



rural development & land reform

Department:
Rural Development and Land Reform
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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BATLHABINE COMMUNITY CELEBRATES THE RETURN OF THEIR ANCESTRAL LAND BACK

By Avhashoni Magada

A pivotal moment for Batlhabine community when the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza handed over a title deed to them on Saturday, 15 April 2023 at Letsitele Valley near Tzaneen town in Mopani District, Limpopo.

The minister, in the presence of Batlhabine beneficiaries and other sector stakeholders, officially presented the title deed to confirm ownership in title for the restored forestry land to the claimant beneficiaries.

Addressing more than 500 people gathered at Tubbs' Hill farm, Minister Didiza said that government was striving to ensure that all land that was dispossessed from people, be restored back to them. She further said, "This is done easier through the department's Commission on Restitution of Land Rights programme, which seeks to redress the injustices of the dispossessed communities."

"We are here to congratulate you and give you a title deed because this land, from today, is yours in full title. Today you are no longer workers of this land, but the owners. Thanks to our government for returning your land back, take good care of this land for the success of your families, community, and the country at large," said Minister Didiza.

The Minister further pointed out that the title deed is for the beneficiaries and not the executive committee of the Communal Property Association (CPA). The proceeds of the restored farm should benefit all households affected by the removal.

Minister Didiza also emphasised the importance of education and the necessary skills needed in the farming sector. She told beneficiaries of Batlhabine Ba Mogoboya that education was key in the farming sector. She also encouraged the beneficiaries to take education seriously



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and ensure that, together with their children, they studied hard and focused on agricultural studies so that they could come back and work on the community farms.

“This will assist to accelerate growth and production for these farms, which government has returned in full title,” Minister Didiza further reiterated.

The momentous occasion

The Chief Land Claims Commissioner, Ms Nomfundo Ntloko, outlined the purpose of the historic event. She provided the description of the restored property as Portion 3 of the forestry farm Tamara 573 LT measuring 216 hectares (ha) acquired at a cost of over R3 million and indicated that the farm was transferred on 15 February 2023.

“We would like to congratulate the new owners and we trust that they will use their land productively,” said Ms Ntloko.

Acceptance moment

The Chairperson of Batlhabine CPA, Mr Eric Ralepelle, thanked the minister and her high-level delegation for traveling to Letsitele Valley to hand over the important document in person that confirms that the farm is indeed registered in the name of the community with the Deeds Office. Mr Ralepelle also indicated that the community will enter into a management agreement with the previous landowner to develop the acquired forestry land.

Mr Ralepelle, in his capacity as the Chairperson of Batlhabine CPA, presented a dummy cheque to the tune of R600 000,00 symbolising the amount to be paid out equally as dividends to beneficiaries in the next coming two weeks as proceeds from previously restored farms.

How did we arrive here?

The land claim was lodged by Kgoshi Sakia Ledikwa Mogoboya on 10 October 1998 on behalf of Batlhabine Tribe in various farms at the fertile Letsitele Valley of the Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality, in the Mopani District, which is renowned for its production of high-value subtropical fruit.

The community previously received 11 farms, measuring 1 730 ha at the cost of R50,3 million to the state, and this community land claim is being settled in phases.



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The current number of households is 295 and total number of beneficiaries currently stands at 876. The farms' previously restored portions produce mangos, bananas, litchis, paw-paws, carambolas (star fruit), citrus, macadamia nuts and avocados.

Among the dignitaries who attended the event were the Acting Director-General Mr Terries Ndove; Chief Land Claims Commissioner, Ms Nomfundo Ntloko; Acting Deputy Land Claims Commissioner, Ms Cindy Benyane; Regional Land Claims Commissioner, Mr Lebyane Maphutha; Chief Director: Land Restitution Support in Limpopo, Mr Tele Maphoto; and Mr Mkhachani Makamu from Gauteng Regional Land Claims Commission. The chief directors in the Limpopo Provincial Shared Service Centre, Dr Modumo Ramodumo and Chief Livhuwani Matsila; member of the Limpopo Legislature Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Hon. Funani Jerry Maseko; and most importantly, Batlhabine Ba Mogoboya Senior Tradition Leader Chief Masibele Jack Mogoboya, also graced the event with their presence.



Euphoric moment! Minister Thoko Didiza, Limpopo Legislature Portfolio Committee Chairperson Hon Jerry Maseko, Chief Land Claims Commissioner Ms Nomfundo Ntloko and Acting Director General at



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the time Mr Terries Ndove twirling after handing over the title Deed to Batlhabine Ba Mogoboya
Communal Property Association



Minister Thoko Didiza and the Chairperson of the Batlhabine CPA displaying the title deed and a cheque of R600 000 to be distributed to the beneficiaries as part of the proceeds from previously restored farms. Looking is the Acting DG Mr Terrues Ndove and the Chief Land Claims Commissioner Ms Nomfundo Ntloko