Agri SA

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Bemagtiging van vroue in die landbou
Empowering women in agriculture

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Bemagtiging van vroue in die landbou

Dertig werklose vroue in die plaaswerkergemeenskap van Keimoes, in die Noord-kaap, het die afgelope jaar 'n praktiese ondernemerskapkursus deurloop wat by hulle die hoop geskep het, om op eie inisiatief, vir hulself, hul gesinne en hulle gemeenskappe 'n beter toekoms te skep. Dit is 'n voorloper-projek wat Agri SA, met die finansiële ondersteuning van Agri SETA, aangebied het en op 'n groter skaal landwyd wil uitrol as teenfoeter vir die armoede, werkloosheid en gevolglike sosiaal-maatskaplike probleme in landelike gebiede.

Toeligting oor hierdie projek is deur Agri SA-verteenwoordigers, tydens 'n konferensie van die Suider-Afrikaanse Konfederasie van Landbou-unies (SACAU) oor die rol van die vrou in die landbou, wat hierdie naweek in Seychelles gehou is, gegee. Delene Möller, die programleier en Elize van der Westhuizen wat die projek oorhoofs bestuur, verteenwoordig Agri SA by die konferensie.

"Die tendens om landbouproduksiestelsels te meganiseer, wat arbeid vervang, is 'n voortdurende proses wat deur ekonomiese realiteite, soos mededinging vanuit 'n globale omgewing, dikteer word. Hierdie tendens is versnel deur die onsekere beleidsomgewing waarin die landbou tans funksioneer, maar ook vanweë die arbeidsonrus en toename in die koste van arbeid die afgelope paar jaar. Dit het daartoe gelei dat minder lede van 'n plaaswerkergesin werk en talle van hierdie gesinne se besteebare inkomste onder ernstige druk verkeer," sê Johannes Möller, president van Agri SA.

"Hierdie omstandighede het Agri SA verplig om strategies te dink oor oplossings vir hierdie vraagstuk. Ons is van mening dat opleiding noodsaaklik is om vroue op plase te bemagtig om nuwe beroep- of sake geleenthede te ontsluit. Opleiding is die mees lewensvatbare vertrekpunt en benadering om hierdie probleem aan te spreek. Ons is opgewonde oor wat die vroue wat die program deurloop het nou in hul gemeenskappe en op plase aanpak. Dit gaan 'n wesenlike positiewe verskil in hul eie en andere se lewens teweeg bring," sê Möller.

Die SACAU-konferensie het in diepte aandag gegee aan die ontwikkeling van ondernemerskap van vroue in die landbou wat 'n vereiste is om weg te beweeg van bestaansboerderye en sodoende die grootskaalse kommersialisering van Suider-Afrika se onder-ontwikkelde landbou te versnel. Dit vind aansluiting by die Afrika-Unie se inisiatief om vanjaar te fokus op die bemagtiging van vroue vir landelike ontwikkeling. Aandag is gegee aan die veelvoudige uitdagings wat vroue moet oorkom en ondersteuning wat hulle benodig om sukses te behaal. Gevallestudies is toegelig en bespreek waaruit verteenwoordigers kon leer.

"Die Suid-Afrikaanse situasie is andersoortig teenoor dié van sy buurlande, maar daar is nogtans genoeg gemeenskaplikhede waaruit ons kan leer, of waarde toevoeg. Wat duidelik is, is dat daar met beleid en in praktyk veel meer op vroue se bydraes gefokus moet word om landbou in die Suider-Afrikaanse streek te help ontwikkel en daarmee saam lewensomstandighede en -kwaliteit van landelike gemeenskappe te verbeter," sê Möller.

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Empowering women in agriculture

Thirty unemployed women from the farmworker community of Keimoes in the Northern Cape participated during the past year in a practical entrepreneurship training course which instilled hope that they could, on own initiative, achieve a better future for themselves, their families and communities. This is a trial project of Agri SA, sponsored by Agri SETA, which could be rolled out country-wide to counter the prevailing poverty, unemployment and the resultant socio-economic problems experienced in rural areas.

Elucidation on this project was given by Agri SA representatives attending a conference of the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) which was held, the past weekend, in Seychelles. Delene Möller, the programme leader, and Elize van der Westhuizen who manages the programme, represented Agri SA at this conference.

"The trend of mechanising agriculture, which results in the replacing labour, is a continuing process dictated by economic realities, such as competition, in a global environment. This trend is accelerated by the uncertain policy environment currently experienced by farmers, but also due to labour unrest and the higher cost of labour in recent years. This resulted in a higher level of unemployment in farmworker households and reduced household incomes," said Johannes Möller, president of Agri SA.

"These conditions compelled Agri SA to rethink strategies by which this challenge can be resolved. We are of the view that training is essential for empowering women to unlock new occupation or business opportunities. Training is the most viable point of departure and approach whereby this challenge can be addressed. We are excited about the new ventures entered into by women who benefitted from this training. It will positively impact on their wellbeing and others in their society," said Möller.

The SACAU-conference debated the entrepreneurial development of women in agriculture as a prerequisite for moving away from subsistence farming towards accelerating the commercialisation of Southern Africa's underdeveloped agricultural sector. The theme of this conference linked the African Union's focus this year on the empowering of women in rural areas. The multitude of challenges which women must overcome and the support which are required for achieving success, received thorough attention. Case studies were presented and debated from which participants could gain new insights.

"Although the South African situation differs from those of its neighbouring countries, there are enough commonalities from which we can learn and share. What is clear is that policies and practices should be gender sensitive if we want to succeed with agricultural development in the Southern African region and, in conjunction with this, improve the quality of livelihoods of rural communities," said Möller.

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