

30 Limpopo farmers receive title deed to state land

The title deed to 189ha of agricultural land recently handed over to 30 black farmers in the Tafelkop community in Limpopo by President Cyril Ramaphosa will give the farmers access to production loans and help them become commercial farmers.

This was according to Annelize Crosby, head of land and legal at Agri SA, who said the handing over of title deeds for state land to black farmers was long overdue and was welcomed by Agri SA.

“This should happen on a much larger scale, as there are many black farmers all over our country who have been farming on state land for decades,” she said.

Crosby added, however, that it was not the only obstacle they faced; market access and repayment capability, as well as a lack of extension services, also posed a challenge.

“Title deeds, however, will not only give these farmers tenure security, but enable them to use their properties as collateral for loans and provide an incentive for investment in the farm.”

According to a statement released by the Presidency, the farmers had been successfully farming a variety of agricultural produce on the land for the past 25 years, and the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure had transferred the land on a gratis basis for land redistribution purposes.

In 2000, the then Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries had entered into lease agreements with the Tafelkop Farmers' Association in terms of the Land Redistribution through Agricultural Development programme.

In 2009, the former Limpopo Department of Agriculture recommended to the Department of Public Works (as the custodian of the land) that the

land be transferred to the farmers who had been in occupation since 1996.

The land, which was now officially registered in the names of the farmers, was valued at more than R25,5 million.

Ramaphosa said during his address at the handover ceremony that a total of 32 households were supported by the land, and farming activities provided employment to 128 permanent workers, and up to 320 seasonal workers.

“The ongoing process now is to formalise their stay on that land in terms of long-term leases (30 years) and to assist them with training and infrastructure where it's not existing or needs to be repaired,” Reggie Ngcobo, spokesperson for the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, said.

He added that the 30 farmers produced tobacco, vegetables and fruit. – *Pieter Dempsey*