

ADDRESS BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE
DISTRIBUTION OF BREEDING LIVESTOCK TO SENIOR TRADITIONAL
LEADERS AT MARA RESEARCH STATION, MAKHADO LOCAL
MUNICIPALITY, VHEMBE DISTRICT

28 OCTOBER 2026

Programme Director,
MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Basikopo Makamu,
MEC for COGHSTA, Mr Pule Shayi,
Executive Mayor of Vhembe District Municipality, Cllr Miyelani Chauke,
Mayor of Makhado Local Municipality, Cllr Dorcus Mmboyi,
Councillors,
Chairperson of the Limpopo House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders,
Our esteemed Senior Traditional Leaders,
Members of the farming community,
Members of the media,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Ndi Matsheloni, Thobela, Avuxeni, Good morning, Goeie more,

A seed planted in fertile soil carries the promise of a harvest, but that promise can only be fulfilled through patience, nurturing and hard work. A healthy herd tells a similar story: it represents the promise of food security, sustainable livelihoods and economic prosperity for generations to come.

Today, we are planting the seeds of agricultural transformation by placing breeding livestock into the hands of our senior traditional leaders. This is more than a distribution ceremony; it is a milestone in our collective journey to empower traditional leadership, strengthen communal livestock farming and unlock the agricultural potential of our province.

As the Limpopo Provincial Government, we recognise that traditional leadership institutions are indispensable partners in rural development. Our traditional leaders are custodians of communal land, respected community voices and important partners in mobilising our people towards sustainable development.

It is for this reason that we are implementing the Traditional Leadership Livestock Improvement Programme. Through this initiative, we seek to transform communal livestock farming from predominantly subsistence-oriented production into a productive, sustainable and commercially viable agricultural sector.

Programme Director,

Limpopo has considerable livestock production potential. However, the challenge before us is not simply to increase the number of animals in our communities, but to improve their quality, reproductive performance, resilience and economic value.

Poor breeding practices, livestock diseases, overgrazing and limited access to formal markets continue to constrain the growth of communal livestock farming. We must therefore invest in better genetics, responsible animal husbandry, veterinary services and sustainable grazing practices.

The breeding livestock distributed today represents a practical intervention by government towards addressing these challenges.

We are encouraged that 13 senior traditional leaders have responded positively to the call to participate in the Limpopo Livestock Programme Re-Sale Scheme for 2026/2027, an initiative that was advertised and closed on the 20 July 2026. Their participation demonstrates an appreciation of the role that agriculture can play in strengthening rural livelihoods and building a more inclusive provincial economy. This rollout will continue to other farmers who meet the Re-Sale criteria in the next financial year.

Through the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the programme provides a breeding package comprising four pregnant heifers and one breeding bull, accompanied by technical support from the Department's Extension and Veterinary Services.

This support represents a deliberate investment in improving livestock genetics, strengthening communal farming and creating opportunities for sustainable rural economic development. We want our traditional leaders to participate actively in agriculture, demonstrate responsible livestock management and encourage our communities to recognise farming as a viable economic activity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our support for traditional leaders must also be understood within the broader commitment of this government to rural economic development. We want our villages to become places of opportunity, where agriculture creates livelihoods, supports small businesses and gives young people a reason to participate in productive economic activities.

However, we must be clear that public agricultural support comes with responsibility. The livestock entrusted to our beneficiaries is not merely an allocation to be received without obligation. It is a development investment that must be protected, managed responsibly and used for its intended purpose.

To our senior traditional leaders receiving these animals today, we call upon you to take this responsibility seriously. Ensure that the livestock receives proper nutrition, adequate water, suitable grazing and regular veterinary attention. Comply with vaccination schedules, maintain proper livestock identification and take all reasonable measures to protect the animals against disease and theft.

Most importantly, you must honour and comply fully with the contractual agreements governing this programme. These agreements establish the conditions under which government support is provided and the responsibilities expected of every beneficiary.

You must comply with all applicable requirements, particularly those relating to the disposal or transfer of breeding animals, animal identification, veterinary care, monitoring and reporting. Do not sell, transfer or dispose of the breeding animals contrary to the terms of your agreements. Any decisions concerning the animals must be handled in accordance with the contractual conditions and applicable departmental requirements.

We expect beneficiaries to cooperate with departmental officials, allow the required monitoring and provide the information necessary to assess the programme's performance. You must also follow the guidance of

agricultural extension officers and veterinary professionals to ensure that the animals remain healthy and productive.

We must be clear that public resources come with public accountability. The success of this programme depends on how responsibly every beneficiary fulfils their obligations. Government has a responsibility to ensure that public resources are used for their intended purpose and that the support provided translates into measurable developmental benefits.

We also acknowledge that many smallholder and subsistence farmers require agricultural assistance. We therefore call upon community members to participate in the Livestock Re-Sale programme, Nguni Cattle loan scheme, Illima-Letshema and production Inputs Support programme. This is a separate strategic initiative within the Re-Sale Scheme (Provincial Livestock Improvement Programme). We remain committed to expanding agricultural opportunities in phases, subject to approved criteria and the availability of resources.

Programme Director,

As we celebrate this milestone, let us remember that development is a partnership. Government is here to provide support, traditional leaders must exercise responsible stewardship and our farming communities must embrace sustainable agricultural practices.

Finally, as we approach the local government elections on Wednesday, 4 November 2026, I encourage every eligible voter to exercise their democratic right and responsibility. Let us all go out and vote. Our participation in these elections is an opportunity to shape the future of our municipalities and influence the quality of services and development delivered to our communities.

Ndi a livhuwa.