



Government Wants to Survey 2 500 Small-Scale Farms

The Namibian (Windhoek)

NEWS

November 22, 2006

Posted to the web November 22, 2006

By Brigitte Weidlich

Windhoek

GOVERNMENT intends to divide land into 2 500 small farms which have to be serviced, surveyed and provided with at least one borehole each, a Government official said.

What land would be divided was not specified.

Speaking at a land reform workshop organised by the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) yesterday, Dr Nashilongo Shivute, Under Secretary in the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement, said this process was very costly and the beneficiaries to be resettled there needed training in the field of commercial farming.

"We even think of erecting a house each on those farms," Shivute said.

"This project could however not yet materialise due to lack of funding," Shivute told the 30 participants.

Several hundred of those farms would be in the communal areas, Shivute said, but residents living there could decide whether they wanted such small farms surveyed in their areas or not.

"In the Oshana Region the communities said they did not want such small-scale farms, they did not agree to that," Shivute added.

"We had feasibility studies prepared for all 13 regions regarding the use of land."

She then referred to the rural communities in the Tsumkwe area, where the Lands Ministry wants to divide the land of an existing conservancy into small farms for resettlement.

According to earlier media reports, the Lands Ministry intends to proceed with the small farms within the N?a Jaqna Conservancy, despite resistance from the residents, who want to develop the tourism potential of the officially proclaimed conservancy.

"The Tsumkwe issue was blown out of proportion," Dr Shivute said.

Asked why there were two different land-use concepts for the conservancy, Shivute replied that he

Ministry had prepared an integrated land-use plan while the conservancy development went ahead at the same time.

Apart from financial constraints, the Lands Ministry was experiencing problems with the implementation of land-use plans in areas with traditional chiefs not recognised by Government.

"Communities under those unrecognised chiefs are not co-operating with the implementation of the Communal Land Reform Act, but discussions are ongoing to find solutions," Dr Shivute said.

Officials had also looked into the tenure and inheritance rights of orphans and vulnerable children, Shivute added.

Government had bought 201 commercial farms for resettlement since the start of its land reform programme and 1 561 families were resettled, Shivute said at the end of her presentation.

In his presentation, the Chief Executive Officer of the Namibia Agricultural Union, Sakkie Coetzee, said the greatest challenge for land reform in Namibia was to "achieve a balance between the political pressure that exists and the economic realities".

Good progress had been made with the acquisition of farmland by previously disadvantaged Namibians, Coetzee said as 755 farms covering 3,6 million hectares had been bought with affirmative action loans.

Together with the resettlement farms bought by the Lands Ministry, some 5,8 million hectares of commercial farmland now belong to previously disadvantaged Namibians.

Coetzee suggested an amendment of the existing land tax, which is currently levied according to the number of farms owned.

"This could be changed and calculated according to the amount of hectares owned," Coetzee said.

The two-day conference ends today.