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CONTENTS

- **Minister's visit to Ghana strengthens bilateral relations**
- **Relationship between Africa and China in agriculture is a partnership of cooperation**
- **Celebrating the International Year of Plant Health**
- **CASP funded farmers happy with the livestock handling facility**
- **Dialogue on Climate Smart Agriculture**

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Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries



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Minister's visit to Ghana strengthens bilateral relations

The Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development was invited to form part of the delegation that would accompany the President on the State Visit at the end of last year. The visit aimed to provide a good opportunity to further strengthen and deepen the good bilateral relations between South Africa and Ghana in the economic sectors including agriculture and agro-processing.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, visited Ghana on a two-day working visit at the invitation of His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana. He was accompanied by a delegation consisting of Ministers and Deputy Ministers, senior government officials, businessmen and women.

All Ministers and Deputy Ministers had an opportunity of meeting their counterparts prior to the meeting of the heads of state.

Minister Didiza and her counterpart, Minister Owusu Afriyie Akoto briefly met at the Jubilee House prior to the presidential talks. Given the investment opportunities in the agricultural and

food sectors, the Minister of Ghana requested Minister Didiza to consider bringing on agri-business delegation to explore investment opportunities set for the growth of their sector.

The official engagements were preceded by a closed session between the Presidents and Minister Didiza also addressed the press at a press conference during her visit to Ghana

President Ramaphosa commended Ghana for implementing the Planting for Food and Jobs Programme and said that South Africa will continue to draw inspiration from them as South Africa is working on boosting the production of food and raw materials for industry and creation of more jobs. Deliberations were concluded by the political agenda that led both presidents to reaffirm their commitment to cooperate at the levels of the African Union, the Commonwealth, and the United Nations and to deepen the shared values of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights and to promote multilateralism and South-South Cooperation.

to p 3

Minister's visit to Ghana strengthens bilateral relations

from p 2

President Ramaphosa outlined the objective of the Business Forum as to strength the historical partnership between Ghana and South Africa, and to explore the untapped economic potential of their relationship.

Parties acknowledge that South Africa is known to be the largest trading partner of Ghana, with the fastest import increase observed between 2016 and 2018. Therefore, both Presidents are keen on planning to connect the west African region and the SADC region as Ghana is a key hub in West Africa, and South Africa as a key hub in Southern Africa. Their talks revolved around the expansion of the scope of the shared, inclusive regional trade. Both Presidents have made a commitment to put in place initiatives that will increase investments in each other's countries. Business deliberations identified agriculture to have a potential for investment with its manufacturing and value added services. South African firms were encouraged to support Ghana's efforts to industrialise and diversify.



Minister Didiza alongside her Ghanaian counterpart Minister Owusu Akoto.

Relationship between Africa and China in agriculture is a partnership of cooperation

Minister Didiza attended the first Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Agriculture (FOCAC). The meeting was held in China, Sanya under the theme “Join Hands for Sustainable Development and a closer New-type China-Africa Partnership in Agriculture” The first FOCAC focused on deepening of China-Africa Cooperation in Agriculture and the establishment of a closer new-type China-Africa partnership in agriculture, in support of Africa realising general food security by 2030.

The forum also discussed modern approaches aimed at addressing food security challenges and exchanged views on potential measures designed towards attaining sustainable agricultural development.

The relationship between Africa and China in agriculture is a partnership of cooperation, rather than that between a donor and its beneficiaries, said Minister Didiza.

Registering an average annual growth of 14 percent, the trade volume of agricultural products between China and Africa increased from 650 million U.S. dollars in 2000 to 6,92 billion

dollars in 2018, said China’s Minister of Agriculture, Minister Han Changfu. There is exciting growth potential, he said, expressing hope that the figure will reach 10 billion dollars within the next decade. However the relationship is not only about trade. According to Han, nearly 10,000 agricultural officials, technicians, farmers and students from African countries receive training in China each year. The China-Africa cooperation sets a prime example of sound South-South Cooperation. China and Africa have similar agricultural background and foundation, therefore the opportunity to conduct result-oriented cooperation through a comprehensive strategic and cooperative partnership is suitably timed.

In terms of trade, South Africa has also had further market access to China for South Africa’s agricultural commodities. Further work on the agricultural trade is unfolding with South Africa expecting to conclude new protocols on exports of South African agricultural commodities to China. It is the hope of Minister Didiza that this inaugural meeting of FOCAC will increase strategic relationships between South Africa, Africa and China

Celebrating the International Year of Plant Health

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development joins other countries in the world to celebrate plant health as part of recognising the importance of plants to our health, animal health, environmental care, biodiversity, social economy, agriculture and rural development.

Plants are the source of life, the source of the very air we breathe (they produce 80% oxygen) and account for 80% of the food we eat. However, according to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations estimates, plant pests and diseases account for losses of up to for 40% of food crops globally and for trade losses in agricultural products worth over US220 billion each year.

Taking into consideration plant health being increasingly under threat owing to pests and diseases, the UN General Assembly declared 2020 the “International Year of Plant Health” (IYPH) to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment and boost economic development. The theme, “Protecting Plants, Protecting Life” was adopted to show the importance of plants to our lives.

Some of the factors that put plant health under threat are climate change and human activities that alter ecosystems, reducing biodiversity and creating new niches where pests can thrive. Increases in international travel and trade can quickly spread pests and diseases around the world, causing great damage to native plants and the environment.

Everyone has a role to play in protecting plants from pests and diseases. The department calls on international travellers and traders to avoid unauthorised importation of plants and plant products. Travelers are urged to declare all plants and plant products at ports of entry.

The department encourages the agricultural fraternity, communities, research institutions, schools, academic institutions and all the citizens to participate in celebrating the International Year of Plant Health 2020 through advocacy and awareness activities such as marathons, concerts, shows, farmer forums, festivals, fares or tree planting ceremonies; public lectures, panel or round-table discussions with government officials, educators, scientists, farmers and private sector representatives.

CASP funded farmers happy with the livestock handling facility

Farmers from Manyeding just outside Kuruman in the Northern Cape praised the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries' Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) for assisting them with the new livestock handling facility. This was witnessed during the visit by CASP officials accompanied by the local colleagues on 12 and 13 February 2020. The purpose of the visit was for the officials to verify compliance and financial assistance given to the projects.

Every now and then DAFF officials visit all CASP funded projects for verification and to make sure what is written in the

reports is what was really given to the farmers.

The livestock handling facility erected in October last year will start operating soon. The local Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development is just waiting for the weighing scale. The facility is going to assist farmers when they want to brand, dehorn and inject their livestock and also when they want to take them to auction. The handling facility has the capacity to handle 50 cattle.

to p 7



DAFF officials engaging with the workers of Manyeding Project in Northern Cape.

CASP funded farmers happy with the livestock handling facility

from p 6

Mr Wesi Elisha is one of the farmers excited about the new livestock handling facility. He mentioned that the structure is going to assist farmers a lot. Elisha was pleased with the structure as he inspected it after it was erected. "I am happy with the facility and it is going to make our lives easier. We have been struggling in the past and this is going to benefit many livestock farmers dealing with cattle, sheep and goats," he said.

He added that a lack of water, no fencing and theft remain their challenges.

Vonani Baloyi from DAFF, who also works on CASP, thanked the officials who visited the projects during the

verification processes. Furthermore, he said they always put farmers first by offering them the assistance they need. "It is our responsibility as officials to make sure we work with the provincial colleagues to help those who are in need of government's help," he said.

Officials also visited the Kgasegonyana Ga-Segonyana Agricultural Cooperative and the Manyeding Fresh Produce Packaging Facility in Manyeding Village. The facility has 149 beneficiaries and produces tomatoes and cucumbers. It has employed 15 workers who are part of the beneficiaries. They supply Pick 'n Pay and Spar supermarkets in Kuruman and also Freshmark in Bloemfontein.



Mr Vonani Baloyi (black t-shirt) led the CASP team during their visit to the projects around Kuruman.

Dialogue on Climate Smart Agriculture

In South Africa there are approximately two million smallholder farmers; many of whom rely mainly on land to feed their families—with hopefully some surplus to sell or trade. The changing climate is causing increased frequency of extreme weather events such as drought, floods, heat waves and excessive winds which increase the vulnerability of these small-scale farmers.

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development has therefore developed sector policies, strategies and plans as measures and interventions to combat climate change and respond to the increasing frequencies of meteorological hazards.

A National Dialogue on Climate Smart Agriculture was held in February to discuss mechanisms supporting adaptation strategies. The department developed a Climate Smart Agriculture Strategic Framework in this regard; which would be shared with stakeholders in the agricultural sector. Participants were national and provincial stakeholders, including partners from the African continent.

By the year 2050, the world will be expected to feed an extra billion people. Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) can

produce more food in a way that will not negatively affect the climate. This could be achieved through sustainable production practices such as organic farming, agro-ecology and conservation agriculture.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) seems to have a clear idea of what should be done and is promoting sustainable practices in various countries through agro ecology. This is a series of social and environmental measures aimed at creating a sustainable agricultural system that optimises and stabilises crop yields.

Approaches discussed at the dialogue include integrated planning of land, agriculture, forests, fisheries and water at local, watershed and regional scales to ensure synergies are properly captured; promoting activities that increase carbon storage, combine animal husbandry and trees with food production; reducing a variety of emissions from agriculture such as nitrous oxide from fertiliser application, livestock emissions and methane from rice cultivation; exploring carbon finance as a lever to promote sustainable agricultural practices that have many other direct benefits for smallholder farmers.



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