

PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLINGS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

THURSDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2021

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning on its oversight visit to Elsenburg on 8 June 2021, as follows:

Delegation

The delegation consisted of the following members:

Baartman, DM (DA)

Maseko, LM (DA)

Van Der Westhuizen, AP (DA: Chairperson and leader of the delegation)

Apologies were received from members Herron, BN (GOOD), Marais, PJ (FF Plus) and Marran, P (ANC).

1. Introduction and background

Section 114 (2)(b)(i) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 mandates provincial legislatures to provide for mechanisms to maintain oversight over the Provincial Executive Authority in the province.

During the deliberation on Vote 11: Agriculture, in the Western Cape Appropriation Bill [B 4–2021] in March 2021, the Committee resolved that it would undertake an oversight visit to Elsenburg to observe the unmanned Aerial Vehicle Project as part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the associated benefits for the agricultural sector.

2. Overview of the visit

The visit commenced with a briefing by the Department of Agriculture on the use of unmanned aerial vehicles in the agricultural sector which was followed by a demonstration. The Committee

also visited the Agri Processing Hub where it met with entrepreneurs who were assisted with product development and business advice by the Department.

3. Findings

3.1 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

The use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) was an alternative to costly and time-consuming traditional methods to improve agricultural water management and crop productivity through the acquisition, processing and analysis of data. UAV's facilitated the monitoring of crops throughout the crop growing cycle, allowing for timely detection and intervention in case of any threats to crops. The use of UAV's in smallholder agriculture was poised to ensure food security at household level and improved agricultural water management.

The Department purchased its first drone in 2017 and has since assisted a group consisting of students, interns and officials to successfully undertake the South African Civil Aviation Authority examination to obtain Remote Pilot Licenses. The training was provided by Drone-X, a Civil Aviation Authority approved drone training school. A drone user's group was established and various drone workshops were held. The Department was currently operating eight drones in various roles. Drone technology was set to create exciting new career opportunities and its applications will contribute to growing the agricultural economy and establishing new jobs within the sector.

The Department, in collaboration with the University of Stellenbosch Business School, compiled a Fourth industrial Revolution Report which amalgamated the rapid changes brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the crucial contribution of the agricultural sector toward food security, employment and economic growth.

3.2 Agri Processing Hub

The Department supported Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) within the Western Cape's agricultural economy and offered various support programmes and interventions that facilitated the growth of SMMEs.

These support programmes focused on financing schemes, financial record-keeping, business analysis and planning, market development, market readiness and client support. Agri business support was also provided through training on Agri processes, including the making of cheese, jam, yoghurt, juice and fruit drying.

4. Acknowledgements

The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Department of Agriculture on the sterling and innovative work that they are doing in the agricultural sector in the Western Cape