



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

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SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN KWAZULU-NATAL RECEIVE VITAL BOOST THROUGH NEW JOZINI PROGRAMME

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Smallholder farmers in KwaZulu-Natal receive vital boost through new Jozini programme

Smallholder farmers in rural north KwaZulu-Natal have been given a boost to supply their crops and produce to the broader consumer market with help of the government and the private sector.

On Friday, the Department of Agriculture launched the Jozini Smallholder Farmer Programme in Jozini in northern KZN focusing on cultivating herbs and spices, leveraging local resources to create a sustainable supply chain.

Minister for Agriculture John Steenhuisen said that the agricultural and agro-processing masterplan has one of its key pillars: how the department can include small scale farmers into the value chain.

“This will help grow the agricultural sector and bring in more **smallholder farmers** into market access. This is crucial as when we do projects we need to ensure that they are sustainable, viable, and profitable. **Being** able to link smallholder farmers directly into a market that guarantees an uptake of their products and the three important points mentioned,” Steenhuisen said.

“What we want to see happen is to turn more small scale farmers into large scale farmers and commercial farmers as this will grow their operation from small to big as this will create jobs for the community and it will create community development.”



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The programme is a result of a partnership between Unilever South Africa and the national and provincial departments of agriculture.

The department said that the Unilever Jozini Project represents a significant investment in sustainable agriculture and community development.

It said that as part of the programme **100 farmers** have already participated in a comprehensive training aligned with AgriSETA unit standards, covering practical and theoretical aspects of herb and spice farming.

Steenhuisen said this collaboration underscored the importance of public-private partnerships and was also part of a bigger programme of the department to revitalise agricultural production in rural areas, and promote access to markets through the Agripark Programme.

He said the department recognised that it can't do everything and that they need to bring in partners from the private sector and the industry to work together.

There was a handover of a tractor to the farmers and unveiling of a drying tunnel, symbolising the support and resources for the farmers.

MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa, said that farmers have been struggling since 2012.

"The department decided to step in and assist as they did not have a market. We trained them **on** how to plant their products, and once this was concluded, we then decided to look for partners. Unilever came on board," she said.

"They took some of them and trained them with agricultural skills. They have signed a MoU where they are not only training but also buying the products that are being produced."

Justin Apsey, CEO of Unilever South Africa, said that they were proud to support the Jozini Smallholder Farmer Programme, which aligns with their commitment to sustainability and empowering local communities.

"This initiative will not only improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers but also contribute to a more sustainable agricultural sector. This is a capacity-building initiative empowering and alleviating unemployment while providing a decent life in the heart of KwaZulu-Natal," Apsey said.

"We understand the success of rural farmers is tied with the well-being of their community. We are placing strong emphasis on sustainable agricultural policies which will not only boost productivity but will protect and enhance the environment of South Africa.

"We are fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship by equipping them with business skills and knowledge to contribute to their local economy. We take that very seriously and this year we will spend R3 billion to invest in Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (**SMMEs**).