



**Media Release**

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### **AgriSETA provides funding for 751 black livestock farmers to commercial status**

From Small Scale farmers to commercial farmers, this is something AgriSETA's CEO takes so seriously, he backed it not only by running for it in his first ever Comrades Marathon, but put AgriSETA's money where its mouth is. In the biggest black farmer development project to date in South Africa, 751 livestock farmers completed a comprehensive training programme presented by a partnership between AgriSETA, Agri Enterprises, and the International Agricultural Academy for Africa (i3A).

Part of our programme was to address things like financial literacy, [something that] basically doesn't exist in many of these [farmer] cases.

Training and development lead at Agri Enterprises, Sulaimaan Patel, said they focused on three critical livestock value chains: wool sheep, particularly in the Eastern Cape, beef cattle and goat farming. Collectively, these industries contribute about R30 billion per year to the South African economy.

Patel said the project focused on livestock farming because of its significant cultural value.

"Given the cultural significance, there are large numbers of animal units that belong to rural farmers. So, we deemed it appropriate to start off with livestock farmers given that most rural farming activities are focused on livestock," he explained.

While most of Mzansi's agricultural transformation initiatives are focused on the advancement of small-scale farmers, the "Farming for tomorrow" project was **designed to strategically position black farmers for large-scale, commercial success.**

In addition to the honing of their technical skills, participants received leadership, management, and entrepreneurial training which included business planning, identifying opportunities, market access, and understanding company structures.

Patel described this as "the most comprehensive approach" to assist up-and-coming farmers to date. Extensive research was done on the operations of participating farms. "These farmers were located [in various parts of] the country. There was quite a comprehensive selection criterion. This was based on current size of operation,

number of employees, current market access and linkage to the Agri SA partnership network.”

From the data collected, the Agri SA and i3A teams also assisted farmers to officially register their companies with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC). WhatsApp and social media platforms were also used to distribute weekly and monthly updates.

This, after project research revealed that farmers did not have sufficient market information on, among others, pricing strategies, market access opportunities, commodity fluctuations, funding opportunities, and disease outbreaks in their respective areas.

Meanwhile, Agri Enterprises commended AgriSETA chief executive Dr Innocent Sirovha and his team for financing the project.

For AgriSETA, this points directly to the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan (AAMP) which emphasises the importance of “inclusive growth” by increasing farmer participation. It also underscored the significance of growing the contribution of black farmers and black-owned agribusinesses across the value chain.

“AgriSETA is therefore key to ensuring this, not only from a financial perspective, but from an ethical point of view. However, we cannot do it alone and strategic partnerships such as this, with Agri SA and Agri Enterprises, help us fast-track what we call absolute empowerment,” said our CEO, Dr Sirovha.

Mentorship remained key for successful skills transfer, and to ensure continuity of biodiversity in the agricultural sector.

Livestock farming is no less scientific than plant production, as to produce good strong livestock requires similar expertise, albeit in a different discipline of the sector. So, to have a mentorship programme to train young black farmers serves not only to upskill them, but to improve the quality of the livestock we produce.

[Part duplicated from a story crafted by Food for Mzansi and additions by AgriSETA’s head of marketing and communications]