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MEDIA STATEMENT**For Immediate Release****Date: 23 July 2021****SUBJECT: GENETIC IMPROVEMENT OF COMMUNAL SHEEP FLOCKS**

Recently local farmers across the O.R. Tambo District benefited in RAMS Exchange program. 270 Duhne Merino have been distributed across the district. This is an ongoing O.R. Tambo District Municipality funded Rams Exchange Program which is being rolled out to the rest of the district with the aim of improving wool production and farmers access to high yield breeds of rams.

In this great initiative Ntinga O.R. Tambo Development Agency as the implementing agency of the O.R. Tambo District Municipality ensured that local farmers are benefiting in the district wide wool improvement program. Sheep farmers and wool growers across the district gained from this important and high impact program aiming at the genetic improvement of communal wool sheep flocks. Majority of local farmers around the district have benefited in this program and expressed gratitude to government for involvement in sheep farming.

Communal livestock farming is one the world's oldest farming system and is associated with improved household food security in poverty-stricken areas. Sheep farming plays a significant role in poverty eradication especially in the Eastern Cape Province.

Speaking on behalf of Ntinga O.R. Tambo Development Agency Acting CEO Loyiso Mbiko highlighted the importance of Sheep farming and how it contributes towards red meat value chain across the district. "The exchanged Rams have the potential to adapt to harsh conditions of the Eastern Cape Province with minimal maintenance costs. Moreover, the communal sheep taken in exchange from the local farmers will be fattened and taken to Umzikantu Red Meat Abattoir for slaughtering. Sheep farming plays an important role in the local economy and red meat value chain in the district" said Mbiko.

Ntinga O.R. Tambo Development Agency SOC Ltd: A Municipal Entity of the O.R. Tambo District Municipality (Reg. 2016/272582/30)

Directors: Mr. S.E. Mase (Chairperson); Prof. L.Y. Majova-Songca; Ms. U.N. Mkize; Mr. M. Msiwa; Dr. L.L. Ndabeni; Ms. N.S.N. Bam; Dr. N.T. Ndudane;
Ms. N.D.A. Ngewu; Mr. M.M. Pupuma; Mr. P.K. Pongwana (CEO)

Company Secretary: Ms. C. Mfana

He further articulated that all the strides that have been made are in line with the National Development Plan (Chapter 6) which point out that there is a need to revive and mainstream communal agriculture.

Konaye Sitofile member of the Executive Committee of Libode Woolgrowers Association commended O.R. Tambo District Municipality as well as Ntinga for this great initiative. He also highlighted that their sheep flocks have poor wool and this program will assist them to improve their flocks and the quality of wool they produce as the local farmers.

Socio-economic challenges such as lack of job opportunities and poverty in the communities of O.R. Tambo District are notable, thus government is making tireless efforts to revive communal agriculture.

For more information contact Communications and PR Officer: Siphosethu Tikana at 064 900 8392 or email siphosethut@ntinga.org.za

Issued by Ntinga O.R. Tambo Development Agency SOC Ltd, Office of the CEO.