

N West moves to digital livestock identification, traceability system

The North West Province will soon upgrade the paper-based system of tracing animals to a modern and computerised livestock identification and traceability system (LITS).



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North West Agriculture and Rural Development MEC, Desbo Mohono, said this is in an effort to align the agricultural sector of the province with the developments in technologies globally.

LITS is a national IT database system that will be used to trace animals and animal products from farm to fork/plate.

Tabling the department's Budget Vote at the Provincial Legislature on Thursday, Mohono said LITS is a system that traces not only origin of animals, but also chemicals that animals have been subjected to.

She noted that the system has a great recompense to use "in that it helps disease control".

"With this technology, one can prevent or know ahead of time the disease status of animals that are allowed to come into the province. The system can also significantly reduce response time during animal disease outbreak by helping to contain the introduction and spread of contagious diseases.

"Introduction of LITS technologies within the agricultural supply chain promises not only increased efficiencies through enhanced data management and more robust traceability, but also enhanced food safety protocols," Mohono said.

Mohono also highlighted that the use of LITS will open up exotic markets for farmers that were previously closed due to lack of tracing, and identifying the origin of animals and animal products by the farm where elementary activities can be accounted for.

She added that the system would help to monitor the use of banned substances and antibiotics.

"For all of these reasons, the introduction of this system will benefit all animal and food producers and processors. The process has started wherein operators are being registered in the national database.

"This will be followed by registering farms and facilities before individual animals are registered. The system is expected to provide information on animals and animal products and a reliable monitoring mechanism that will strengthen government's regulatory function in the livestock sub-sector," Mohono explained.

Mohono further announced that the department would embark on a process of digitising administration of its veterinary laboratory services, which will be done through the introduction of Laboratory Information Management Systems (LIMS).

R11m allocated for assistant agricultural advisors appointments

Meanwhile, Mohono announced that a total of 443 Assistant Agricultural Advisors would be appointed this year on a three-year contract to bolster its extension and advisory services.

This follows a pronouncement made by both President Cyril Ramaphosa and Minister Thoko Didiza on the appointment of 10 000 Assistant Agricultural Extension Advisors across the country.

"Out of this 10 000, 443 will be coming from the North-West Province. Extension and advisory services is the coalface platform for the department's interaction, liaison and support to farmers and communities.

"Agricultural advisory through this service are at the forefront of service delivery and are the face of the sector to clients and the public. They play an important role as information intermediaries between scientists and farmers, translating, and adding value to agronomic and economic information of use in agricultural management decision making," the MEC said.

She said an amount of R11.1m from the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme will be used in this regard.

"During the 2021/22 financial year alone, the department managed to support a total of 7 992 smallholder producers across the province with agricultural advisory services, through the Extension Recovery Programme (ERP)."

As part of contributing towards addressing the triple challenges of poverty; unemployment and inequality in the province, Mohono said the department managed to create an overall of 979 jobs through Land Care Programme; Rural Development initiatives, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) as well as through the Environment and Culture (EAC) Sector Work Opportunities.

She said that at the end of the 2022/23 financial year, a total of 1,147 work opportunities would be created throughout the province.

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