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New programme to link KZN agri graduates with job opportunities

12:35 (GMT+2), Mon, Monday, May 30, 2016

By Lloyd Phillips

In a first for South Africa, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (KZN DARD) recently launched the Agricultural Graduates Placement Programme (AGPP).

This programme aims to link unemployed agricultural graduates with work experience and other job opportunities in the country's agricultural value-chain.

"The online graduate portal seeks to bridge the gap in the agricultural sector by linking the existing but unutilised agricultural skills and talents with commercial farms, unproductive [land reform](#) farms, and the agri-business value-chain," said KZN DARD's head of department, Dr Siphiwe Mkhize, in a staff circular.

Agricultural graduates looking for work experience or employment, and farmers and agri-businesses seeking agricultural graduates, can register their details on an online portal, or visit their nearest KZN DARD office.

[The African Farmers' Association of SA](#) (AFASA) also welcomed the AGPP's launch. AFASA's secretary general, Aggrey Mahanjana, said that agricultural graduates from SA's tertiary education institutions often lacked sufficient practical farming experience. He felt that the AGPP could help remedy this shortfall.

"This is a good initiative, especially for young people who want to start their own farming enterprises. People must also understand that the [agricultural] sector is becoming more technical and mechanised. This is pushing the sector to be less labour-intensive. Only highly skilled personnel will, in future, be absorbed by the sector," said Mahanjana.

AFASA urged the KZN DARD to ensure that proper screening of farmers and agribusinesses willing to host or employ agricultural graduates first be

carried out “to avoid students landing in the wrong hands”.

“If there is a [financial](#) incentive for the farmers [and agribusinesses] to be hosts, the possibility will be that all fly-by-nights will take chances and the [AGPP will] miss its goal,” said Mahanjana.

For more information on how to participate in the AGPP, visit ugp.kzndard.gov.za.

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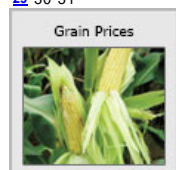


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