



## **MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND FORESTRY**

### **MAWF invites Agronomists Activist Group 11 to constructive dialogue**

Over recent months, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF) took note of several letters to the editor published by various Namibian newspapers in which a group called the “Agronomist Activist Group 11” criticises MAWF over numerous issues in a rather unsubstantiated manner.

One such recent letter was titled “The Ministry of Agriculture creates unfair competition” and was published in the Sun newspaper on 29.01.2014, another one was titled “Green Scheme a White Elephant” and was published in the Namibian newspaper on 14.02.2014.

What may at first sight appear as the utterance of comprehensible concerns in these letters regularly turns out baseless allegations, possibly aimed at provoking MAWF to react.

MAWF therefore today wishes to inform both media houses and the readership of these letters that the “Agronomist Activist Group 11” is not unknown to our Ministry and consists of people who are disgruntled over MAWF’s decision some time ago, that they were not eligible to a Ministry support programme.

This group of disgruntled people appears to have vowed to henceforth discredit if not badmouth MAWF, and writing letters to the editors of Namibian newspapers - which are often uncritically printed as they fall under “opinion” and are therefore correctly protected by our constitutional right of freedom of speech - seems to be their chosen tool in doing so.

MAWF not only has reasonable grounds to disagree with the views of this group from a professional point of view, but also wishes to highlight that the Ministry has invited this Agronomist Activist Group 11 on several occasions to discuss their presumed concerns and allegations. Yet, the group has always refused this offer and instead opted to continue spreading their insinuations through letters to the newspapers.

From the outset, MAWF does not believe in arguing out differences in the public sphere and is not inclined to respond here and today in this newspaper point by point to the countless unfounded allegations made, let alone “defend” or “justify” government policies in the agricultural sector on the basis of the Agronomist Activist Group 11 questionable claims. Not even a book would be sufficient to deal with that and we would do no justice to the readers.

MAWF however believes in constructive dialogue, fruitful discussion, teamwork and finding common ground to the benefit of our communities and nation at large. We therefore reiterate our Ministry’s unconditional willingness to discuss with the Agronomist Activist Group 11 and discuss their apparent issues, claims and allegations.

We are confident that all matters pertaining misunderstandings and misconceptions resulting in misleading information as disseminated through the group's letters to newspaper editors can be resolved and that a joint approach as well as mutual understanding and respect are possible – and in the best interest of our farming communities, whom we serve.