**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 263 / NW284E**

**MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES:**

**MR N PAULSEN (EFF) ASKED TO THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES**

**QUESTION:**

Whether he has been informed that the youth agricultural co-operative in the Lower Zingcuka village in Keiskammahoek was allegedly hijacked by a certain company (name and details furnished) and that members of the youth co-operative are now in the employment of the specified company which is allegedly using the Lower Zingcuka Agricultural Co-operative to obtain subsidies from the Government; if not, what steps does he intend to take to prevent the company from hijacking a noble youth developmental programme in Lower Zingcuka; if so, what steps has he taken to rectify this situation?  **NW284E**

**REPLY:**

This matter was only brought to my attention when the Honourable Member asked the question. However, the department has been in contact with the Eastern Cape Provincial Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (Directorate: Economic Services) and the cooperative (Mr Somdaka-Treasurer). Preliminary investigation by the department revealed the following:

1. Lower Zingcuka Agricultural Cooperative is registered in terms of the Cooperatives Amendment Act (Act No 6 of 2013) as a primary agricultural cooperative with limited liability.
2. The cooperative was established by six members (three males and three females with an objective of producing vegetables collectively on a fourteen hectare piece of land. Currently nine hectares are under production.
3. The cooperative has been supported by the Office of the Premier (Eastern Cape) with a tractor, fencing and a voucher for inputs worth R 30 000.00. They currently sell their produce in King Williamstown and East London.
4. The cooperative is not aware of their enterprise being hijacked; furthermore they have no knowledge of a private company that is soliciting financial support from government on their behalf.
5. DAFF will continue working with the Provincial Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (Eastern Cape) and the cooperative to ensure that it maintains its autonomy and independence. Any suspicious acts of external interference (hijacking) will be reported to the relevant authorities including the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission.