

Press Release: Minister van Rensburg motivates new farmers on export initiatives

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Illustrations: Photo by Wouter Kriel

W-MarketAccess1: "From left to right: Bongiswa Matoti, Western Cape Department of Agriculture, Director: Agricultural Economics; Gerrit van Rensburg, Western Cape Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development; Jan Lefleur, Ceres Crispy Farming; Alec Abrahams, De Hoop Farm in the Hex River Valley".

Body: "Competing on the export market means you have to up your game to the next level" Western Cape Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Gerrit van Rensburg, told new farmers who took part in the Department of Agriculture's European Union Market Access initiative in March this year. Van Rensburg addressed the farmers at a debriefing function held at Elsenburg, outside Stellenbosch last night.

The Department of Agriculture has budgeted R2 million for the development of new markets for the Provinces' farmers for this financial year. The European visit of ten farmers cost R600 000, which Van Rensburg said should be seen as an investment in the future of our agricultural economy. "Money invested in people yield much higher returns than any investment on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange", Van Rensburg said. He added that wine and fruit farmers were able to clinch deals on the trip. "This is our proof of money well spent".

Van Rensburg said the Western Cape Government wants new farmers to be successful. "Your success will create more job opportunities and earn valuable foreign exchange for the province. Through your success we will built and expand the Open Opportunity society for All."

The group of farmers presented feedback reports and agreed there is enormous potential for Fair Trade or Organic accredited export produce to the EU from South Africa. The main challenge is being able to supply the required quantities at the desired levels of quality. Wine, fruit and Rooibos tea was mentioned as products that are in demand in European and Scandinavian countries. The farmers stressed the importance of knowing what overseas customers want, and to focus on supplying exactly that. Specific fruit size and flavoured Rooibos tea was mentioned in this regard.

Van Rensburg agreed with the farmers that it is important to differentiate our products from those of our competitors, as we need to create incentives for buyers to choose us above them. He said that the Department of Agriculture will assist farmers with accreditation processes, as this is a very effective strategy in creating differentiation.

Van Rensburg warned the group that BEE is not an effective marketing tool when trying to penetrate the global market. "Transformation and BEE is our South African in-house business. Out there on the world markets, it is only quality and good service that counts. It is the Department of Agriculture's responsibility to support you through the transformation process so that you are able to compete with the required quality products on the global markets", Van Rensburg told the group.

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