

14 Nov - 20 Nov 2008

# Temo news

E-Newsletter of the Limpopo Department of Agriculture



LIMPOPO  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Temo News is published by the Sub-Branch Communication and Liaison Services: Tel: 015 294 3000  
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## Limpopo farmers to benefit from Chinese visit

By Samson Mabunda

Last month, Premier Sello Moloto with a team that included MEC For Agriculture in Limpopo, Mme Dikeledi Magadzi, farmers, Limpopo Department of Agriculture's (LDA) Head, Mr Bigman Maloa and senior government officials visited China on a trade and investment mission. This trade visit focused on economic opportunities on mining, tourism and agriculture.

Concerning agriculture according to the General Manager for Sustainable Resource Management within the LDA Mr Mortimer Manny, it

was a follow up visit to strengthen technical relations and explore further areas in agriculture related technology within the existing bilateral relations.

With the electricity shortage and its rising costs in South Africa, the delegation met and discussed with suppliers of alternative energy source technologies particularly solar energy. In the light of this, discussions were held with Farbol, one of the major companies dealing with solar energy equipment. Solar energy has a great potential for Limpopo farmers as an alternative source to electricity especially irrigation farming.

This company has started with distribution of its products in Gauteng and is willing to spread out to Limpopo.

LDA continues to engage the company on solar power and the company will be invited to Limpopo in 2009 to assess business opportunities. The interactions also looked at the possible ventures on engineering and water drilling services, thus specialist companies were engaged thereof.

Centre areas in Vhembe and Sekhukhune Districts. Since there are water bodies in these areas, a number of production and processing activities could take place. Envisaged activities will not be limited to crop production and processing, but will also bring in aquaculture.

The design would enhance linkage of activities and ensure that these activities support each other. Crop production for biodiesel would support animal production for example; as animal feed rich in protein and starch would be derived from the cake which remained after the biodiesel processing. On the other hand, the

agricultural training centres will offer various needed training.

Furthermore, farmers will benefit from the existing technical agreement reached with a major tractor company, Foton, with specific reference to agricultural machinery, implements and training in Limpopo. Foton will send its trainers to provide training to tractor operators and mechanics at the Limpopo's two Agricultural Training Centres; Madzivandila and Tompi Seleka.

Business opportunities on ethanol produced from maize and research on rice cultivars for various markets were deliberated upon. An ethanol company is willing to collaborate and exchange with Limpopo on ethanol technology.



The Limpopo delegation interacting with their potential Chinese business partners.

A Service Level agreement was signed with CAMCO, an engineering organisation relating to the provision of engineering technical services. The agreement will see LDA Engineers sent to China for training and Chinese Engineers coming to Limpopo to provide technical support. This will open opportunities for enhancing the much needed engineering capacity in Limpopo.

It is hoped that the Chinese engineers will help strengthen the agricultural industrial clusters by providing expertise on planning and designs, particularly for both the Nandoni and Nebo hubs. This includes the Nandoni Dam, Madzivandila Agricultural Training Centre, the Flag Boshielo Dam and Tompi Seleka Agricultural Training

# COMPOST MAKING IN TZANEEN

The community of Tzaneen witnessed the launch of Nkomamonta Organic Farmers Co-operative in the Mopani District yesterday. The co-operative produces organic compost from tree leaves and plants. It was established in 2003 by 34 farmers which included seventeen youth, thirteen men and four women. The Greater Tzaneen local municipality has granted the co-operation a permission to utilize the site that they operate on for five years and it will also be getting free services such as water and electricity for the next five years. It operates on scale of 1211 ha, currently 505 ha of land are under production and 4000 ha needs to be debushed. Each farmer produces their own compost.

Manager at Greater Tzaneen municipality said this has been an integrated approach achieved by Greater Tzaneen municipality, LIBSA, Greater Tzaneen Economic Development Agency (GTEDA), Trade and Investment Limpopo (TIL), LEDED and LDA through Tzaneen sub-branch. She further said that one farmer has been assisted with a 10 ha drip irrigation system from the Department of Agriculture(LDA) and their also busy assisting two co-operative members with shed nettings and irrigation systems.

LIBSA has purchased a compost making

facility to the amount of R 600 000 and has also donated a drip irrigation system covering half ha for each farmer. The co-operative has

process of making the compost. Only tree leaves and

By Sophy Maponya



Workers busy preparing the organic material for processing

plants are being used and are mixed with water and after seven days water will be used again.

Mr.Rammalo added that sometimes hoendermess is also mixed. He cautioned that if hoendermess are beign used extra care should be taken because they can burn the compost before it is ready, and this might in turn burn plant or crops. He further said that compost making period differs because if the hoendermess are used it will take two months

for the compost to be ready and if they are not used it takes three months to be ready.

Their clients include ZZ2, farmers from far as Dendron, Hoedspruit and local community farmers and members. Mr.Rammalo said they always advise their clients as to which compost they should use. He said the demand for the compost is very high as sometimes their clients can buy about 10 lines of compost which is eighty meters long. And this forces them to sometimes work on the weekends.

managed to secure a market contract with one of South African supply chain that is well known for selling organic produce, Woolworths with a contract and have a trading code (52). One agronomist from Woolworths and two extension officers from LDA have been assigned to the co-operative for provision of technical support.

Mr. Sam Rammalo who is working at one of compost making site for since it began said that said the compost they make is organic and there are no chemicals that are used during the

## PERSEVERANCE IS THE MOTHER OF SUCCESS



Kgoshi L Phasha adressing the crowd at the fetakgomo farmers day

The story of Ikageng Vegetable Project is a true example that indeed nothing can be achieved without hard work. Having started the project in the early 2000; it is only now that members of the project are starting to reap the rewards of their hard work and dedication. Had it not been the efforts of the Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA) through the Participatory Extension Approach (PEA), Ikageng would by now be another failed project. The project held farmers day

event at Fetakgomo Local Municipality in the Greater Sekhukhune District to celebrate yet another milestone that it has achieved as well as sharing information with other emerging farmers.

Outlining the background and how they started wayback in 2001 with PEA, Me NA Morwasi narrated how excited they were thinking that LDA will give them money to buy fancy cars and build houses, but she got it all wrong, all they got was information. "The difference between the present government and the previous one is that the present government consider the people's needs and what benefits them in the near future, while the previous Regime would just give especially rural farmers Maize Seeds without making proper surveys to inspect whether the area is suitable for Maize production" echoed Me Morwasi during the speech. Ikageng is one of the Pilot projects that PEA was introduced to after several Workshops and Trainings that were conducted by the likes Mr KP Molatlhegi and Mr PH Mashiane. Currently the project is regarded as the pride and Joy of the Province because of its success. This is after they have recently signed a lucrative contract with Simba to produce potatoes under the wings of Mr A Creighton. This is after they planted two hundred (200) hectares at stydkraal having started with only five hectares.

Mr Creighton concurred with what Me Morwasi had earlier alluded, and the fact that information and perseverance are the tools required to succeed if one

intends to be a farmer, he went further to encourage

By Nape Masemola

Members of the community to start Farming and also emphasize his willingness to assist underprivileged communities. He told the Audience that they are better resourced and they will carry all the cost of Production and operating expenses as long as there is enough Land to work on, and they are ready to share profits with communities just as they did with Tswelopele in Tubatse, Ikageng in Fetakgomo and others around the Province. Kgoshi L Phasha encouraged community members to utilize the available land to Farm as Farming is the only weapon to reduce the escalation of Poverty rate that the World is currently facing. He went on to congratulate members of the Project for their tireless efforts and acknowledged that indeed it has been long and that he is not surprised that the Project has grown. Kgoshi Phasha told the gathered Crowd that lack of money and resources never discouraged the members of Ikageng to continue with the project. "Members of Ikageng were armed with information and perseverance and not laziness when they started and that is why we all gathered here to celebrate with them" so said the honorable Kgoshi in conclusion.

The event ended with presentation of Certificate to Farmers who successfully completed their training with Tompi –Seleka.