

**REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT,
LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS: "PRE-TAKING LEGISLATURE TO THE PEOPLE"
OVERSIGHT VISITS - LEKWA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, GERT SIBANDE DISTRICT, 24 – 25
AUGUST 2016 (DARDLEA)**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature (the Legislature) has a responsibility in terms of Section 118 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, (the Constitution) to facilitate public involvement in its legislative and other processes. In terms of Section 133 (3) (b) of the Constitution, Members of the Executive Council of a province must provide the Legislature with full and regular reports concerning matters under their control. Section 115 (a) and (b) of the Constitution empowers the Legislature to (a) "*summon any person to appear before it to give evidence on oath or affirmation, or to produce documents*" and sub-section (b) states that "*the Legislature or any of its Committees may require any person or provincial institution to report to it*".

The "Taking Legislature to the People" is a project in line with section 59 and 118 of the Constitution which states that both the National Parliament and Provincial Legislature must facilitate public involvement in the processes of the Legislature and the committees, to ensure '*effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government*'. The purpose of the TLP is to reach out to the communities and to enable the people to have access to the Legislature, especially people who are living in the deep rural areas. The Legislature seeks to hear the voice of the people and to ascertain whether provincial government delivers services effectively and efficiently within the respective municipalities.

In carrying out its oversight and public participation mandate, the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental affairs (the Committee) conducted oversight visits in the Lekwa Local Municipality (the municipality) from 24 – 25 August 2016. This was done in preparation of the "Pre-Taking the Legislature to the People" (TLP) event, which will take place from 12 to 16 September 2016.

This report reflects the issues that emanated from the oversight activities during the said period, which will need the further intervention of the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs.

2. PURPOSE OF THE OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

The Committee assessed progress on projects that are funded by the department as reflected on the department's APP. The Committee wanted to interact with project beneficiaries and ensure that the department's delivery of core mandated services is fast tracked.

3. METHOD OF WORK

As per the Legislature programme, committees of the Economic Cluster had Pre-TLP oversight visits planned from 24 – 25 August 2016 at Lekwa Local Municipality. The Committee informed the regional offices of the department about the Pre-TLP oversight visits to be conducted and the purpose thereof. Invitations were sent to the department, Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (Mpumalanga Office) and the Municipality requesting them to be part of the visits.

- On 16 August 2016, the Committee Researchers briefed the members of the Committee on the projects to be visited. Subsequently, the Vukuzenzele and Tsotetsi farming projects were selected to be the projects to be visited by the Committee.
- On 24 August 2016, the Committee conducted oversight visits at Vukuzenzele Farming Project.
- On 25 August 2016, the Committee conducted oversight visits at Tsotetsi farming project

4. OBSERVATIONS

The Committee observed the following:

- The socio-economic study conducted by the Legislature in the municipality in 2011, found that women and youth are involved in farming, however, on a small scale due to limited access to farming land. The majority of the people that contribute in the agricultural sector of the municipality are elder people dominated by males.
- The Committee noted that the status quo still remains in 2016, with limited youth and women participating in the agricultural sector. Limited access to farming land remains a

key challenge for the community members of Lekwa Local Municipality. This is despite the commitments made by the provincial government and particularly the DARDLAE in 2011, whereby the MEC indicated that people will be assisted to get access to land.

- The poor working relationship between the DARDLEA and DRDLR is of a concern in terms of supporting projects.
- The Project Manager from the department responsible for Lekwa Local Municipality accompanied the Committee on the oversight visits.
- The Provincial Head of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform tendered an apology due to a MINTEC meeting that was taking place on the same day. Officials from Recapitalisation and Property Management sections of the DRDLR were delegated to attend.

5. OVERSIGHT VISITS ON GOVERNMENT PROJECTS

5.1. VUKUZENZELE FARMING PROJECT

5.1.1. Project Background

- This is a land reform farm that was transferred by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform to 7 CPA members in 2007.
- The farm is 947 hectares in extent with 482 hectares used as grazing land, 171ha arable land, and 120 hectares as established pasture. The land use includes cattle, goat, pigs and grain production.

5.1.2. Infrastructure

- The project has a dairy structure which was previously used for commercial milk production. The dairy structure is currently used for pig production, as a means of maintaining cash flow in the farm.
- The farm has a river stream and one (1) functional borehole.
- The farm also has a boundary fence which is in good condition; however, the grazing camps are not properly demarcated.

5.1.3. Support Provided by the DARDLEA

- The department reported that the project has been supported with 31 Nguni cattle through the Masibuyele Esibayeni Programme (MESP) project in 2012. The Nguni cattle have increased to a total of 96.
- Furthermore, the department reported that the project was affected by the recent Elnino Drought on both animal and crop production. However, it was supported with bales and feed supplements through the departmental Drought Relief Program.
- All the Nguni cattle have been dipped and treated by the clinical service official from the department.
- There is no specific training that was provided by the department to the project beneficiaries. The project beneficiaries, however, receive regular visits from Agricultural Research Council as part of Kaonafatso ya Dikgomo Scheme.

5.1.4. Challenges

The following challenges were noted by the Committee:

- The project is still waiting for the recap grant funding that they applied for from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform. There has not been any feedback to date on the recap grant funding.
- The arable land is not optimally utilised. The project does not have tractors and implements to plough on the field and relies on the Masibuyele Emasimini programme to assist them which is sometimes received very late during the planting season.
- Market remains a challenge for the project. It was reported that the Nguni cattle breed weigh less and therefore makes it difficult for the farmers to get some returns in the market.

5.1.5 The Committee deliberated with the DARDLEA, DRDLR and the project beneficiaries at Vukuzenzele Farming Project. The following was noted from the deliberations:

- The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform acknowledged receipt of the application for recap grant funding from the project beneficiaries and reported that the

application was still in the process of being considered. Furthermore, the department reported that a budget will be allocated in the 2017/18 financial year for the project.

- There seemed to be confusion regarding the lease expiry date. Project beneficiaries reported that the lease agreement was expiring in September 2016. The DRDLR reported that it was expiring in September 2017. Project beneficiaries raised a concern that there was no communication from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform regarding the renewal of the lease agreement.
- The DRDLR was not properly supporting the project. Shortage in human resources was reported to be a challenge in the department.
- The project beneficiaries raised a concern that the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform telephonically promised to deliver the irrigation system to the farm, but to date, nothing has been delivered onsite. The DRDLR reported that when the overall assessment of the farm was done, the irrigation system was not included in the assessment. In addition, they reported that only the land was assessed and it was found to be at a cost of R8 200 000.00. This cost was excluding the irrigation system.
- The DARDLEA made a promise that the project will be assisted with mechanisation through the Masibuyele Emasimini Strategy for the project to be able to optimally utilise the arable land.

5.1.6. Findings

After the interaction with the DARDLEA, DRDLR and the project beneficiaries, the Committee made the following findings:

- a) The DRDLR does not properly support the project. The project applied for recap funding in 2007 but to date they have not received feedback from the DRDLR.
- b) There seems to be a lack of working relationship between the DRDLR and the DARDLEA in terms of providing support to the project.
- c) The DARDLEA confirmed that the project lacks capital funding to utilize the arable land for crop production and committed to assist the project with mechanization that will enable the project to optimally utilize the arable land.

5.1.7. Recommendations

The Committee therefore recommends that:

- The Head of Department must before the main TLP event, which will take place from 12 September 2016, arrange a meeting with the provincial head from the DRDLR and together attend to the challenges affecting the project and also address the issue of the irrigation system.
- The MEC must raise the concerns that are affecting the project in the next MINMEC meeting with the Minister responsible for DRDLR.
- The department must submit a plan detailing how the project will be supported with mechanisation through the Masibuyele Emasimini Strategy during the 2016/17 financial year.

5.2. Tsotetsi Family CPA

5.2.1. Background

The farm is located 30km away from Standerton on the Morgenzon road and it was bought through LRAD in September 2009. The project has 7 beneficiaries registered as a cooperative and one project leader that is within the youth age category. The leader of the project has shown passion on farming as he is working full time on the farm.

5.2.2. Support Provided by the DARDLEA

- The animals are in good health and condition as the project has benefitted bales and feed supplements through the departmental drought relief program.
- The project leader indicated that the department assists the project with advices, trainings and veterinary services.
- The farm has a very good production history and a good production potential for future expansion and sustainability.

5.2.3. Infrastructure

The farm has been provided with a water tank and a stand.

5.2.4. Challenges

- The dam capacity or water level has significantly declined due to drought conditions and has led to insufficient water access.
- The grazing camps are not properly demarcated.
- Shortage of sheep handling equipment and old sheep kraal

5.2.5. The Committee deliberated with the DARDLEA and the project beneficiaries at Tsotetsi Family CPA. The following was noted from the deliberations:

- The project leader reported that as part of expanding the project they have applied for a loan from MEGA of R350 000.00 which is payable in an instalment of R100 000.00 per year to add more sheep and to rebuild the kraal.
- MEGA made a commitment that the project will be assisted with the required funds and a report will be provided to the Committee before the main TLP event.
- The project leader reported that the project has applied for recap grant funding from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform. He raised a concern that to date, no response has been received from the department. MEGA made a commitment that the project will be assisted to make a follow up with the DRDLR.
- There seemed to be good working relationship between the project beneficiaries and the project leader displayed a high level of commitment to the farm.
- In overall, the project has a good production potential for future expansion and sustainability.

5.2.6. Findings

After the interaction with the DARDLEA, MEGA and the project beneficiaries, the Committee made the following findings:

- a) The project applied for recap funding but to date they have not received feedback from the DRDLR.
- b) The project has applied for a loan from MEGA of R350 000.00 which is payable in an installment of R100 000.00 per year to add more sheep and to rebuild the kraal.

5.2.7. Recommendations

The Committee therefore recommends that:

- a) The Head of Department must before the main TLP event, which will take place from 12 September 2016, arrange a meeting with the provincial head from the DRDLR and together attend to the challenges affecting the project.
- b) The department must before the main TLP event make a follow up with the CEO from MEGA on whether the loan has been approved and properly inform the project beneficiaries.

6. CONCLUSION

The Chairperson would like to express his gratitude to all the Honorable Members of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs for their attendance and active participation during the Pre-TLP Programme. He further wishes to thank the department, the DRDLR and the Legislature staff for providing support to the Committee

Unless otherwise stated, the department must implement the House Resolutions and provide a progress report on all issues raised by **07 September 2016**.



HON. D DUBE (MPL)

01/09/2016

DATE

**CHAIRPERSON: PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, LAND
AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**