



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Task Team Report

On the

Investigation of problems that arose during
the 2012/2013 implementation of ART in
Limpopo province

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1 Preface and legal frame-work of investigation

The mandate for the investigation for which this report was compiled was duly and legally given as *“to investigate the details of the problems at the ART implementation sites where they emerged for the project phase implemented in 2012-2013 financial year”*. This report serves solely the latter mentioned mandate and is therefore not intended for any other purpose that may emerge for which it was not intended. The findings are deductions from the factual information as relayed by the famers and in cases where binding but unsubstantiated statements were made they were recorded as allegations as the task team had no means to prove or disprove their correctness. This report shall only be tabled at an official gathering of the Provincial ART steering committee and its further presentation beyond the point shall be with the granting of permission by this committee as the commissioner of the investigation.

The mandate for the investigation was issued on behalf of the Provincial Steering Committee by the chairperson:

DR Nthakheni N.D. :

The mandate was received and acted upon up to the reporting stage by the appointed members as follows:

Dr. Mashiloane M.R. :

Netshilema T. :

Sebei P.J. :

Mashiloane M.L. :

Sambo F.T. :

Moloto M.J. :

Maruma M. :

Sitholimela M. :

2 Background

The Application of Assisted Reproductive Technology to upgrade productive and reproduction of the communal beef cattle herd in the Limpopo province is a joint project between the Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA) and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC). The funding for this project came from Technology and Innovation Agency (TIA). The implementation of this project in the Limpopo province came after proper consultation with the authority and collaboration with technical personnel in the LDA. Prior to commencement of the applications in the project, the project was piloted successfully on site within the province and the experiences thereof were used to declare the project suitable for roll-out through the entire province. Prior to the roll-out, provincial steering committee and district steering committees with defined roles and responsibilities were setup to facilitate the recruitment, selection and technical support function in the implementation process that is led by the ARC. Among many other roles of the steering committees, there is one of monitoring project implementation to ensure compliance to project guidelines. In a joint provincial and district steering committees meeting held on the 17th of February 2014 there was a discussion on “Challenges of the previous breeding season” which was held under agenda item 7.2. In this agenda item there were general issues and site specific issues that were raised from all district steering committees. Some general challenges were resolved immediately, others were regarded a learning curve for future implementation, others were declared out of scope of influence of the steering committees and the project. There were also specific site challenges of grave concern that seemed central to the overall success of the project and there appeared to be limited information on which to conclude and resolve these challenges. This lack of information or facts necessitated that an investigation be initiated to establish facts on which conclusions and resolutions to the challenges shall be derived. The resolution on agenda and minutes item 6.2 of the ART Steering committee meeting states that *“For specific challenges, a team consisting of Veterinary services representation, LDA official on site and an ARC representative shall be formed to investigate the details of the problems at the site where they emerged. The secretariat shall serve as coordinator on this team and the results shall be reported to the chairperson in a month’s time and also in the next meeting”*.

3 Authority for Investigation

The authority for execution of this investigation was granted by the provincial steering and district committees’ joint sitting through the provincial steering committee chairperson in a formal and recorded gathering of the 17th February 2014.

4 Constitution of the investigation task team

In line with resolution of agenda item 6.2 the following appointed committee members were constituted into a task team as follows:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Veterinary representative | : | Mashiloane M.R. |
| 2. ARC Representative | : | Netshilema T. |
| 3. The Secretariat | : | Sebei P.J., Mashiloane M.L. |
| 4. District Representatives | : | Mopane : Sambo F.T. |
| | : | Vhembe : Sitholimela M. |
| | : | Capricorn : Moloto M.J. |
| | : | Sekhukhune : Maruma M. |

Based on resolution of agenda item 6.2 of the ART Steering committee meeting minutes, the terms of reference (TOR) for investigation were constructed as follows by the task team and approved by the chairperson.

1. Planning and scheduling of investigation activities
2. Co-opting of relevant technical personnel by task team members if deemed necessary for attaining objectives.
3. Visit of specific projects sites for facts gathering
4. Analysis of separate/individual findings and collation into unitary findings
5. Drafting of report and presentation to the committee

The officials who were co-opted for involvement in the investigation included:

- | | | |
|--------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Setati M.M. | : | ART Provincial Training coordinator |
| Mushaku M. | : | ART Committee Vhembe |
| Dr. Mabasa C | : | Veterinary Services Mopani |
| Mnisi T.D. | : | ART Committee Mopani |
| Sithole G.P. | : | ART Committee Mopani |
| Moloto M. | : | ART Committee Capricorn |

5 Specific Investigation Cases

In line with the resolutions of the meeting in which the task team was constituted, terms of reference the specific problem areas that were targeted for investigation were in the municipalities: Makhado (Vhalinavho), Giyane (Mapubye, Mashabela & Muyexe), Maruleng (Aneas Eden & The Willows), Aganang (Prospect) and Fetakgomo (Strydskraal, Lepellane & Vlakplaas). The specific issues (or problems) for specific project sites that necessitated investigation were as follow:

Makhado Municipality

Valinavho Project : Low calving rate

Giyane Municipality

Mapubye, Mashabela & Muyexe : High Abortion rate
: Selection of pregnant animals into project

Maruleng Municipality

The Willows, Enable & Aneas Eden : Low pregnancy
: Loss of interest in cows by bulls after AI

Fetakgomo Municipality

Strydskraal, Lepellane & Vlakplaas : Low conception
: Abortion
: Birth of weak calves and death thereafter

Capricorn Municipality

Prospect : Farmer withdrawal
: Low calf survival

For comprehensive investigation, the issues addressed were not limited to the issues that raised the alarm but the farmers were allowed to also to raise other issues that they deemed of concern to their dissatisfaction or otherwise with the project.

6 Respondents

In all cases, the respondents were farmers either in representation of their enterprises and or the beneficiary groups to which they belong. In all instances, the ART district coordinator and a representative of the ART district committee in the municipality was present as co-opted members to the investigation team. Farmers in representation of groups especially in communal lands were informed to gather information from all individual farmers they represented so as not to miss any of the factual evidence that they may have not known about.

7 Procedure of evidence gathering

In all cases that warranted the investigation, there was no current event but rather observations and records kept by the farmers and agricultural personnel in some cases. To effectively deduce the information out of the observers, open ended interviews and discussions were held in gatherings between the concerned farming communities and the investigating team. To ensure transparency, none of the respondents were questioned or interviewed on their observation individually and all the given statements were therefore open to scrutiny by peers and members of the committee as and when it was rendered available to the gathering. The incidents and numbers pertaining to incidents were recorded as mentioned by observers but the actual sequence of events in the incidents was probed for a better analogy of possible causes and or solutions thereof.

The following are the dates on which gatherings were held at specific sites

28 March 2014 : Giyani Municipality (Mashabela, Muyexe and Giyani)
31 March 2014 : Makhado Municipality (Vhalinavho)
03 April 2014 : Fetakgomo Municipality (Lepellane, Strydskraal B and Vlakplaas)
04 April 2014 : Aganang Municipality (Prospect)
28 May 2014 : Maruleng Municipality (The willows, Aneas Eden and Enable)

8 Findings

The following table presents the findings of the investigation in all sites for which it was performed and it further gives the recommendation as to whether the Steering Committee should take remedial steps for the specific site and what action will seem feasible.

Municipality	Site	Findings	In meeting resolutions	Remedial action needed for site YES/NO	Recommendations
Giyani	Mashabela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The official PD results for this site are 17% (3/17) and all three of the cows calved. ✓ One of the animals that received AI developed an eye problem thereafter and the other one became emaciated and started losing fur. ✓ Farmers were complaining about the sudden loss of weight after birth of calves from the AI process ✓ One of the born calves was born weak and it died a month after birth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The PD results indicated an unsatisfactory level conception. ✓ The problems of the eye and the emaciation have no direct link with the AI process. ✓ The loss of weight of the cow was most likely associated with low nutrition and lactating demands. ✓ The loss of the calf is worrying but no veterinary post mortem was performed to ascertain the cause of death which was the initial agreement for the calves. 	NO	<p>Declare poor success on site.</p> <p>If possible the site should be redone because of the low conception rate it achieved</p> <p>Call for more involvement of Animal Health personnel in assisting with post-mortem of calves in the project for the site</p>
	Muyexe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The official PD results for this site were 71% (27/38) at the time of investigation, there were no clear numbers as to how many that were diagnosed pregnant calved. ✓ Three of the cows that were diagnosed pregnant aborted despite the promise that will never abort made by an unnamed official. ✓ One of the AI calves died immediately after birth. ✓ Farmers felt that a promise about genetic verification had been broken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The PD results indicated a satisfactory level of conception. ✓ The promise about “no abortion” in AI cattle was erroneous and an apology was tendered on behalf of the committee and an unknown official. ✓ The loss of a calf is worrying but again there were no veterinary reports showing the cause of death. ✓ The verification was delayed but still on course to be done on the site. 	NO	<p>Declare good success on site.</p> <p>Call for more involvement of Animal Health personnel in assisting with post-mortem of calves in the project for the site</p>

	Mapubye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The official PD results for this site were 47% (11/23) and at the time of investigation, there were no clear numbers as to how many that were diagnosed pregnant calved. ✓ There was a complaint about the low level of conception by farmers. ✓ There was also an incident wherein a pregnant cow was synchronised. ✓ In the number of cows that had calved at the time of investigation, 1 of the calves was born small and died soon thereafter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The PD results indicated a satisfactory level of conception. ✓ At almost 50% conception, the notion of low conception was arbitrary given the conditions under which AI was applied compared to the average AI rate which is estimated at 60%. ✓ The incident of synchronisation of a pregnant cow was confirmed with evidence of pictures. ✓ The loss of a calf is worrying but again there were no veterinary reports showing the cause of death. 	NO	<p>Declare fair success on site.</p> <p>Call for more involvement of Animal Health personnel in assisting with post-mortem of calves in the project for the site.</p> <p>Committee to relay a message to the implementation team that proper diagnosis should be done to avoid misdiagnosis in the future.</p>
Makhado	Vhalinavho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The official PD results for this site were 93 % (31/33) and of the 31 cows 17 had calved at the time of the investigation. ✓ Three of the calves died suddenly. ✓ One calf died due to lack of milk as the mother yielded little. ✓ Farmers complained about small size of Nguni and asked if Bonsmara was not considered in the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The PD results indicated a satisfactory level of conception. ✓ The death of calves is worrying and it appeared the farmers understood it was more management related although no veterinary post-mortem diagnosis was done. ✓ The program was for now limited to Nguni breed and as such only it shall be propagated in the program. 	NO	<p>Declare good success on site.</p> <p>Call for more involvement of Animal Health personnel in assisting with post-mortem of calves in the project for the site.</p>

Fetakgomo	Lepellane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The official PD results for this site were 50% (3/6) and all three gave calves. ✓ On this site, a cow that was not conditioned was selected even though the selectors seemed to agree on its condition not being desirable to participate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The PD results indicated a satisfactory level of conception. ✓ The cow gave birth after AI although to a frail calf. But information also came forward that the calf was still alive. 	NO	<p>Declare good success on site.</p> <p>In future ensure that the selectors stick strictly to the set selection criteria.</p>
	Strydkraal B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The official PD results for this site were 83% (5/6) and 2 aborted while 3 calved. ✓ All calves were born weak and 1 of the three calves died. ✓ There was a question on the extensive spread of calving for AI done in one day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The PD results indicated a satisfactory level of conception. ✓ An animal health technician was called in to attend the abortions and the weak calf. The calf that died was also reported but was too decomposed to be analysed. ✓ The spread of the calving for AI cows is supposed to be smaller but if there are doubts on the paternity of the calf, it shall be confirmed through parentage verification. 	NO	Declare good success on site.
	Vlakplaas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Official PD results for the site were 66% (4/6) and all four cows calved. ✓ One calf was rejected by cow after birth and later died due to malnutrition. ✓ One of the cows seemed to have come back on heat a month after it was inseminated and therefore the calf may not have come from the AI. ✓ All three calves born on site are female. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The PD results indicated a satisfactory level of conception. ✓ Better nutrition management and calf rearing could have saved the calf. ✓ The parentage of all calves born from AI cows shall be verified and this will tell if the other calf was that of the program or not. ✓ The project objective is to bring bulls so if the calves are all female at a site it means the objective has not been met. 	NO	<p>Declare good success in terms of the implementation.</p> <p>Declare poor success in terms of project objectives.</p> <p>Redo the site to ensure that success in correct sphere is met.</p>

Aganang	Prospect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The official PD results for the site were 71% (5/7) and of the 8 that were inseminated, 4 cows gave birth although with an extensive calving spread. ✓ Two of the pregnant cows died one due to car accident and the other due to an undiagnosed cause. ✓ Two of the cattle aborted with one of them aborting a fully developed calf. ✓ On the day of cow selection, there were farmers that were initially selected to participate in the program but withdrew their animals just as they were about to enter the crush pen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The PD results indicated a satisfactory level of conception. ✓ Farmers were very understanding of the liability on their side to care for the animals when they are in the program. ✓ Of the two abortions, neither of them was reported to the coordinators nor the animal health until the investigation. ✓ It was established that the farmers that withdrew were scared for their animals given the intrusive nature of the process but mostly was due to influence by an opinion leader among them. 	NO	Declare good success on site.
Maruleng	The Willows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The official PD results for the site were 31% (5/16) and of the 5 cows diagnosed pregnant none calved within the expected period but 2 gave calves in April 2014. ✓ Three of the pregnant cows aborted after diagnosis with one among them aborting a fully developed calf. ✓ The other two were suspected to have aborted without being seen. ✓ It was alleged that of the sixteen cows that were inseminated, the fourteen that did not manage to conceive either at insemination or at re-mating are currently being rejected by bulls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The PD results showed an unsatisfactory level of conception. ✓ In all cases of abortion seen, none of the program support officials or animal health personnel was notified. ✓ It was acceded that the level of conception on this site was suspect and warranted further investigation. ✓ The allegation on rejection by bull will also need substantiation by observation. ✓ To ascertain the substance in the allegation of revenue losses, the history of reproduction and the current reproductive capacity of the cattle have to be thoroughly investigated by medical means. 	YES	<p>Declare poor success on site.</p> <p>Conduct a thorough reproductive soundness assessment on the herd.</p> <p>If reproduction capacity is acceptable, redo the herd if the farmer is still interested.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Farmers feel that they have been let down by the project and importantly that the project has led to a potential loss in revenue from the calves that they usually had before the intervention 			
	Aneas Eden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The official PD results for the site were 14% (4/27). ✓ The farmer on site alleged that the cows cycled again a month after AI. ✓ It was also indicated that 6 of the 28 cows synchronised gave calves in January 2014 which was way beyond the expectation period for AI calves. ✓ It was also alleged that the remaining 22 just cycles over and over monthly without conception because the bulls are just not interested in them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The PD results showed an unsatisfactory level of conception. ✓ For cattle that do not conceive after AI it is natural for them to cycle in line with their oestrus activity and their cycling also gave them a chance to be mated by bulls. ✓ Parentage still has to be done to verify if the calves are from AI or not. ✓ The problem of low conception was noted and agreed upon that there is a need for in-depth analysis of the situation. 	YES	<p>Declare poor success on site.</p> <p>Conduct a thorough reproductive soundness assessment on the herd.</p> <p>If reproduction capacity is acceptable, redo the herd if the farmer is still interested.</p>
	Enable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The official PD results for the site were 36% (4/11). ✓ The official figure of PD was in contrast with the figure given by the farmers who indicated 6 of the 11 inseminated were diagnosed pregnant. ✓ One cow calved successfully and the second had an abortion with a fully developed calf. ✓ The four other pregnant cows just seem to have come back to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The official PD results showed an unsatisfactory level of conception. ✓ The PD results have to be verified with the original records by implementation team ✓ The problem of low conception was noted and agreed upon that there is a need for in-depth analysis of the situation. 	YES	<p>Declare poor success on site.</p> <p>Conduct a thorough reproductive soundness assessment on the herd.</p> <p>If reproduction capacity is acceptable, redo the herd if the farmer is still interested.</p>

		<p>cycling again.</p> <p>✓ It is alleged in the current that the 4 that were diagnosed pregnant and the 5 that never conceived are experiencing recurrent cycling without being mated by bulls.</p>			
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9 General Conclusion

The case specific findings of the of the investigation are as presented in the table in the findings section and beyond those findings there were also generic findings that were made that were applicable to all visited sites. The main problem that was cited in almost all sites was that the nutritional status of the animals was not sufficient and help on feeding the animals during the implementation of the project could be very useful. Separation of cows under synchronisation is a big challenge especially in cases where camps are not available. There is also a general lack of monitoring of cows and calves by relevant municipality support structures (animal health and animal production) of the project which has resulted in many calves dying, cows dying and abortions without no proper veterinary diagnosis to establish the cause of death. In general at the core of the outcries that led to the investigation were genuine issues that necessitated it. The findings made were thoroughly explored and recommendations made thereof were meant to augment some of the solutions that were agreed upon in the meeting that commissioned this investigation.

10 Reporting

This report shall be tabled at the ART Provincial Steering Committee meeting which shall adopt and declare the report the official finding of the investigation. The final original copy (signed by the receiving chairperson and the reporting task team members) shall be kept in the project files for future reference. Copies of the report shall be made available to all committee members and all other parties shall access it by sending a request through the chairperson.