

## **Stakeholders meet to consolidate CRDP strategy**

“For as long as the majority of our people are still bedevilled with a myriad of social ills, we shall not rest and we dare not falter in our drive to eradicate poverty.” Fitting words expressed by honourable MEC KC Mashego Dlamini, setting the tone for stakeholders who on 17 July 2012 converged at the Lowveld College of Agriculture for a summit which was organized by The Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Administration.

The aim of the summit was to finalize a draft provincial strategy for the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP), whose main thrust is to create vibrant and poverty free rural livelihoods. The draft document was mainly informed by extensive consultations through meetings of CRDP council of stakeholders throughout all seven CRDP municipalities to ensure that implementation of the programme is based on aspirations of the people.

In her opening remarks, Head of Department Ms NL Sithole took the gathering down memory lane from when the programme started and the milestones achieved since then. “Since the inception of CRDP in Mpumalanga Province, we commenced with a pilot in Mkhondo local municipality around October 2009 where we initially focused on three sites. Later in 2010, we rolled out the programme to other poverty stricken municipalities in the province where we paid attention to two or three wards. Currently we have since expanded the roll out sites to include 33 wards across the province,” said Ms Sithole.

“We have seen some positive outcomes on the implementation of CRDP and we believe that those outcomes will help towards the crafting of a strategy that will benefit poor people in the province. This will guide planning of the three spheres of government since rural development is cutting across. The platform which we have created today offers stakeholders an opportunity to input towards the final document that is going to be presented to cabinet,” continued Ms Sithole.

In her key note address, honourable MEC KC Mashego-Dlamini asserted that though past rural development strategies and policies were considered in crafting the draft strategy, the present strategy was different in that it was premised on a proactive participatory community based planning approach rather than an interventionist approach to rural development.

“CRDP should not just be about social grants and hand outs but should assist in enabling our rural people to take control of their destiny with support from government. We believe that the finalization of the strategy marks another milestone which will assist in fast tracking the implementation of the programme. Together with all stakeholders, public and private we can push back the frontiers of poverty and create sustainable job opportunities in rural areas,” said the MEC.

Areas which were to be deliberated upon on the day included Rural Development Focus Areas, Funding Model, Roll out Plan and Cooperative Development.