



## agriculture & rural development

Department:  
agriculture  
& rural development  
**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

### **GLIMMER OF HOPE FOR COMMUNAL WOOL PRODUCERS IN UMZIMKHULU AS THEY BRACE FOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETS**

WOOL, according to recent statistics released by Stats SA, is one of the most profitable commodities in Agriculture and most of it forms part of large exported agricultural items.

The country's major partner in wool export worldwide is China, with an export outflow of about 70 percent. The Harry Gwala District in KwaZulu-Natal is a number one producer of wool in the province. This is partly because of its large and wide grazing land for sheep production as well as suitable cold weather conditions. Interestingly, and probably vital, is that communal sheep farmers have pulled serious strides in the sector recently as they are also contributing hugely to the overall turnover of profits.

During a Farmers Day in Umzimkhulu recently, it emerged that black wool growers who trade in the formal sector are multiplying.

At the same event, the Wool Growers Association 6<sup>th</sup> Congress was convened to share knowledge on how to stimulate emerging wool growers. The speakers reiterated that the role of wool growers is vital as the country has a shortage of wool. Emerging and subsistence farmers were also urged to play a meaningful role in sheep production so that the shortage of wool would be addressed.

Addressing the Congress, the Chairperson of the National Wool Growers Association, Mr. L. De Beer, said it is imperative for emerging farmers to form part of the National Farmers Association so that they speak in one voice and also get assistance from government and various stakeholders.

Mr De Beer told scores of communal farmers from KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape that there is a glimmer of hope for them in the sector as China which is the biggest partner, has a huge demand for wool since it has become big on textile products globally.

The wool farmers complained about the high level of stock theft and the diseases that kills thousands of their livestock.

Addressing the challenges of animal diseases, Mr Nceba Masangwana from the Mzimkhulu DARD Local office, mentioned that this issue which was raised by the farmers have been brought to the local office's attention. He also stated that the Department has already embarked on the animal vaccination programme in areas such as Cabazi, Nyanisweni, Emangulwini, Bhanabhasi which have been identified.

The issue of stock theft was quite high on the agenda and farmers raised serious concerns about the rate in which this scourge is escalating. The congress resolved that emerging farmers should be assisted with sufficient information about the market.

Mr Theo van Rooyen who addressed the congress on behalf of the Department, assured farmers that the Department will increase the number of extension officers to support emerging farmers in the area.

He told delegates that if farmers unleash the wool potential to its maximum, it can be used to empower rural communities both in job creation and economic growth.