

LANDBANK ASSISTS COMMUNAL WOOL FARMERS WITH BASIC TRAINING



Building an impactful CSI programme

Land Bank has worked to implement an impactful CSI strategy aligned with its core mandate of creating a more inclusive and equitable sector. **Through its Corporate Social Investment (CSI) programme**, it is supplementing the development financing work being done on a daily basis by reaching out to local communities to facilitate greater participation in the sector by those previously disadvantaged.

Embracing partnerships in agriculture

Land Bank values working relationships with relevant agri-organisations and experts in the communities where we work. During 2017, following consultations with communal woolgrowers and sector experts, Land Bank entered into a partnership with the South African National Woolgrowers Association (NWGA) to roll out a training programme for communal woolgrowers in the Eastern Cape. The programme was delivered in OR Tambo, Amathole, Chris Hani, Alfred Nzo, Mbizana and Joe Gqabi district municipalities. This capacity-building initiative is aimed at not only providing basic flock and breeding management training to the woolgrowers, but also at creating access to local and international markets, so that communal growers are able to grow their businesses sustainably.

A total of 224 training courses were conducted from February 2018 to the end of September 2018 with about 5 300 farmers benefitting from the theoretical and practical exposure in the training areas of Animal Health, Animal Nutrition, Animal Breeding, Shearing Shed Management, Basic Bookkeeping and Administration. These topics were identified by the communal woolgrowers as essential for advancing their business development intent and potential.

Reflections on elements of the courses

Livestock shearing shed management: Some farmers were not aware that kemp in their sheep contributes to contamination and that polypropylene bags, used instead of paper for bale partitions, are a great cause of contamination.

Access to markets: Dr Louis du Pisani, NWGA national manager for Production Advice and Development, said that Eastern Cape communal farmers have been producing wool for decades. When the NWGA first got involved, most of the wool they produced was marketed via the informal market at much lower prices than the formal market prices. As the wool was mostly sold to vendors, one of the most important goals was to create access for the communal producers to the formal market auctions, so they could realise better prices.

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Business administration and bookkeeping: The business of farming and keeping livestock requires that farmers have an understanding of administration and bookkeeping. The NWGA, through its trainers, shared knowledge with farmers on the basic principles of these two aspects. All training participants (including the East Cape Communal Woolgrowers chairman Lawrence Maduna) were also given the opportunity to explain how regional meetings are planned and structured and what their bookkeeping systems look like. According to the chairman of Region 21, Mlondolozu Mnyanga, although regional constitutions are in place, greater support is required in all regions in terms of governance of the communal sheds.

Financial management: According to Patti Myburgh, NWGA Finance and Administration manager, the financial training could be applied to not only the regional shed finances, but also to the participants' personal lives and even their own businesses, involvement with church, school, and other committees. The basic principles of compiling a budget and recording monthly income and expenses (with a well-kept paper trail and filing system) were covered.

This part of the training also covered the roles and responsibilities of the shed's treasurer.

"We support the communal woolgrowers to improve the quality of the flock and to access the formal wool market, so that they advance greater participation in the commercial agricultural sector. This intervention will have a huge socio-economic impact within the participating communities by radically reducing poverty and potentially building sustainable agricultural businesses. Our vision is to see the communal woolgrowers contribute significantly to the growth of the wool sector," says Land Bank's manager for CSI, Lion Phasha.

The way forward: Land Bank will continue to support communal woolgrowers, in partnership with relevant sector development organisations, to advance transformation in the agricultural sector. We plan to build on our partnerships with project partners and communities to enhance a focused farmer development to a selected group of young communal woolgrowers.

CSI focus areas

Land Bank's CSI programme has three distinct focus areas to boost participation within the agricultural sector, including:

- **Food security:** upskill and provide resources to households to improve food security and reduce vulnerability to hunger
- **Employment quality:** capacity building for smallholder farmers to upskill them to pursue sustainable agricultural practices and employment opportunities
- **Sector growth and transformation:** building the agricultural sector skills pipeline focusing on greater youth and women participation

