A FOOT IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION FOR VEGETABLE PRODUCTION IN MBELEJA, HARRY GWALA DISTRICT

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (KZN DARD), in partnership with Sutherland Seedlings, hosted a Farmers' Day and an information sharing session on vegetable crop production in the Harry Gwala District.

The event was held under the theme: "Promoting Sustainable Vegetable Production and Food Security" in the Johnnes Phumlani Phungula (JPP) Local Municipality on Thursday, 18 June 2026.

Local crop farmers, Departmental extension officers, and key agricultural stakeholders, including TWK Agri, the JPP LED Office, Farmers Agri-Care, KHULA, the Land Bank of South Africa, Kwanalu, and the Tshala Nathi Group were in attendance.

The programme commenced with a visit to Sutherland Seedlings, where farmers were introduced to the seedling production process, including quality assessment (grading) of seedlings grown in climate controlled environments.

Farmers observed key indicators of plant health, structural strength, and uniform development.

This was followed by a field walk at Mbheleja Enterprises where farmers had an opportunity to observe practical vegetable production techniques and engage directly with experts from Sutherland Seedlings.

Mbheleja Enterprises is an emerging smallholder farming enterprise specialising in vegetable production. The enterprise contributes to agricultural development, job creation, and skills development within the JPP Local Municipality.

The interaction provided valuable insights into improving production efficiency, managing climate-related challenges, and identifying market opportunities.

Discussions throughout the day focused on innovative farming methods, improved seedling production systems, climate adaptation strategies, fertilisation and available departmental support programmes aimed at strengthening food security and rural economic development.

During the session, KZN DARD Harry Gwala District Director, Ms Smangele Zulu, emphasised the importance of partnerships in strengthening local agricultural capacity. Zulu highlighted the role of skills transfer, improved market access, and sustainability in supporting emerging farmers.

The District Director further encouraged farmers, particularly the youth, to actively participate in such engagements and to take advantage of agricultural support programmes.

"We want farmers, especially the youth, to take full advantage of these opportunities as they provide access to resources, training, and support to build sustainable farming enterprises"


ELLEPOT


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