

## THE KAVANGO REGIONS CAN BECOME THE BREADBASKET OF NAMIBIA



During his recent visit to the Kavango regions as part of the Bank's Stakeholder Engagement Programme, the Governor of the Bank of Namibia, Mr. Ipumbu Shiimi addressed a highly publicised and attended public lecture at the Rundu Campus of the University of Namibia on 06 November. The lecture was attended by the Regional Governor, Mayor of Rundu, church, community leaders, senior government officials, academics and students.

The Governor narrated the urgency to unlock the regional potential of agriculture in the Kavango regions that is necessitated by the need to feed many mouths of a growing population.

The current world population of 7.4 Billion will balloon to 9 Billion by 2030 and 11 Billion by 2050. Namibia's population is expected to jump to 3 million in 2030. The question is: "How do we feed this growing population by then?", he asked.

The Governor therefore called for different

stakeholders to meaningfully play their roles to deliver on this undertaking. He acknowledged the huge investments Government has made in green schemes and the conducive investment environment in the agricultural sector enabled by infrastructure such as fresh food hubs. However, Mr. Shiimi said the private sector needs to play a bigger role in agricultural productivity in both regions as government is not well-suited to the role of running agricultural businesses.

The Governor also admitted to a number of constraints that prevent financial institutions from investing in communal areas such as the land tenure system. He recalled his engagements with the Minister of Land Reform on the land tenure system which currently prevents commercial banks from financing viable projects in communal areas.

Mr. Shiimi indicated the Bank has initiated a process to work out a solution to this challenge of unlocking investment in communal areas

with commercial banks. In turn, the commercial banks have made a submission, which will be considered by the central bank.

Governor Shiimi also pleaded with ordinary citizens to get involved in the agricultural sector and especially commercial activities that have the potential to add value to agricultural produce. The youth, he said, needed to be supported and empowered through relevant skills development in the sector.

The Governor concluded his talk by explaining the SME Financing Strategy that is under consideration to comprehensively take care of the various needs of SME's. This includes a Credit Guarantee Scheme and Training Mentoring Scheme and a Venture Capital Fund.

These interventions, he said, have the potential to assist farmers to take their agricultural activities to the next level.