

Media release

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Important resolutions to guide agricultural development from NERPO 18th Annual Congress

The National Emergent Red Meat Producers' Organization's (NERPO) 18th Annual General Meeting and Conference which was held from the 20th to 22nd September was attended by more than 350 delegates. The NERPO AGM and Conference is an important platform where the organization expresses and demonstrate its strategies meant contribute to the country's agricultural transformation, land reform and rural development.

During the conference, NERPO has made the following resolutions which were unanimously adopted and will be prioritized in the coming season.

NERPO Livestock Syndicate Scheme

Literature and international experience show that the success of smallholder farmers can only be through cooperation (working together). For our smallholder farmers in South Africa to effectively bargain in input and output markets and own facilities in the red meat value chain, NERPO Livestock Syndicate Scheme has been put forward as the ideal model for such cooperation.

Resolution – All farmers' support and development programmes facilitated by NERPO will only be through NERPO Livestock Syndicate Scheme. All NERPO members are encouraged to be part of the NERPO Livestock Syndicate Scheme.

Finance

Currently the number of non-performing loans are high, partly because NERPO Financial Services (Pty) Ltd has had no control over the products that have been financed compared to other industries such as wool, grain, fruit and vegetables where the products are controlled by the financiers via storage and /or single channel marketing systems.

Resolution – As a means of putting a control mechanism on farmers funded through the NERPO Livestock Credit Scheme, it is agreed and resolved that membership to NERPO Livestock Syndicate Scheme will be a pre-condition in the NFS Loan Credit Policy. Applicants must undergo training programmes specifically for syndicates. Furthermore, loan applications should go through syndicate chairpersons for recommendation and support prior submission.

Government Support to Smallholder Farmers

On the 18th May 2015, NERPO & AFASA submitted their priority projects & programmes that needed government support. Amongst these programmes was the Agricultural Sector Plan which included APAP.

Resolution – Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is requested to consider and urgently action the AFASA budget proposal submitted to DAFF in May this year.

Climate Change

Climate change has been observed to be a reality and has started to affect agricultural production systems all over the world. The advice from the experts is that farmers have to modify their farming practices to adapt.

Resolution – NERPO calls upon the Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries to run campaigns of educating farmers on the effects of climate change and how to adapt to it.

Livestock recording system

For the past 18 years NERPO has been trying to encourage emerging farmers to keep records of their animals' performance and livestock enterprise as a whole with little success. The lack of records from our members posed a challenge for the association to measure the performance of the livestock and enterprises in the smallholder sector. Furthermore, the industry had challenges in defining the strengths and weaknesses of the developing sector as there were no supporting evidence.

Resolution – All NERPO Livestock Syndicate Scheme members must use a recognized livestock and livestock enterprise performance recording system.

Primary animal health care

It has been observed overtime that one of the major factors that has resulted in the low performance of the livestock in the emerging sector is animal health and nutrition. The low conception rate, low calving percentage, high mortality rates and poor growth performance of the animals from this sector has been proven to be the result of poor animal health care and nutrition, which in turn is caused by the limited knowledge of the farmers on primary animal health care and limited access to animal health care services.

Resolution – To resolve this challenge, NERPO calls upon the Department of Agriculture Forestry & Fisheries to implement an accredited national farmer training programme on primary health care to ensure that the farmers have the basic knowledge and skills to improve the performance of their animals. This also alleviate the strain on the demand for animal health care services. Furthermore, NERPO calls upon DAFF to implement the Veterinary Community Services Programme in order to improve the accessibility of veterinary services to smallholder farmers, as they cannot easily access the services of private veterinarians.

Red Meat Industry Training Academy (REMITA)

The red meat industry is the largest, if not the second largest agricultural commodity in South Africa. Any transformation initiatives in this sector will have to consider training as the key element of transformation along the value chain.

Resolution – NERPO call upon the Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries, AgriSeta and the Red Meat Industry through the Red Meat Industry Forum (RMIF) to seriously consider establishing a training academy, specially dedicated for the red meat industry.

End

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