



## Media Statement

**19 October 2017**

### **Crop theft impacts farmers negatively- MEC Ngomane says**

Mpumalanga MEC for Community Safety, Security and Liaison, Pat Ngomane says while the agricultural sector provides many families with livelihoods, many farmers' productivity levels are negatively affected by crop theft. He was speaking during the launching of Mobile Agri Skills Development and Training (MASDT) Research Study in Mbombela today.

MEC Ngomane alluded that crop theft is a serious challenge as many farmers are now compelled to hire private security to safeguard their assets. "This is a setback because instead of farmers investing more money into the improvement of their business and development of employees, resources are now channeled to security," he added.

Ngomane also bemoaned the illicit sale of cigarettes saying such activities threaten tobacco farmers and government's ability to generate revenue out of tax. He also indicated that the police should continue working hard to arrest illicit cigarettes traders especially during road blocks and other intelligence driven law enforcement operations.

He went on to implore crop owners to work with the police in order to bring crop thieves to book. He urged them to further empower local communities by employing them on their farms because they will encourage them to assist with crime prevention on those farms.

He further called on farmers to work hand in glove with community structures such as the Community Police Forums (CPFs). The MEC said that these structures have a direct link with local police stations and police sector managers.

The MEC welcomed the programme saying that it would go a long way towards eradicating poverty and unemployment because the 10 000 farm workers who are participating in the feed over 29 000 people.

Speaking at the same function, Shadrack Ntando Sibisi, a farmer from Nkomazi has urged government to assist emerging farmers with sufficient land. He said this will enable them to strengthen the work of developing farmers in rural areas.

Mobile Agri Skills Development and Training Research Study is an initiative by British American Tobacco and Agri SA after seeing a gap in their space of operation and came up with a development and training programme that assists emerging farmers sustain their farming business.

The launch was among others attended by CEO of British American Tobacco SA (BATSA), Soraya Benchikh British American Tobacco SA Director for Legal and External Affairs, Bongumusa Makhathini, Managing Director of the Limpopo Tobacco Processors, Christo van Staden, Prof. Hendri Coetzee and Prof. Werner Nell from North West University, Government Affairs and B-BBEE Transformation Manager of Mansanto, Parusha Pillay.

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**Enquiries: Joseph Mabuza**

**Contacts**

**Tel: 013 766 1579**

**Mobile: 082 678 1450**

**[E-mail: emabuza@mpg.gov.za](mailto:emabuza@mpg.gov.za)**