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Agriculture Ministry commemorates Arbor Day
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EDITOR’S NOTE

Welcome to the first edition of the MAWF Newsletter for 2015, which focuses on the achievements and activities in the agriculture, water and forestry sectors.

In this edition, we bring you the stories of the main events that took place during the fourth quarter of 2014, such as the inauguration of the Ministry’s new state veterinary facilities, namely Eenhana veterinary office, Outapi veterinary office and Omuthiya veterinary office, all aimed at completing the Government’s efforts to control animal disease in the regions.

We have created a platform for you, our readers, to send letter, stories, photographs and comments to the editor on the matter related to Agriculture, Water and Forestry. You are welcome to send your contributions to kalom@mawf.gov.na and may find them in our next Newsletter. Enjoy the read!

Margaret Kalo - Editor

Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry
Luther Street
Government Office Park
Private bag 13184
Windhoek

Tel: +264 61 208 7719/7604
Fax: +264 61 208 7767
Website: www.mawf.gov.na
State Veterinary Offices bring relief to farmers in Communal Areas

The Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Hon. John Mutorwa officially inaugurated the newly constructed State Veterinary Services Offices and a Clinic at Eenhana in the Ohangwena region. The offices were constructed with support funding from the United States Government using the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and through the Millennium Challenge Account Namibia (MCA-Namibia), while the Republic of the Government of Namibia provided partnership funding through MAWF for the project.

During the official inauguration, Agriculture Minister, John Mutorwa emphasised that the establishment of State Veterinary Services offices built in the areas north of the veterinary cordon fence is part of the MAWF strategy to implement the policy on eradication of trans-boundary animal diseases.

"The ultimate objective of this strategy is to enable the relevant international bodies to recognise these areas as free from Foot and Mouth disease as well as contagious Bovine Pneumonia also known as lung sickness," Mutorwa said.

"It is my duty as the current line Minister, to publicly inform the Namibian public, particularly the Namibian farmers that it is the duty and mandate of the Namibian Government, through the Ministry responsible for Livestock, to continue constructing auction facilities, loading facilities, quarantine facilities, state veterinary offices and clinics in all those areas, in our country, where they never existed and do not yet exist," the Minister said.

The inauguration at Eenhana was attended by various dignitaries including the Ohangwena Governor, Hon. Uusko Nghaamwa, MCA senior officials, regional and traditional councillors, the National Farmers Union representatives, church leaders and community activists.
New dam boosts Ohangwena livestock farming

Livestock farmers at the remote Oshamono village in the Epembe Constituency of Ohangwena Region have breathed a sigh of relief after the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry in partnership with the Millennium Challenge Account Namibia (MCA-N) handed over the N$4.5 million Nghishongwa Earth Dam to the Oshamono community. The dam was inaugurated by the Minister of Agriculture Water & Forestry (MAWF), John Mutorwa, on the 8 November 2014.

The Nghishongwa Earth Dam was built with the aim of increasing farmers’ income in the Northern Communal Areas. The dam has a capacity of 60,000m³ and comes complete with a solar-powered submersible pump, a pipeline feeding water storage tanks, livestock drinking troughs and a stock proof fence around it.

The Nghishongwa Dam provides for the simultaneous watering of large herds with more than 600 head of cattle and can hold water for up to two years, even allowing for the additional requirements of villagers who venture into gardening projects.

At the handover ceremony, Agriculture Minister Mutorwa urged the local community to continuously guard the Nghishongwa Earth Dam infrastructure that was made possible by American taxpayers, reminding them that Namibia was a very dry country and that water meant life for the Oshamono community and their livestock.

“This dam will no doubt help improve the condition of your livestock and the farmers will get far better prices for their animals at the auctions,” the Minister said, adding that the Government planned to take over from where MCA-N had left off by constructing similar earth dams at selected settlements throughout the country.

Once again, the Minister warned against theft and vandalism of the dam infrastructure. “There are solar panels and pumps. There is a fence around the dam. All these must be protected. If you take good care of this dam it will help you,” the Minister urged the communal farmers.

U.S. Embassy Chargé d’Affaires, John Kowalski, said the U.S. Government recognised the lasting benefits of creating opportunities for hard-working Namibians to help themselves - and by doing so, to build a stronger Namibia.
Omuthiya State Veterinary Office opens

The Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry Lempy Lucas officially inaugurated the state veterinary office and houses at Omuthiya Gwiipundi, in Oshikoto region.

In the past, farmers all across the region had to travel to Ondangwa to have their livestock checked by a veterinarian. This has now become a story of the past as farmers from the region can now access the public veterinary health services at Omuthiya Gwiipundi. The services will be provided by well-qualified veterinarians as well as other highly experienced animal health professionals.

According to the latest official statistics from the Directorate of Veterinary Services in the Ministry of Agriculture Water and Forestry, Oshikoto region has a total number of about 292,000 cattle, 3,400 sheep, 200,000 goats, and a number of other domestic animals.

During the event, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Hon. Lempy Lucas stated that the new structure within the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry has been approved by the Public Service Commission and will be effective from 1st August 2014. This means that in the near future, Omuthiya State Veterinary Office will have its own 2 state veterinarians who will be based fully at the office, and at the same time be able to observe the health of the livestock in respective constituencies and farms.

The establishment of this office, together with other state veterinary offices within the area of the Veterinary Cordon Fence, is part of the overall Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry’s Strategy to eliminate trans-boundary animal disease.

Namibia signs a cooperation agreement with Serbia

The Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry and the Serbian Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding on technical cooperation in the field of Agriculture and Water Resource Management.

The two countries have agreed to cooperate on various human resources training and capacity building initiatives, particularly in the water sector. According to the newly signed MOU, collaboration and cooperation in the water sector will include the strengthening of professional capacity building both at master’s level and on short courses, as well as project development in integrated flood and drought management planning.

Signing on behalf of the Government, the Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, John Mutorwa expressed gratitude to the Serbian Government, saying that, once fully implemented, the MOU will put Namibia’s water sector at an advantageous and possibly advanced position in water and disaster management.

“We look forward to the beginning of intensive future joint activities in those important fields” stated the head of the Serbian delegation Professor Milan Dimkic.
The Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry commemorates the annual Arbor day

The Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry celebrated the world tree planting day known as Arbor Day. This year’s Arbor Day was celebrated under the theme: “Plant trees that promote indigenous knowledge, for healthy teeth, plant bluebush”. At the event, people were encouraged to plant as many trees as possible, to avoid deforestation and soil erosion.

In Namibia, Arbor Day is normally celebrated on the second Friday of October by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry highlighting the importance of conserving Namibia’s trees and forest.

Delivering the keynote address at the event, the Deputy Director of Forests and Research at the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Vincent Louw emphasised that Arbor Day is celebrated in order to appreciate and create awareness about trees and their fundamental role for the environment.

“The importance of trees cannot be over emphasised. Trees provide habitats to small insects, birds, both wild and domesticated animals and reptiles. Therefore when trees are destroyed, their habitat is also destroyed. Roots from the trees help to stabilise the ground by holding and binding soil particles together and also reduce soil erosion” – said Louw.

The selected tree of the year for 2014 was Diospyros Lycioides, locally known as Bluebush which is commonly used and provides fodder for animals. The wood is used to build huts and make spoons.

Mutorwa appoints new Co-operatives Advisory Board

The Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Hon, John Mutorwa appointed the new Co-operatives Advisory Board, which will serve for the next three years, (2014-2017). The Co-operatives Act under Clause 13 makes provision for the establishment of a Co-operative Advisory Board.

The Minister made the following statement. “The Board that I am inaugurating here today is not the Minister’s making but legally provided for under the Co-operatives Act”. During the inauguration of the new Co-operative Advisory Board in October, Mutorwa emphasised that the Namibian Government through the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry has developed a policy and legal framework to guide and regulate the establishment and operations of agricultural co-operatives. At the same event, the Minister also highlighted that the new Advisory Board has a vital responsibility to address issues affecting the livelihoods of our people.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry supports the establishment and development of all
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**Omuthiya Community receives Livestock and Agricultural items during the 2014 World Food Day Commemorations**

The Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) donated agricultural products worth over N$ 300 000 to ten beneficiaries and the general public at the World Food Day celebration held in Omuthiya (Oshikoto Region).

The donated items included goats, fertilisers and vegetable seeds while the general public each received a pack of Mahangu or sorghum seeds. This year’s World Food day was held under the theme “Family farming: feeding the world; caring for the Earth”. The event also highlighted awareness of food security and agricultural sustainability. This year’s theme is a symbol of recognition of the role that farmers play towards household and food sufficiency.

It is estimated that a total of 805 million people worldwide in 2012-2014 were reported as being undernourished. In Namibia, despite the effect of floods and droughts experienced in the country, there has been a slight improvement in agriculture production in 2013/14 compared with 2012/13, while household and food security are also reported to have seen some improvement this year.

The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture Water and Forestry, Joseph Iita, pointed out that the Namibian Government should be applauded for its efforts towards curbing poverty in the country.

“Namibia as a country is being driven by the goal of achieving national food self-sufficiency as stipulated in our Fourth National Development Plan (NDP4), which is also aimed at poverty reduction and food security,” stated Iita.

Iita made reference to several government-initiated programmes through the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry geared towards ensuring household and national food security by providing tractors, fertilisers, bulls, and encouraging development of irrigation-based agronomic produce in Namibia.

The Chairperson of the Oshikoto Regional Council and Councillor of the Onayena Constituency, Max Nekongo, urged the beneficiaries to appreciate Government’s efforts.

He said the beneficiaries should see the donations as manna from heaven that will enable families to care for their children.