



DAFFnews

2 August 2019

Official newsletter of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

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Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries



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Minister Didiza tables Budget Vote 24 and 39 for the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development

By *Jamela Nkanyane*

The Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza tabled the Budget Vote speech on 16 July in Parliament. She tabled Vote 24 and Vote 39 respectively noting critical issues such as land reform, which has sparked debate on various platforms in the country and the reorganisation of the new department. The Minister held a media briefing prior to tabling the Budget Vote to provide highlights of the speech to the media where land reform issues quickly became a popular subject of discussion.

Land reform

Speaking at the media briefing, Minister Didiza told journalists, “It is our view that as a nation we need to find a lasting solution to the issue of the land question in our country.” She further noted that for many South Africans, the land matter not only relates to sovereignty, equitable access to land as a natural resource, but more to address socio economic challenges that our country face.

Delivering her Budget Vote, she brought to the fore that addressing the land question will need a meaningful conversation with landowners varying from farmers to companies or trusts.

She also highlighted that the department has a responsibility to revitalise land that was handed through restitution of land rights, support farmers settled in agricultural state land and those in communal areas who have acquitted themselves even where land scarcity remains a challenge.

Supporting the Minister at the media briefing, Deputy Minister Mcebisi Skwatsha reminded journalists that President Cyril Ramaphosa emphasised in his State of the Nation Address that the issue of expropriation of land without compensation has to be conducted in an orderly manner.

Discussions sparked by the land issue have seen the rise of a motion to amend the section 25 of the constitution, which protects property rights, to allow for the expropriation of land without compensation.

In the same tone, Minister Skwatsha, who will oversee the Land Reform mandate of the department emphasised that the department will not necessarily wait for the amendment of the constitution to redistribute land. “While all these talks are happening, we are not waiting to redistribute land only after the

Minister Didiza tables Budget Vote 24 and 39

By Jamela Nkanyane

amendment of the constitution. As we speak, yesterday, day before yesterday, in the last couple of years, there has been land that has been redistributed by this government,” he said.

He added that, “We also know that there has to be a rapid land release because in relation to the target indicated by the National Development Plan, we seem to be very much behind. But the process is on.”

Agriculture

Minister Didiza further noted the historical past of the country where certain groups were marginalised in the agricultural sector. “Historically, black South Africans were excluded from meaningful participation in the agricultural economy. The food value chain remains highly concentrated among a few role players,” she said. She believes that this cannot be the basis of building a sustained agricultural economy that serves all. She urged that, “we need to work together to open up the sector, create opportunities for the historically disadvantaged groups and make a concerted effort in growing the sector on an inclusive one.”

In this regard, the department is

developing a deliberate strategy for youth and women in agriculture building on initiatives that have been undertaken already.

She emphasised that agricultural production linked with market access will enable a contribution to the economy as expected. “The opening of markets in countries such as the People’s Republic of China for beef and fruits are just but one example of the growth opportunities that we can maximise,” she enthused.

The Minister also announced an agreement with the Minister of Trade and Economic Development to work together on certain issues. The two departments will work together on liaising with trading partners such as the People’s Republic of China to increase commodities for their markets where there is a comparative advantage; develop an agri-business master plan; relook at the poultry industry and lastly prepare for the implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade area, and discuss labour and industry.

Another critical mandate of the department is biosecurity. “In order to sustain our biosecurity in respect of the livestock industry, we will ensure that

Minister Didiza tables Budget Vote 24 and 39

we recruit veterinary doctors and animal health specialists,” she said. She also said that the department will work with provinces to ensure that dipping and other veterinary services are undertaken at scale.

She said in this financial year, the Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) will commence with the upgrading of the facility to ensure that vaccine production is undertaken within the prescribed international standards. The Agricultural Research Council will commence with the Food and Mouth Disease (FMD) diagnostic facility. The department will also allocate budget to step up surveillance of the FMD red zone that cuts across KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Mpumalanga provinces.

Supporting developing farmers remains an important role of the department and Minister Didiza said she is working on reducing overlapping functions in grants provided by the agriculture and rural development parts of the department to support developing farmers. “I have already instructed the two departments to look into areas of overlap and align.” She added that the department will work with the Land Bank to look into the best

models to finance the agricultural sector in the country.

“Skills development in agriculture is critical. To this end we will work with the Minister of the Department of Higher Education to strengthen the work of agricultural colleges.” The work will also be extended to universities “to ensure that we build requisite skills for the sector,” she said.

Reorganisation of the new department

In light of the challenges raised, especially on land reform, Minister Didiza noted that these “require a responsive and capable state.” “In this regard, we will need to ensure that in the reorganisation of the new department, we bring requisite skills,” she said.

“Together with my colleague, the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, we have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure that we manage decision-making on the areas that will be transferred to her department,” she said.

For the rest of the article send an email to: jamelan@daff.gov.za or phone 066 084 6355

Young entrepreneurs show they are not just pretty faces at #YAFF awards

By *Jamela Nkanyane*

Today's youth are often associated with fashion, beauty phrases such as 'brows on fleek' and other trendy social statements.. However, do not make any mistake to think that is all our youth are capable of. The hashtag Youth in Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Awards (#YAFF) became the showground of young people showing beauty and farming skills.

Case in point is 25 year-old Siphesihle Kwetana, who had the audience in awe with her beauty when she ascended the stage to receive the award for Agriculture Excellence in the Smallholder category. She was awarded during the #YAFF awards ceremony hosted by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape in June. Kwetana received R100 000 sponsored by Macadamias South Africa (SAMAC) and said she would use it to grow her business.

Speaking at this excellence awards ceremony, Deputy of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Mr Mcebisi Skwatsha said government would like to see more of the young entrepreneurs in this sector graduating into commercial farming

because the matter of food security is very important.

He further said, "I appeal to all role-players to multiply their efforts to attract and create an enabling environment for our youth to participate in the sector."

The #YAFF awards were launched in 2016 with the vision to encourage youth participation in the mainstream sector; provide a framework for networking opportunities between the aspiring young producers and key stakeholders in the sector, and to create an enabling environment from which different role players in the sector can establish synergies to support youth initiatives.

The awards recognises top young achievers in the production value chain, namely livestock and poultry production, crop production, fisheries or aquaculture production, forestry and agro-processing. The #YAFF award programme serves as a crucial barometer of the progress in youth economic empowerment and development across the sector.

For the rest of the article send an email to: jamelan@daff.gov.za or phone 066 084 6355

Meet the winners of the 2019 #YAFF awards

By Jamela Nkanyane

AGRICULTURE EXCELLENCE AWARD: COMMERCIAL CATEGORY

Wayne Mansfield is the sole owner of Fruitfield Farming located in Paarl, Stellenbosch in the Western Cape. This 34 year old farmer started out as a fruit hawker; buying second grade fruits from local commercial farmers and reselling them. Realising that the business was no longer yielding enough profit, Wayne's passion and need for growth drove him to negotiate a piece of land with one of the farmers in the area. To date the business is operating on 12 hectares of leased land where he is producing lemons on 5,2 hectares and has young lemon trees on 4,8 hectares. In the first year of production, the business exported 31 tonnes and increased production exceedingly in the second year where he exported 163 tonnes of lemons to international markets and sold the surplus to local markets. To date, the business has created seven permanent and between 35 and 40 seasonal job opportunities.

AGRICULTURE EXCELLENCE AWARD: SMALLHOLDER CATEGORY

Siphesihle Kwetana is a 25 year-old sole owner of Siphe Development and Capacitation Agency (SIDECA) located in Shawbury, Tsolo under the Mhlontlo Municipality in the Eastern Cape. The business has been operating for four years producing a wide variety of vegetables which yield a harvest of about 12 000 bunches of spinach, 10 000 heads of cabbage and 6 000 kg of green peppers a month within a given season. She has also planted 4 hectares of pumpkin and 2 hectares of other vegetables, inter alia, broccoli, beetroot, carrots on a smaller scale. SIDECA supplies a number of supermarkets in Umthata, Tsolo and Qumbu which include Spar, Pick n Pay, Ideal Veggies and Food Lover's Market.

THE FORESTRY EXCELLENCE AWARD: LARGE-SCALE CATEGORY

Sonwabile Bushula is a 30 year old entrepreneur and the sole owner of SA Fine Tuned located in Stutterheim, outside East London in the Eastern Cape. He currently serves as the Chairperson of Amahlathi Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development and is also the Treasurer of Amathole Charter of Youth in Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. He has been operating on 2000 hectares

Meet the winners of the 2019 #YAFF awards

of leased land since 2013. He has a range of land use agreements such as short-term agreements, harvesting permits and caretaker agreements with the Amahlathi Local Municipality. The business currently harvests 50 hectares of pine which translates to approximately 500 cubic metres per month, they also harvest gum tree which produces between 20 000 to 30 000 units. He currently supplies 12 000 tonnes to SAPPI, TWK, NCT and to local markets and individuals. To date, the business has created fifty job opportunities, seven of which are permanent.

THE FORESTRY EXCELLENCE AWARD: SMALL-SCALE CATEGORY

Thabiso Sithole, is the co-owner and Director of Red NS Holdings. This is a livestock and forestry business operating on 45 hectares of land ;out of which 20 hectares is for wattle and 25 hectares for gum tree. This 28 year old BCom graduate, together with his business partner, started the business in 2015 and have since then produced 2 000 tonnes of wattle on average of 500 tonnes per year. The business supplies entities such as the Natal Timber Cooperation and TWK, which is an agency for SAPPI, Mondi and others.

THE FISHERIES RECOGNITION AWARD: SMALL-SCALE CATEGORY

Morena Khashane, a 32 year-old entrepreneur, is the sole owner of MK Enterprise Fish Farming located in Rooigrond, Mahikeng in the North West. The business has been operating on leased land since 2006. He underwent training in Aquaculture at the Stellenbosch University, China and Malawi. He is a member of African Farmers' Association of South Africa and also sits in the executive committee of Tropical Aquariums. Through his passion and interest in aquaculture, he started MK Enterprise; a fish farming business that specialises in Tilapia fish farming. The fingerlings are procured from reputable hatcheries in Gauteng at the average weight of 0,02g, nurtured in the Aquaculture Recirculating System until they reach market size, which takes about 6 to 8 months. The business supplies restaurants and informal markets such as households and individuals. However, in the last two years the business was hard hit by Eskom's intermittent load-shedding and lost their stock.

Meet the winners of the 2019 #YAFF awards

THE AGRO-PROCESSING RECOGNITION AWARD: SMALL- SCALE CATEGORY

Molatelo Kgarose is the sole owner of Kgarose Kgaros located in Itsoseng Business Centre, Polokwane in the Limpopo Province. This 29 year-old IT and Marketing graduate realised his passion for entrepreneurship and started the business which produces healthy sweet potato yoghurt in apricot, strawberry and banana flavours; making it the first of its kind in South Africa. The company currently produces 385 bottles of yoghurt per day, which is packaged and distributed to different stores around Polokwane. He also empowers smallscale farmers by buying sweet potatoes directly from them ensuring that they have a guaranteed and sustainable market for their produce.

AGRICULTURAL TRAINING INSTITUTE GRADUATE ENTREPRENEUR

Reatlegile Seleke, a 27 year old farmer, is the sole owner of Kaelo Farming Project located in Longaneng Village, in Taung in the North West Province. She attained her National Diploma from Potchefstroom Agricultural Training Institute. The farm was given to her by

her father in 2011 with just five cattle. She purchased 20 pregnant heifers, 14 pregnant ewes and one ram using a loan she received from the Land Bank. The business currently has sheep, cattle and goats that she sells to both formal markets such as auctions and informal markets such as funerals and ceremonies.

YOUTH LIVING WITH DISABILITY

Godfrey Mathebula, a 32 year-old farmer didn't let the inconvenience of having his arm amputated stop him from realising his dreams, he owns Macelakuomile farm located in Plange Village, Malamulele, in the Collins Chabane Municipality in the Limpopo Province. He started his mixed farming business of cash crops and small stock in 2007 operating on a 3 hectare land where he produces a variety of vegetables ranging from dry beans, tomatoes and green pepper. Currently the business produces 50 kg of dry beans, 12 crates of tomatoes, 100 crates of green pepper and 1000 bundles of Chinese Spinach, which they supply to Johannesburg and Pretoria Fresh Produce Market, Shoprite, Spaza shops and the local community. To date, the business has created eight temporary job opportunities.

Pre-launch of the Electronic Certification system

By Rony Moremi

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development appointed Fruit South Africa (Fruit SA) in March 2018 to develop electronic certification (E-Cert) system aimed at modernising the export of agricultural products. The development of the system was informed by increasing demand on inspection and certification of import and exports of agricultural products by the department. The system will also allow harmonisation between different inspection centres and will assist in preventing fraud on documents, which could lead to loss of markets caused by loss of confidence by importing countries in the South African certification procedures.

The system will serve as an interface between different government institutions such as the Department of Trade and Industry (the dti), the South African Revenue Service (SARS) and other stakeholders such as assignees, to keep track of consignments that enter and leave South Africa.

Ernest Phoku, Director Inspection Services said phase one of the system is mainly for export certification of all agricultural products, but will in the

interim be used on certification of fruits. The reason for the latter is that there is already a system in place for pre-certification of fruits called the Phytclean (track and trace system developed by Fruit SA, in collaboration with the department to manage the inspection and integrity of the information in the value chain).

The department is working in collaboration with the Netherlands Department of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (DANFQ) following bilateral cooperation entered into on November 2015 between the two countries to develop e-certification system. Subsequently, DANFQ seconded experts on the project, to mentor the department and developers on the development and operation of the system.

The introduction of E-Cert to SA's authorities and its inclusion on the bilateral cooperation was facilitated by former attaché to Brussels, Thapsana Molepo. When fully operational, this system will reduce fraud while improving turnaround times and traceability.

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Promoting the conservation and preservation of indigenous seeds

By Rony Moremi

The Genetic Resources Directorate of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development working in partnership with North West Department of Rural, Environment and Agricultural Development (READ) handed over a community seed bank in Jericho, North West on 12 June 2019. The community seed banks were established in 2013 as a way of conserving and preserving traditional seeds. When the process of establishing community seed banks started, the department collected 20 different indigenous seeds from communities that were preserved at the national seed bank.

Jericho community seed bank is one of the four community seed banks established in the country— with others in Sterkspruit, Joe Ncabi District Municipality in the Eastern Cape and Gumbu village in the Mutale Local Municipality, Limpopo. South Africa ranks among the 50 countries in the world that have community seed banks. Dr Rony Vernooy of Bioversity International praised South Africa as the only country that has a national gene bank.

Julian Japhta, Chief Director, Plant Production and Health said the community seed bank will help to promote food security in the community. He said it is also a real time evidence of the role that the community and farmers can play as custodians and protectors of the resources and should work together with the department to ensure that the seed bank becomes successful. He said he hopes the community seed bank will be included in the local development plans.

Vice chairperson of the Jericho community seed bank, Magdeline Mabiletsa said she started working at the seed bank in 2017 and has learnt a lot about the importance of seed preservation. She said the bank will promote planting of indigenous seeds in the community and the consumption of indigenous food crops.

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ASF could change the world's protein situation forever

ASF (African Swine Fever) is the first virus in history that could lead to a shortage of protein in the world. I believe that this could change the face of animal production forever. Without food production we can't survive," said Dr Pieter Vervoort, chairman of the National Animal Health Forum (NAHF), at a media briefing this week.

"China is very worried about its serious ASF situation as this is leading to a serious decrease in the countries' availability of pork. Pork is China's main source of nutrition. Not all countries could import

their food as Singapore does as they do not have the money to do so," he said.

Dr Vervoort said he believes that South Africa is still an extremely food secure country, but this could change.

"Many South Africans do not have family farming anymore as in the past. Consumers will become more and more disconnected with where and how their food is produced. The media has a huge role to play to continuously inform consumers where their food is coming from and that farmers have no intention to rip them off," Dr Vervoort said.



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Gxotiwe shows real passion in farming

By Samuel Kgatla

At the age of 32, Aviwe Gxotiwe has shown a real passion in farming. He became a commercial farmer at a young age and he is living proof that farming is for everybody with passion, including the young ones. Despite being a commercial farmer of Soutvlei Farm, Aviwe continues to show more passion and he is taking the world of farming by storm and is making strategic investments in the way he approaches the sector.

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development officials visited Soutvlei Farm at Somerset East near Port Elizabeth in Eastern Cape Province. The purpose of the visit was to profile the farm on their production, farming commodity and their challenges that they are facing when practicing farming.

Under the guidance and vast experience of his father, Harry, Gxotiwe farms with sheep, chicory and lucerne on 2 340 ha land. He is a keen and passionate farmer who has 1 500 sheep. They secured an off-take agreement with Chicory SA who in turn process the chicory and supply to Nestlé. Their first lucerne planting

was on 30 hectares in October and November 2017 and it is 'first-grade' lucerne. In South Africa, chicory is grown almost solely for the root. This is cut into cubes which are dried, roasted and milled and used for blending with coffee. Chicory is also consumed fresh, usually in salads and leftover parts of the root which are too small to be cubed are sold as livestock feed.

With the assistance of his hardworking dad, Harry, he received Soutvlei through the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) land reform programme. Currently, he employs 12 permanent workers and one specialises in sheep.

He moves his sheep from camp to camp to make sure that pastures grow well. As part of social responsibilities, the farm supplies to the abattoir, local market and wool industry in Port Elizabeth. They also supply to communities during weddings and funerals. The farm has invested a lot in their labour as there are showers and houses for their workers.

Gxotiwe said that they made major investments in some of their

Gxotiwe shows real passion in farming

dilapidated infrastructure on the farm. They bought three medium-sized tractors and lots of other implements. “We need this kind of exposure from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development because I know that there are programmes that can assist

us as farmers. We are doing well to manage the farm and make sure that everything run smoothly,” he said.

Gxotiwe and the manager of the farm, Bertus Van Vuuren, won the trophy from Chicory SA as proof to show that they are doing their best.



People from as far as KwaZulu-Natal come to buy their fresh goats. Mr Gxotiwe is now 62 years old and is grooming his son to enable him to understand everything about livestock before he retires in three years' time.

Father and son making a living through livestock farming

By Samuel Kgatla

Harry and Athi Gxotiwe are a great combination who are making great progress in livestock farming. They are the owners of Woobu Farm near Alice in the Eastern Cape Province. The farm has almost 200 cattle (Boran, Pinzgauer, Nguni and crossbreed), 93 goats and also plant lucerne on 165 ha of land. They employ five permanent workers. Before the arrival of officials from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, they had just sold 40 goats—a clear indication that demand is high in the area as people from as far as KwaZulu-Natal come to buy their fresh goats and cattle. Goat farming has got a market in the area.

Woobu farm was first founded in 1970 under the name Tyum Citrus Estate Farm which mainly farmed with citrus (oranges). Mr Gxotiwe Senior used to work as a production manager and was seconded to Assoil Oil Project to work as a manager. The then Department of Agriculture privatised the citrus farm to the black Ciskei government. There are two dams on the farm; one of which has been handed to the community

In 2004 they managed to get a lease agreement of 30 years. All citrus on the

farm was de-bushed and the farming commodity was changed to livestock farming; which is why they now farm with cattle and goats. They sell their goats and cattle to the abattoir, butcheries, at auctions and local markets. They are making sure that the community benefits with regards to employment and the farm assists during burials, sporting events, sponsorship, donation of foods and continues to supply villages with water.

Mr Gxotiwe tried to acquire the farm but the issue of collateral was a challenge; which resulted in the Land Bank not being able to assist him. The 62 year-old is now planning to groom his son to enable him to understand everything about livestock before he retires in three years' time. The son, who operates as a manager on the farm, is currently busy with a course in livestock production although he already has plenty of experience in goat and cattle farming. He fenced his farm with 10 km fence on a national road.

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Bayer ensures that products and services are within reach of customers

To assist farmers in rural areas in South Africa, Bayer recently launched seven new DEKALB-branded container shops in Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Eastern Cape to ensure that smallholder producers can have easy access to input supplies.

Smallholder farmers form the basis of many rural communities in South Africa and according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, these farmers easily produce about 80% of the food available to these communities. As important as this sector is, it still faces many challenges, one of which is easy access to inputs early in the season.

“To Bayer it is important that our products and services are within reach of our customers. We want to create value through innovative products and

services, and sustainable development. To have these container shop close to our customers is one way of honouring this pledge and delivering on our social and ethical responsibilities,” said Kobus Steenekamp, commercial lead for Bayer Crop Science in South Africa.

Reuse and recycling ensures sustainability

Reusing shipping containers and turning them into buildings, is a novel way of contributing towards sustainable use of resources. Using these containers prevent the use of bricks, cement and the production of additional steel, of which the production is a major source of CO2. It is said that the reusing of a container could help to save about 3 500kg of steel. Containers are furthermore safe movable and clean structures and acceptable structures for business in the local communities.



Reusing shipping containers and turning them into buildings, is a novel way of contributing towards sustainable use of resources.

Farms attacks rise with 60% this past decade

Farm attacks rise with 60% this past decade – TLU SA presents bi-annual agriculture crime statistics. These statistics were announced during the organisation’s presentation on farm attacks and murders.

According to TLU SA’s official Incidents Report updated since 1990, 1 125 farm attacks were reported between 1990 and 1999. Between 2000 and 2009 an increase of 22% - 1 407 attacks – were reported and in the past nine years from 2010 to 2019 a rise of 60% - 2 616 attacks – were reported.

During the corresponding time farm murders increased from 637 (1990 to 1999) with 22% (799 murders) between 2000 and 2009. In the next nine years until 2019 there were 586 farm murders.

“These statistics are shocking. But for TLU SA these are not just statistics,” said Maj-Genl Chris van Zyl, deputy general manager of TLU SA. “It is 2 022 members of our farming community murdered since 1990. It is 5 148 times families and farmworkers feared for their lives during a farm attack.

TLU SA is aware that crime across the country is out of control with 56

murders taking place every day. According to Dr Johan Burger of the Institute for Security Studies the past six years saw an increase of 17% in murders and more than 20 000 people murdered during 2017/18.

Dr. Burger today shed more light on the extent of crime in South Africa with a focus on the brutality of these crimes.

In light thereof it is important for the farming community to know when and how to act during a farm attack and what the consequence of the act would be. Dr Llewellyn Curlewis, law expert from the University of Pretoria shared the reasonable person’s behaviour relevant to the common law.

The farming community should further focus on using technology, communication and information; and the use of contingency plans as implemented by TLU SA already.