

# The land reform process is on the move

● Advertisement

By Musa Ndlangamandla

**T**he Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) continues to achieve enormous success in safeguarding the future and rights of thousands of farm workers and dwellers through a strategy of real empowerment that enables them to fully participate in the mainstream economy.

Through its 50/50 policy, the Department assists beneficiaries secure permanent tenure on the properties in which they work and live and a meaningful economic stake in the agricultural land and businesses.

"This ensures that the farm workers and dwellers are acknowledged as partners whose voice is recognised as equally important as the opinion of estab-



Minister: Gugile Nkwinti

lished farmers, government services or any other partners in the society," says Minister Nkwinti.

This is at the heart of the Policy Framework on Strengthening the Relative Rights of People Working the Land, - also known



as the 50/50 policy - which was first introduced in 2014 to ensure transformation and broad based participation of the farm dwellers

who are farm labourers in the agricultural enterprises where they live and work.

The model being piloted in

partnership with the National Empowerment Fund (NEF), avails the finance for meaningful equity in farms, ensures skills transfer

from farm owners to beneficiaries, thus contributing to poverty alleviation, social cohesion in rural communities and overall economic empowerment.

"Despite initial skepticism, organised agriculture has begun to embrace the initiative. A total of ninety (90) proposals have been received from established farmers across the country from 2015 to date, these are at various stages of processing," explains Minister Nkwinti.

## Umtshezi: Another class act for 50/50 policy

Another inspiring story of workers of Westcliffe farm in Umtshezi near Greytown in KwaZulu-Natal, is another 'feather in the cap' of the DRDLR's 50/50 program in ensuring that those who 'broke their backs working on farms' benefited equitably.

In this case, the Department bought the land and buildings and financed infrastructure, equipment and working capital as equity contribution for the beneficiaries' Ekhamanzi Trust, whilst the commercial farmer contributed R6million in equipment and cash to acquire a 50% stake in the new business in line with the partnership ethos of the 50/50 program.

Revenue will comprise the current produce that is on the farm, namely sugarcane, timber and cabbages. A further 30ha will be used to grow avocados.

Muntu Ntuli, trust chairperson, said the initiative was a life changer for generations of the 55 workers who are now co-owners.

Minister Nkwinti said as a consequence of this program, farm workers and dwellers no longer have to fear evictions because land tenure has been secured.

## SA's Biggest Land Claim Settled

**I**n what can be described as a major boost to efforts to speed up land reform, one of South Africa's biggest land claims involving 54 280 hectares has been recently settled in the North West Province.

In late 2016, the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights successfully settled the claim and restored the vast tracts which include a game farm to five Bahurutshe communities who were disposed of their land in the late 1930s.

After successful negotiations, based on a justifiable and equitable process, the Commission paid close to R500 million (R465, 326,484. 20) on behalf of the Bahurutshe, benefitting a total of 1878 households.

"Through the restitution process the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform



(DRDLR) awarded title deeds to the Bahurutshe tribes who were forcibly removed from their land following the passing of the Development Trust Act by the pre-

vious government," said Minister Nkwinti during the handover ceremony in Zeerust.

"Restoring land to the rightful owners was among the govern-

ments' key interventions aimed at correcting injustices of the past and restoring our people's dignity."

Like many African communities in South Africa the Bahurutshe lost their rights in land and were reduced to farm workers and labour tenants on their properties which were allocated to white farmers. The Bahurutshe Kingdom stretched as far as Rustenburg and Pilanesburg. These communities lived between the Ngotoane, Madikwe and Crocodile rivers in what is now known as the North West Province.

The Bahurutshe land claim was lodged during the first re-opening of the land claims process which ended in 1998. The settling of this claim is part of on-going efforts by the commission to finalise all outstanding claims lodged during the initial re-opening.

## Workers proud owners of Cape Wine Estate

**T**he DRDLR stands on the cusp of history following successful inroads into one of the country's most untransformed industries, which saw farm workers acquire a 45 percent stake of Solms Delta Wine Estate and a portion of the 54 hectares property in the picturesque Franschhoek outside Cape Town.

In what flies in the face of transformation 98% of the land in the wine industry still belongs to the white community.

As part of the DRDLR's ground-breaking 50/50 program, Minister Nkwinti, last December, launched the R65 million transaction between Wijn de Caab Trust (the farm workers and dwellers' empowerment vehicle) and the established wine farmers - Professor Mark Solms and Richard Astor. The NEF, which facilitated the transaction, retains 5%. The deal makes provision for



a six member board, one each for the NEF, Solms, Astor and the farm's chief executive, and two representatives for the workers.

Minister Nkwinti said the 50/50 policy was among government's interventions for economic prosperity for the rural poor.

Susana Malgas, one of the beneficiaries and board member of the Wijn De Caab Trust, said as a result of the transaction, life on the farm has greatly improved,

as workers now have a say in the affairs of the farm, have acquired new skills and their children's education is paid for.

Malgas, a former domestic worker, has become a qualified wine and heritage guide.

"In the past we did not have enough money to send our kids to university after they finished school. We don't want our kids to be like us when we were growing up," she said.