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TODAY'S NEWS

Small farmers 'need access to markets'

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By ZWELI MOKGATA

Business Correspondent

FINANCIAL markets may have to adapt business practices to accommodate small-scale operators and poor African communities, says the ComMark Trust, which is holding a three-day seminar on Making Markets Work for the Poor in southern and eastern Africa.

FEATURES

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

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"I have been looking at opportunities in the wool market in southern Africa and found that the industry is dominated by large companies," she said.

ComMark has been working with the National Wool Growers Association since 2004 in a programme aimed at small-scale farmers in the Eastern Cape with support services 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.

In 2004 only 20% of wool sold in the formal market came from small-scale communal farmers. This rose to 55% by the end of 2006.

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

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