



[Cooperatives briefed on R600m mega farming project](#)

By Afesis-corplan

THE Eastern Cape Rural Development Agency (ECRDA) will spend R600-million on a farming project targeting 12 villages in Tshabo, outside King William's Town.

Afesis-corplan is drafting a social contract for the project through a public participation process to ensure that commitments made by the communities, represented by 12 cooperatives, and government are clearly understood.

The innovative agricultural enterprise called the Tshabo Rural Enterprise (RED) Hub is being implemented by ECRDA and will create manageable economic infrastructure out of the current inactive value rural assets of Tshabo .

It will also create 483 sustainable jobs excluding seasonal workers and bring much needed food and nutritional security for villagers.

The cooperatives will work in massive agricultural facilities that are going to be built in three villages.

The proposed facilities include a five star flora nursery, a flower packaging and processing facility, a 12 000 square meter snail processing facility, 20 hectares of hydroponics (a process of growing plants without soil) facilities and an agro processing facility.

Processed raw materials derived from the project will be distributed to the local and international market.

According to ECRDA the transformative project is aimed at unlocking Tshabo's rural economic opportunities, while enhancing and creating an income diversity for locals.

The community will also be imparted with management skills and farmer technical expertise.

ECRDA has said the project will be private sector driven and promoted to ensure sustainable economic viability and compliance with legislative frameworks.

The sector will also work to secure off- take agreements with end retailers both in the country and abroad.

Afesis-corplan has been contracted to strengthen the community's involvement in the project. The

goal is to identify what the cooperatives will contribute to the project and ascertain the kind of assistance they will need.

Afesis-corplan's programme officers Vusi Gqomose and Masixole Kente recently concluded separate visioning exercises with each of the cooperatives over a two week period.

"The purpose," explained Gqomose, "was to get everybody to participate by sharing their dreams and vision for their families and community. This gave us an opportunity to understand what the people in these villages go through in their daily lives and how they think they can improve their situations."

Kente said: "We are going to draft a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or social compact between the cooperatives, government and other private entities that want to assist with the project. This will explain how each stakeholder will contribute towards the success of the project."

For their part, Tshabo residents said unemployment was high in their community and many saw the proposed project as a way out of poverty.

Resident Thandiwe Dwaba, 46, "If we can commit on this project, we will move forward. The main thing is cooperation and partnership, no squabbles. We must also agree on what product we need to farm and stick to that, because we know what our land can produce and not produce, for example we cannot farm mealies in this area because it does not grow."

Dwaba said the community was excited about the project and how Afesis-corplan officers conducted the social facilitation.

"The information that they were sharing with us was easy to understand. You could see everyone was participating unlike in other instances where only a few people would speak. Everyone was involved in the social facilitation," Dwaba said.

Another resident Nosiphiwo Viti, 65, said: "We have attended many workshops of this nature before and nothing came out of that. I just hope that this time around government will live up to its word and make this project a possibility. We will believe it when they start fencing the land they want us to work in, at the moment we are just hearing about the project."

Zwelidanile Gxabalashe who was born in Tshabo in 1929 said he hoped the project will come to reality while he is still alive.

"Where there is smoke there is fire, I am hopeful. My only wish is that it happens when I am still alive. I grew up farming and I have livestock, now this project means that when I die my children will be left with something to do," Gxabalashe said.



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Afesis-corplan, having worked on local governance and housing development issues for more than 20 years is one of the organizations that offers a wealth of knowledge and expertise that could play a meaningful role in strengthening local government to deliver on its mandate. Besides innovating and enhancing processes, Afesis-corplan is also best placed to support the emergence of an active citizenry, one of the three main cogs that the NDP indentified were crucial in moving South Africa forward (alongside a capable state and strong leadership). We are proud to present our 2017 Strategy which is developed with the sound understanding of what the country's developmental goals are, the socio-political and the socio-economic context and the understanding of Afesis-corplan's strengths and weaknesses.

Click here to view the [Strategic Plan Handbook 2017](#)



[Mvezo Welcome Centre](#)

Afesis-corplan is excited to be the implementing agents for the Welcome Centre In Mvezo on behalf of the National Lotteries Commission. The purpose of the Welcome Centre is to be an initial point of contact for tourists visiting the area, whether it be for an extended visit, or if they are just coming through for the day. The Welcome Centre will boast an information desk where visitors will be able to gain an understanding of the cultural richness of the area, curio shops where local residents will have an opportunity to sell their crafts and generate an income for themselves, and a restaurant and take-away area which takes advantage of the majestic views of the of the unique terrain and the mighty Mbashe river.