

## EMPOWERMENT

# Japan steps in to assist SA subsistence farmers

South Africa's subsistence farmers are getting a helping hand from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to move towards growing agricultural produce to generate personal income.

The agency will be working with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) to implement the Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion initiative, which has already achieved substantial success in other parts of Africa.

The spokesperson for JICA South Africa, Brigitte Kgaphola, told *Farmer's Weekly* that the initiative was the result of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe's call to subsistence farmers in Africa to "move away from agriculture that merely enables farmers to eat,

to agriculture that enables farmers to earn an income". He was speaking at the 2013 Tokyo International Conference on African Development.

Kgaphola added that one of the initiative's achievements since its inception in Kenya, Malawi and Japan in 2014 was the training provided to 20 DAFF officials from KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo. The officials from Limpopo then went on to share their knowledge and skills with 90 agricultural extension officers in that province.

"[The initiative] inherently focuses on motivating both farmers and extension workers by [helping them shift] from the notion of 'grow-and-sell' to 'grow-to-sell'. It has been introduced across Africa and has succeeded in uplifting farmers'

incomes through supply and demand principles by changing their mindsets and by encouraging them to consider market information for better prices [for] their produce," Kgaphola said.

JICA South Africa representative Takahiro Saeki told *Farmer's Weekly* that as of February this year, 735 subsistence farmers across the three provinces had been trained in the initiative's principles and it was now being rolled out nationwide.

"As a result of the training organised by DAFF and JICA, there are 'resource persons' [stationed] in all 51 districts of the nine provinces in South Africa. It's expected [that South Africa will become] a leading country in the scaling up to extend the initiative's approach to one million small farmers across Africa," he said. – *Lloyd Phillips*