LRAD aid farmers to achieve their dream

The dream of 37 farmers who make-up the Thusong Trust situated in Mangaung 35 Kilometers from Bloemfontein was made possible after they acquired a grant from the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) - a sub-programme of the land redistribution programme.

According to the trust’s leader Simon Sekopha, they have always had a dream of having their own farm while they were still working as farmers at the Vergesoght farm. “We are happy now that LRAD has helped us to become independent farmers, because this has been our dream while we were still working at Vergesoght farm,” he said. Most of the farm workers had not had formal employment for almost three years and had to do odd jobs on neighbouring farms as their sole means of survival.

They have also had a problem with their tenure right which was threatened by change of ownership. However, that has been solved through the assistance of a Non-governmental organization (NGO) known as the Free State Rural Development Association which approached the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) for alternative accommodation and DRDLR managed to identify the farm which the Trust is occupying now. The only skills that members of the Trust have are in Agriculture and they intend to use those skills to make a living on the identified farm which has also provided them with shelter and tenure security.

Members of the Trust praised the DRDLR for the support they have given them because they believe it will help them to sustain and develop their farm. “The Thusong Trust is one of the projects that prove that the DRDLR is on track with its vision to create and maintain an equitable and sustainable land dispensation that results in social and economic development.” The Trust was started by 37 former Vergesoght farmers after the farm owner was sequestrated and only ten families moved to Thusong Trust in 2003. The farm workers consist of 19 Adults, 3 youth males, 13 Adult females and 2 female youth, all who qualify as marginalized group.

The main activities of the Trust include, producing vegetables, Mielies which they sell at Bloemfontein market and they also have 80 cows and calves. They use their profit to renovate their houses, buy seeds, diesel and attend household matters.

The Trust is facing challenges like lack of irrigational system, financial support and cooperation with white farmers. “We do not have irrigational system to extend our ploughing method, financial support to sustain our farm and enough cooperation with neighbouring white farmer,” said Simon Sekopha. The Trust is facing other challenges like lack of transport, un-tarred roads and lack of a clinic.
The Thusong Trust would like to engage in small scale ploughing, poultry and feetlot production.