit, which committed all countries to reduce poverty by half by 2015.

Among other things, the congress will also discuss multisectoral issues affecting the development of rural women.

The Congress will be preceded by the African Consultative Conference of Rural Women from 19 to 21 April 2007 at the same venue for the formulation of the African position on the WCRW.

As our country's political and business leaders are getting ready for the massive world event, South Africa's Civil Society has chosen to believe that the nature of this event requires that rural women be both politically and socially empowered so as to inform their discussion and engage in rural development activities at grassroots. It is imperative that rural women from diverse segments of society participate in this Congress in large numbers, as the policies that will be discussed by the leadership will impact mostly on their lives.

In this regard, a permanent physical space at the WCRW, called the Rural Women's Voices Tent (RWVT) will be set up to meet the needs of rural women. The Tent will be an integral part of the Congress' Forum for Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs). The Tent will be held concurrently with the Congress from 21 to 24 April 2007 at the Durban's Kingmead Stadium. The RWVT is of utmost importance in the context of the rural women development agenda and for the strengthening of the WCRW outcomes and it will therefore raise issues affecting rural women in the global arena.

**NB: Attendance is per invitation only**

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Agriculture  
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