

Crop planting drive to improve KZN food security

In an effort to create vibrant agricultural communities and improve food security, the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government will this week launch a multimillion-rand Crops Planting Programme in Mkhanyakude District Municipality.



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The R160m programme will see the provincial government providing tractors, farming implements and seeds to hundreds of subsistence and smallholder farmers in all 11 district municipalities in the province.

The launch on Thursday will be led by KwaZulu-Natal Premier Sihle Zikalala, members of the Provincial Executive Committee, traditional leaders and mayors.

Speaking ahead of the launch, the MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Bongsi Sithole-Moloi, said planting crops is one of the provincial flagship programmes that is expected to transform the lives of many small farmers who struggle to produce adequate crops due to the lack of operational farming resources.

"We have decided to launch it in September, which is the start of the planting season. We are excited that the head of the provincial government, will be part of the launch," said Sithole-Moloi.

Farmer register kicks-off

Meanwhile, the technical committee working on Producer Farmer Register (PFR) has started with the pilot project launched recently in Mpumalanga.

The committee started with the collection of data, where they visited 18 projects based in Ehlanzeni and Bohlabela District Municipalities.

The project aimed at collecting stats on commercial and non-commercial farmers was established by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), assisted by Statistics South Africa.

Launched in 2019, the project will run until 2021 and is expected to improve the inaccurate and misrepresented statistics of farmers in the non-commercial sector, in particular, smallholder farmers across the country.

It will establish the number of farms, size of farms, crop types being farmed in different geographic areas, and agricultural inputs such as irrigation usage.

The establishment of the Producer/Farmer Register for South Africa is going to address the following areas for the sector and the country:

- Improve the inaccurate and misrepresented statistics of farmers in the non-commercial sector, in particular smallholder farmers across the country;
- Build a basis from which the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (AFF) sector performance can be measured in the non-commercial sector;
- Enable the development of indicators in line with Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) and National Development Plan (NDP). These indicators will help to identify progress in achieving government outcomes;
- Accurately identify smallholder farmers in terms of their geographic distribution and agricultural activities;
- Establish an up-to-date frame of reference for conducting agricultural sector surveys in the country;
- Track the impact of agricultural support amongst beneficiaries in agriculture and development of strategies to help producers overcome the challenges related to natural and unnatural disasters; and
- Account for beneficiaries in agriculture who are entitled to support services.

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