

Cooperatives get financial help

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SIBONISO SHIBA AND
SIBONGISENI MAPHUMULO

AMID the losses suffered by farmers due to the crippling drought in Kwa-Zulu-Natal, the department of agriculture and rural development has come to the assistance of farming cooperatives in Umzimkhulu.

The department, in partnership with the Masisizane Fund, handed over farming equipment valued at R36m, including tractors, 23 000ha of land and soya seeds.

Ellis Khumalo, 60, chairperson of Zamimpilo Farmers Association, said the drought had destroyed vast amounts of their crops.

"We appreciate the government extending a helping hand. It never crossed my mind that our cooperatives would be among the lucky ones."

MEC Cyril Xaba said the province was facing a tough period where water had become a scarce commodity.

"In the drought, soya is a preferred alternative to be grown instead of maize, which requires a lot of water."

Mathophisa Dlamini, chairperson of the Schoemans Hoek cooperative said: "After the losses we suffered, one feels a sense of being compensated."



HELPING HAND: MEC for agriculture and rural development Cyril Xaba with mayor Mluleki Ndobe and others during the handover. PICTURE: MBOYISELO NDOLOVU

The Masisizane Fund will inject R26m for the planting and production of soya beans in the area, following a memorandum of understanding between the department and the Fund that will see 144 communal estates in the Harry Gwala region benefit.

"I want to thank the Masisizane/Old Mutual Fund for seeing the potential in

this area and joining in this partnership. It is not a project of the KZN department of agriculture and rural development or of the Masisizane Fund. It is your project and it will only succeed if all of you take ownership of it and seize the opportunities that are being offered," Xaba said.

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