

APPSA LESOTHO INTRODUCES ROAD CONSTRUCTION FIRM TO THE COMMUNITY



Agricultural Productivity Programme for Southern Africa (APPSA) is supported by the World Bank and seeks to promote a regional approach to agricultural technology generation and dissemination by supporting, strengthening, and scaling up of regional centers of leadership on commodities of regional importance. Lesotho selected horticulture-based farming systems as Regional Center of Leadership (RCoL) or commodity of excellence. The proposed RCoL in Lesotho focuses on Fruit Trees, and Vegetable Production. Other areas of research priorities are on Legumes (Beans) and Cereals (Sorghum). APPSA in Lesotho was officially launched in 2019 and will phase out in January 2025.

To strengthen the institutional and enabling environment for technology adoption through upgrading and development of research infrastructure, APPSA engaged a design and supervision firm to undertake civil engineering designs for the proposed construction of infrastructure planned to enable enhancement of RCoL in Horticulture. This was followed by engagement of contractors who are to construct and build the infrastructure. The procurement processes took approximately six months to complete.

In preparation for the construction phase, Information, Communication and Knowledge Management (ICKM) jointly with Environment and Social Safeguards (ESS) of APPSA undertook stakeholder consultations and community engagement/sensitization to pave way for the contractor to undertake activities. The purpose is to ensure that risks associated with the construction are communicated with the communities, to establish a communication base between the contractor and the community and to ensure that all lines of communication and protocols are clearly ironed out.

As part of the series of community sensitization initiatives, the 3rd community engagement was held on the 11th June 2023 within the premises of the Lesotho Agricultural College (LAC) in which the Department of Agricultural Research (DAR) is located. Almost 65 participants showed up during the event as per the documented attendance register. The gathering was a strong mix of gender and age groups which blended a diverse outlook and interests into the project. In terms of hiring of personnel, the views were many but the whole discussion culminated with a consensus to keep a register of names and skillsets for interested parties with the exclusion of civil servants. Civil servants may only serve in the committees. During hire, labor will be selected based on contractor's need at the time. The contractor considers three sets of skills which are classified as skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labor.



According to the design and supervision firm, the drawing and setting of the road to DAR main station is still under development. The process involves determining the earth work on infrastructure implemented by other agencies such as electrical power poles, water, and sewage lines as well as other key infrastructural elements. Construction works are anticipated to commence in two weeks from today's stakeholders' engagement meeting. The community concerns were centered around the obstruction of road for routine errands. The firm's response was that a *Stop & Go* strategy would be employed. The arrangement will allow for a free flow of end-to-end traffic while building one side of the road at a time and controlling traffic from one end. Since the forming of dust is inevitable in this type of construction work, suppression mechanism will be applied in a form of scheduled sprinklers.

The current road construction work is one of the four (4) construction works anticipated to run concurrently in close vicinity. The understanding is that the road construction firm together with ordinary road users will continue to use the route running from the main gate. Only heavy-duty

users of the road will utilize the alternative routes meant for them to alleviate stress on the road construction site. All grievances arising as the result of infrastructure activities will follow the grievance redress mechanism (GRM) resources and channels to lodge, document and resolve complaints as such.

Contractor will erect a site camp for office purposes and safekeeping of exclusive equipment. The firm sought solemnly for cooperation from the community to ensure smooth operations. Contractor's safety officer indicated that working together during implementation helps avoid unnecessary accidents and incidents particularly at construction site. He further showed that any reasonable degree of fault caused by the firm on humans or property will be the responsibility of the firm.

A community committee constituting five (5) members was elected on the same day to work hand in hand with other key personnel overseeing construction works. The committee will act as a formal communication channel through which community grievances and engagements could be relayed. The selection criterion was based on the representation of localities falling within the construction work premises.

A similar process will be undertaken for all infrastructure construction that will take place in all the different five (5) research station of DAR, namely Mokhotlong, Mahobong, Machache, Nyakosoba and Siloe.