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Media Statement

Its' all Systems go for Donkey Production and Trade

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Mahikeng: The Bokone Bophirima Province will boost its provincial economy with more focus on the Village, Township and Small Dorpies (VTSD) by embarking on donkey production programme. This entails animal cultivation which includes establishing of donkey abattoirs, commercial trading of donkey meat and hides. The key ingredient in donkey hide, gelatine is used in the production of Chinese medicine called "ejiao". This is an ingredient used for various medical treatments such as delaying menopause in women, weight loss, flu and several others.

The spike in donkey hide demand around the world means that the donkeys and donkey products are an agricultural commodity and will contribute to the Agricultural Growth and Development Plan(GDP) of the Province. It is estimated that 1.8 million donkey hides are traded annually, while the global demand is approximately at 4 to 10m skins.

The MEC for the Department of Rural, Environment and Agricultural Development (READ), Manketsi Tlhape said the Department will implement the donkey skin trade

project in line with the fifth administration's vision to Rebrand, Reposition and Renew the province whilst allowing the economy to grow.

"We are proud to be part of the provincial concretes and we note with gratitude that agriculture has been prioritised as part of the ACT strategy and is it is meant to be at the apex of our provincial economy. We have therefore engaged and informed our local Communities on the proposal to be undertaken by our Department jointly with the Provincial Government to exploit the donkey trade market" said MEC Tlhape.

Post the benchmarking visit to China that included the North West Premier Supra Mahumapelo, MECs for Finance, Enterprise and Economic Development (FEED), Ms Wendy Nelson as well as the MEC for Rural, Environment and Agricultural Development (READ), Ms Manketsi Tlhape, the Departments will embark on capacity building and educational information sessions to educate communities on how the project will unfold. The Province will start the supply by end of this year and Chinese experts will be roped in to train the local breeders to ensure that farmers are capacitated in this regard.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) with China has already been signed with the government opening a way for the Province on various areas of donkey production and trade. The programme in its entirety has key areas which include capacity building programmes for farmers and potential producers; mobilizing donkey producers; establishing of a donkey feedlot and establishing an abattoir.

The Department strongly condemns the theft of donkeys, illegal trade of the hides and meat. MEC Tlhape emphasised that the department together with all relevant stakeholders including South African Police Services (SAPS), the *Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals* (SPCA) and National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) are joining hands to curb the inhumane handling of the animals and donkey theft in the Province.

Currently, there is an increased emphasis on dispersing information about humane handling of animals. Communities are also being informed of the legalities on what constitutes cruelty or inhumane handling of animals in compliance to the Meat Safety Act, Act No. 40 of 2000.

The intended projects will go a long way to alleviate poverty, address inequality; create decent jobs and in an immense way contribute to the aspirations of our National Development Plan (NDP) and other National Policy instruments such as Agricultural Policy Action Plan (APAP); Revitalisation of Agricultural Value Chain (RAVAC) and even stimulate local economic development, as the triple challenges facing our Province, the Bokone Bophirima.

Photo:

6543 – MEC Manketsi Tlhape says the Department is ready to implement Donkey Production Programme

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