

African Union commits to small stock rearing

By [Benjamin Shapi](#)

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GABORONE, Botswana - The coordinator of the AU-Inter Africa Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR, VETGOV) based at Sebele says the African Union (AU) is committed to empowering women and youth in small stock production.



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Speaking during a two-day workshop for small stock farmers organised by Botswana Farmers Association at Sebele on Wednesday, Dr Peter Sinyangwe said his organ has been mandated by the AU to work on capacity building and strengthening of small commodity, especially small stock farmers to realise their dreams.

Sinyangwe said their intervention was also to ensure that small stock farmers form strong and vibrant cooperatives which would make them prosper without encountering many challenges.

He said there should be synchrony of applied technics and farming methods among farmers in various regions of the country. This, he said, would assist small stock farmers to appreciate and know what the other farmers were doing in other regions, and that they would be able to share ideas as well as challenges they encountered.

Sinyangwe added that he was optimistic that women, who formed a large part of the attendants, would benefit from the workshop.

He encouraged the youth to take part in small stock production in large numbers, adding that the sector has a bright future.

Small stock sector was doing relatively well

For his part, the deputy coordinator of the poverty eradication programme in the Ministry of Agriculture Development and Food Security, Kemoabe Ditedu said the programme has its challenges, but that he was elated that the small stock sector was doing relatively well compared to other alternative packages. Ditedu said while packages such as bee keeping, rabbit production, leather works, indigenous chickens, vegetable production and fodder production were not doing as expected, small stock was performing well, though goats were at times attacked by diseases.

He said most vegetable projects did not succeed because of the shortage of water countrywide while chickens were attacked by New Castle Disease.

With regard to bees, he said there has been a long spell of the absence of wild colonies to collect and multiply while some bee beneficiaries lost their bees because they were not given the right care.

A need to harmonise farming activities

Meanwhile, the president of Botswana Farmers Association, Diane Sibanda said the country was lacking behind in the region in harmonising its farming activities which were mostly headed by the youth and women.

She said in the past the country sent famers who were not competent to represent it at SADC regional farming meetings and said the time had come for them to introspect on the issue.

She also decried challenges such as climate change, lack of resources and infrastructure, saying they crippled the sector.

Sibanda, however, said with a strong commitment from farmers they could overcome some of the challenges, adding that they should use ICT in farming to achieve maximum rewards.

Thato Supang from AgriBusiness Forum Botswana, who were co-sponsors of the event, said the workshop would look at various issues such as farming organisation structures, farming principles, existing farming organisation structures, participation of women, policies and strategies and the ICT role.

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