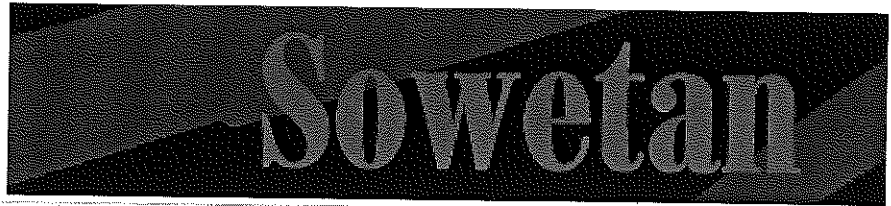


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Looking for greener pastures

Zweli Mokgata
13 March 2007

Financial markets might have to adapt business practices to accommodate small-scale operators and poor African communities, according to the ComMark Trust, which is currently holding a three-day seminar on Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) in southern and eastern Africa.

ComMark trade specialist Norma Tregurtha said that the conference was aimed at dealing with the lack of access to markets by poor people and stimulating economic growth and employment in Africa.

ComMark has been working with the National Wool Growers Association since 2004 as part of a programme aimed at small-scale farmers in the Eastern Cape to enable them to market their wool through the formal auction system.

"We were able to help these communal farmers get twice as much as they were being paid simply by helping them understand the market and their own shortfalls," Tregurtha said .

She continued that the model could be transferred to any other industry with a measurable level of success.

"One of the core philosophies of our programmes is adaptability. We try to get operators to understand the market and why it is or isn't working. We don't look at symptoms, but the underlying problem to create a comprehensive solution," Tregurtha said.

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