

Discrimination of women in agriculture remains a challenge

Despite their overwhelming participation in agriculture, women are still subjected to discriminatory practices.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

These were the remarks of Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane during a dialogue session with women farmers in Limpopo.

"Historically, women farmers experience socioeconomic barriers including a lack of access to financial services that assist in sustaining their farm expenses. This is despite women farmers using environmentally-conscious practices in comparison to their counterparts," the Minister said on Tuesday.

Nkoana-Mashabane noted that women, who end up in the agricultural business, often do so through the support of other women farmers.

"They create and are part of organisations and communities that assist women in all things farming [and] this allows them to network, seek advice and make friendships. Unlike their male counterparts, women are more focused on stewardship and

tend to prefer smaller organic and sustainable farms.

"As such, they push for advocacy and stand behind eco-friendly ideals. They are also looking for ways to improve farming and make it accessible. Women are making great strides in the world of agriculture," the Minister said.

This as government recognises the contribution of women in pioneering innovative solutions to agricultural practices.

In 2016, an increased number of women were awarded land for agricultural use through the government's land recapitalisation programme.

Nkoana-Mashabane maintains that the increased participation of women in agricultural processes increases the country's abilities to drive innovative solutions to address socioeconomic barriers in society.

"Now more than ever, women are contributing to the food system in several meaningful ways. We must harness the untapped potential of women exploring the business opportunities of agriculture.

"The business ventures include operating hospitality services where they are able to sell a variety of goods. This provides an opportunity to diversify their forms of income and equip women farmers to respond to the uncertainties of agricultural practices."

Inclusion and driving equality

The Minister also noted that despite the advancement and increased participation of women in agricultural processes, gender inequalities continue to threaten their full and effective participation in the sector.

"The gender and wage gaps that were apparent decades ago are still so today. We need to see a reform of the sector to promote inclusion and drive equality."

AgriBEE Charter

The Minister highlighted that the AgriBEE Charter has enabled good progress with the testing of business models with selected commodity groups, and local development organisations working on the best way to integrate emerging participants into mainstream agriculture.

She said that evaluation and monitoring systems for AgriBEE activities have been set up and implementation and monitoring interactions conducted at national, provincial, regional and local levels.

"Implementation of AgriBEE is based on the commodity/product value chain approach. This approach is integral to creating linkages, partnerships and networks for balanced, mutually benefiting results for all concerned.

"It will ensure enhanced competitiveness and sustainable development with improvement/expansion of the existing businesses, rehabilitation of ailing agricultural business concerns and expanded entry for new businesses in the sector," the Minister explained.

As part of the process to unlock the full entrepreneurial potential in the sector, we have also been encouraging partnerships between established agricultural enterprises and emerging farmers and entrepreneurs, she added.

Bursary scheme

Meanwhile, the Minister announced that an external bursary scheme and experiential and internship programmes have been established, to empower youth and women to contribute towards the transformation and growth of the agriculture sector.

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