



public works
& infrastructure

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**Speech by Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure,
Patricia de Lille at the handing over of title deeds to black
farmers in Groblersdal, Limpopo**

Note to editors: The following speech was delivered by Minister Patricia de Lille at the title deed handover ceremony led by President Cyril Ramaphosa where title deeds were handed over to 30 black farmers from the Tafelkop Farmers Association in Groblersdal, Limpopo on Saturday 22 May 2021.

Embargoed against delivery at 12h00 on 22 May 2021

His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa

Acting Minister in the Presidency, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni

Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform, Thoko Didiza

Minister of Justice, Ronald Lamola

Deputy Minister, Noxolo Kiviet

Premier of the Limpopo Province, Stanley Mathabatha

Sekhukhune District Mayor, Stanley Ramaila

Elias Motsoaledi Local Municipality Mayor, Julia Mathebe

Traditional leaders

Tafelkop Farmers Association Chairperson, Mr Jerry Sefoloshe and members of the Tafelkop Farmers Association and family members

Representatives from the African Farmers Association of South Africa (AFASA)

Government officials

Members of the media

Thôbêla, good morning

It is my singular honour to be here today with our President Cyril Ramaphosa and Cabinet colleagues for this long awaited and momentous occasion to hand over title deeds to the Tafelkop Farmers.

When I saw the history of this case, I immediately instructed officials from Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) to work harder to finalise title deeds registration for the farmers who have waited too long for this land redistribution matter to be finalised.

It brought me great joy and a great sense of relief when we finally received the title deeds from the Deeds Office in February and May this year.

The history of this land redistribution case is long and the journey that Mr Jerry Sefoloshe and his fellow farmers had to endure to become the successful farmers they are today was not easy.

I stand here and I share in the joy that the farmers feel today that finally, they are now the land owners.

We all feel the pride and joy as we see the vast amount of crops the farmers have been farming for years.

Today, as we hand over the title deeds, these proud black farmers in the beautiful province of Limpopo can now fully taste the fruits of our democracy and of their years of labour.

We all know of the sad past we come from with a history of colonial and apartheid governments where black people were denied the right to own property and had property stripped and bulldozed away from them through atrocious mechanisms such as the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the Group Areas Act of 1950.

The legacy of apartheid spatial planning is vicious but it is a legacy that government is working to reverse through accelerating land reform through land restitution, land redistribution, land tenure and expropriation.

At the dawn of our democracy, the democratic government identified the need for land and agrarian reform as a key part of national reconciliation efforts.

Land Redistribution as one of the three elements of land reform is aimed at providing redress to persons and communities dispossessed of their property rights by colonial and apartheid governments.

Over the years, while these processes are slow as government has to follow due process and ensure fairness and a credible land reform programme, we have seen many parcels of land returned to families dispossessed under apartheid legislation.

Coming briefly to the history of this land.

These farms were in the past occupied by the white soldiers who participated in the 2nd World War.

White people who participated in World War 2 were rewarded with farms by the government while people of colour who were part of the 2nd world war only received bicycles.

The white soldiers abandoned the farms in the mid 1980's and the municipality made a Mr Andries Stalls the care taker while the Municipality was planning to allocate the farms to 4 white farmers.

The Tafelkop farmers organised themselves on 14 April 1994 to be registered commercial farmers as the Tafelkop Farmers Association and started to engage Government looking for the correct custodian which was the Department of Public Works (DPW).

In 2000, the then National Department of Agriculture entered into lease agreements, with an option to purchase, with the farmers in terms of Government's Land Redistribution through Agricultural Development program.

In May 2008 as an interim governance measure, pending the transfer of the land from Public Works, the Department of Land Affairs entered into a caretakership agreements with the farmers.

In 2009, the Limpopo Department of Agriculture subsequently requested the DPW to transfer the State land to the identified Tafelkop farmers who had been in occupation of the farms since 1996.

In April 2010, the Department of Public Works acted on this request and the Minister of Public Works approved the gratis transfer of various portions of the Farm Loskop South totalling 189 hectares to the identified black farmers.

On 26 June 2011 National Treasury endorsed the gratis transfer of the land.

In October 2019, the DPWI engaged with the office of the State Attorney to speed up the transfer of the farms to the beneficiaries.

Finally, in February and May 2021, DPWI received the 31 Title Deeds of the subdivided Portions of farm registered in the names of the beneficiaries - the farmers and their spouses.

The value of the 189 hectares of land now officially registered in the names of the farmers is worth more than R25,5 million.

It has been a decades' long journey for the farmers who have successfully farmed various agricultural produce including maize, onions, cabbages, spinach, soya beans and other vegetables as well as cotton and tobacco.

The farmers started out in in the 1990s farming very small quantities of produce of between 5 and 6 tonnes per year but can now produce between up to 60 tonnes of maize per farmer, per year.

The farmers sell their produce to British American Tobacco, cotton to the Loskop Cotton Ginnery, fresh produce to Boxer Stores, Groblersdal Spar and other shopping stores in the region as well as to the Johannesburg and Pretoria Fresh Produce Markets.

The farmers also provide a substantial portion of fresh produce to local school feeding schemes.

Through receiving the title deeds for this land, the farmers intend to form partnerships with investors to expand market access and expand their output and offering.

This will enable them to make a greater economic contribution to the region while expansion of operations will also enable them to create more jobs in the region.

Access to land equals freedom and dignity and will empower the farmers as they finally have ownership status of the land which will enable them to expand and improve their farming activities.

I want to thank the Deputy President, David Mabuza for his leadership in the Inter Ministerial Committee on Land Reform.

Minister Didiza, I must also thank you for your drive to advance the work of land reform and for the support your department has provided to the Tafelkop Farmers and many other emerging farmers across the country.

As the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, we stand ready to support the work of land reform because we must see greater urgency injected into accelerating land reform and bringing about redress, spatial and land justice.

In terms of the land redistribution, in March 2021 I signed off the release of 125 agricultural properties to the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform covering all nine provinces measuring 25 500 hectares in total.

DPWI is pushing and I will ensure that we work harder to finalise more land releases under the land reform programme of government because land reform is urgent.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a very special place for our President.

It was in this province that he became active in the struggle against apartheid and fought for our freedoms.

President Ramaphosa enrolled to study law at the University of the North here in Limpopo in 1972, where he became involved in student politics, joining the South African Student Organisation (SASO) and the Black People's Convention (BPC).

President Ramaphosa has walked a full journey with the people of South Africa and today he leads us as we continue the work of making the freedoms of our democracy a living reality to the people of our great country.

With that, ladies and gentlemen, it is my honour to call President Cyril Ramaphosa to deliver the keynote address.

Ke a leboga. (Thank you)

Modimo ali Segofatse (God Bless you all)

ENDS

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