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MEDIA STATEMENT

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM & RURAL DEVELOPMENT RECOGNITION AWARDS

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Minister of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza, conferred recognition awards on 45 outstanding women for their contribution towards hunger eradication, job creation and the improvement of rural areas, during the Women in Agriculture, Land Reform & Rural Development Annual Recognition Awards ceremony held on Monday, 30 October at Mbombela in Mpumalanga.

The awards were organised under the theme: ***“Recognising the role of women in improving rural development, food security and increasing production and employment”*** and comprised of four categories, namely, smallholder, commercial, agro-processing, and female farmer with disability.

Speaking during the awards ceremony, Minister Didiza said that it is important to acknowledge women who are playing a significant role in the sectors because women were not fully recognised in the past, regardless of their involvement and valuable contribution to food security.

Minister Didiza also presented special ministerial awards to two female farmers, Ms Makhosi Cebekhulu and Ms Zokhanyo Bikani. Ms Cebekhulu is a member and deputy secretary of Ubizo Communal Property Association (CPA) based in Ubizo in Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal. The CPA manages 2 547 hectares restored to 149 households in 2015 through the restitution process. She is also a manager of the farm that produces more than 95 000 tons of sugarcane per season that is supplies Tongaat-Hulett. As part of her duties, she manages 150 employees of which 80% of them are from the Ubizo community.

Ms Zokhanyo Bikani on the other hand, started her own mushroom business which is based in Masakhane outside Gansbaai in Western Cape. She was trained by the Grootbos Foundation to educate community members, especially women, about urban farming



methods, to enable them to grow their own food at their homes. Ms Bikani established small groups made up of women and few young men who dropped out from school and encouraged them to learn to be independent by starting their own household vegetables to feed their families. When submitting her needs for her Presidential Economic Stimulus Initiative (PESI) voucher, she made it clear that she only wanted organic pesticides and insecticides as she cares about the environment. She plants a variety of vegetables on a 0,25ha land and uses the garden to train subsistence farmers.

The awards provided a platform for women in the sectors to showcase their work and share experiences, and to support efforts to increase the active participation of women in agriculture, agro-processing and rural development. The awards ceremony was attended by MECs for agriculture from Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape.

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Issued by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development:

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