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MEDIA STATEMENT**For Immediate Release****Date: 11 August 2022****SUBJECT: ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION PROGRAMME CONDUCTED SUCCESSFULLY**

Ntinga O.R Tambo Development Agency participated in Animal Branding Programme that was held in Qumbu, Ndwe Admin Area on the 10th of August 2022. The program was organized by Mhlontlo Farmers Association with the intention of educating the local farmers about the importance of Animal Branding and to fight livestock theft in the Ndwe Admin area as it is one of the stock-theft hotspot areas in the O.R. Tambo District.

Local Farmers came in numbers to embrace this prominent programme and to gain knowledge on livestock improvement. Various Departments including Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (DRDAR), SAPS, Mhlontlo Local Municipality and O.R Tambo District Municipality also attended the occasion.

Senior Manager Trading Enterprises Mlungiseleli Zilimbola speaking on behalf of Ntinga gave the local farmers a glimpse of what Ntinga O.R Tambo Development Agency is doing in terms of livestock improvement, livestock production and opportunities available for Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME's). He further highlighted some of the key programmes that can benefit local farmers such as Heifer exchange, Bull loaning and Rams exchange programme. He also emphasized on the importance of animal branding that assists in identification of stolen livestock. The entity is committed to work in hands with all the key stakeholders through District Development Model (DDM).

Speaking on behalf of Mhlontlo Farmers Association Chairperson Mr Lawrence Mambila commended all the stakeholders that were in attendance. He also highlighted that DRDAR played a significant role in assisting local farmers by providing them with seedlings, fencing material and production inputs.

DR Hozani Wedu-wedu Mhlontlo Manager (DRDAR), was among the key dignitaries that attended the programmes. He made informative insights about the commercial side of farming. He also capacitated farmers about animal branding.

Colonel Mzukisi Sigcawu SAPS stock-theft in Qumbu speaking during the engagement, urged Local farmers to brand their livestock. He also highlighted that Qumbu is one of the areas with high stock-theft.

"All the local farmers must apply for branding certificates. If we work together as a community, we will be able to fight stock-theft in our community. Let's do with traditional way of branding livestock and create a safe environment for everyone," said Col Sigcawu

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