



What the land claimants plan

The Vukani community in Sisonke's Nkomazi area became land-reform beneficiaries in November. They now own 4 500ha, featuring citrus and beef enterprises and a game ranch with a lodge. Their approach to becoming productive commercial farmers could be land reform's best hope.

"We'll lease our land to the previous owners until we've learned to farm like they do," explains William Magosi (pictured), a trustee of the Vukani Community Trust. "There's huge potential for us to generate income. In the meantime we'll save money from the lease income and government grants, to train suitable community members in farming. We'd also like to form partnerships with local farmers.

"We plan to run the citrus farm ourselves, but under the guidance of local white farmers. On all our land, it has been decided that only community members will be employed. When our youngsters have had proper agricultural training and when government gives us post-settlement support grants, we'll start running all the farmland ourselves. We don't want our land to go to waste."

The community is setting up a security guard network to prevent vandalism on

the fence-lines between their tribal land and the farms. William says that the community must look out for the interests of their lessees. "There are always a few bad people in any community, and we want to ensure they don't ruin our business dealings where our land is involved," he says. "It's still very early, and we have strong hopes for a good future for us all."

It took just three years to settle the Vukani claim. The land cost the Regional Land Claims Commission (RLCC) nearly R24 million. Regarding post-settlement support, the KZN RLCC's communications manager, Nokuthokoza Ndelela, said, "We need to establish a dedicated post-settlement unit, focusing on the projects' sustainability. Collaborations with other spheres of government are bearing fruit. There's been good progress in providing post-settlement support through the Siyavuna Programme."

The Siyavuna Programme is an initiative by the KZN agriculture department and the departments of economic development and arts, culture and tourism. It helps farming communities in their specific line of production. The arts, culture and tourism department has helped carry out feasibility studies and prepare business plans for land with tourism potential.