



The Possibility of Transformation in the Agriculture Sector: A Good Story to Tell in the Pork Industry

Mrs Mbalo of Simba Mabhele piggery

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On 26 May 2017, the representatives of the Transformation Review Committee (TRC) attended the South African Meat Industry Company's (SAMIC) carcass competition for the developing and commercial pork producers in Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) Province. This forms part of SAMIC's strategy to transform developing farmers into commercial farmers. A total of five developing farmers participated in the competition and an overview is set out below, showing how things developed, leading up to this year's competition.

On 19 October 2015, the TRC of the National Agriculture Marketing Council (NAMC) engaged with the South African Pork Producers Organisation (SAPPO). The aim of the engagement was to discuss SAPPO's transformation activities and to table the TRC's proposal on transformation, with specific focus on enterprise development. SAPPO was then assigned to develop selection criteria, and provide numerical figures in terms of the unit size and budget requirements that would graduate a developing farmer into becoming a sustainable commercial farmer.

On 23 November 2015, the transformation proposal on enterprise development was accepted by SAPPO, and farmers with a minimum of 20 sows were selected.

After a series of meetings between NAMC and SAPPO, a good story has emerged to tell within the pork industry. Hence, this article profiles one of the outstanding developing pork producers, Mrs Mbalo of Simba Mabhele piggery.

Simba Mabhele piggery is a 130 farrow to finish sow unit, operated on a 46 hectare farm. The farm is situated in Port Shepstone (KZN Province) and is privately owned. It is a family business driven by Mrs Florence Mbalo. Mrs Mbalo is a qualified nurse and started farming with pigs in the year 2000, with only three gilts; two bought from a commercial farmer in Howick and one that was donated by her sister-in-law. About a year and a half later, she started building low-cost housing structures and bought 20 gilts from a commercial farmer in Howick. The unit grew from 20- to a 50-sow unit.



Pigs in the Simba Mabhele Piggery



2017 carcass of the developing farmers

The unit was later expanded to a 100-sow unit financed with a loan from Old Mutual (Masisizane Fund). The unit is currently marketing more than 50 pigs per week, with an average carcass weight of 75kg, through La Rochelle abattoir located in Margate. The farm has been under SAPPO mentorship from the year 2010 to date. It is through SAPPO mentorship that the unit performs within the industry production norms.

In 2016, SAPPO, through the Enterprise Development Programme (EDP), assisted the farm with production inputs and equipment required to maximise production. It was through the programme that the farm graduated from a 100-sow unit to a 130-sow unit.

During the 2017 SAMIC carcass competition held in the KZN Province, Mrs Mbalo emerged victorious in the category of developing pork farmers. Furthermore, Mrs Mbalo's carcasses were graded close to that of the commercial farmers, indicating the possibilities for participating in the formal markets. This was evidence of achieving good quality carcasses, according to SAMIC's grading standards. In addition, Mrs Mbalo was announced as the 2017, National Carcass Competition Winner in the developing farmers' category. This prize was officially awarded on the 16th of August 2017 in Vryburg.

Despite the challenges of 2016 that were faced by the agricultural sector, by the pork industry in particular, Simba Mabhele farm survived the awkward year. However, despite the commitment and hard work demonstrated, which proved to be worthwhile, the farm still requires additional support. It is through financial support, coupled with technical support, that the farm will graduate to a commercial level. Smallholder farmers, particularly women, face challenges such as limited or lack of funding for expansion, mainly for infrastructure development which will, in turn, create employment, thereby ensuring sustainable food security. To ensure profitable and sustainable enterprises, financial intervention is required from government departments such as DAFF through CASP, DRDLR through the Recapitalisation programme, and other financial institutions.

Competition

The South African Pork Producers' Organisation, SAMIC, and the NAMC's Transformation Review Committee are acknowledged for their commitment and support in ensuring that transformation in the pork industry is a success. A further note of special gratitude is conveyed to the farmers for their contribution in the agricultural economy, through job creation and achieving food security.

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