



MINISTER

AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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MEDIA BRIEFING

SPEAKING NOTES BY MINISTER A.T DIDIZA DURING THE MEDIA BRIEFING ON PROGRESS ON THE RELEASE OF AGRICULTURAL STATE LAND ALLOCATION

10 November 2020
Tshedimoseetso house (GCIS), Hatfield

Deputy Ministers Mcebisi Skwatsha and Sdumo Dlamini
Acting Director-General Mooketsa Ramasodi
Senior managers present
Members of the media

Good afternoon

A month ago we met to appraise the nation on matters relating to land reform, in particular the announcement made by President Ramaphosa in his first State of the Nation immediately after assuming office. President Ramaphosa affirmed government's commitment to accelerate our land redistribution programme not only to redress a grave historical injustice but also to bring more producers into the sector and to make more land available for cultivation.

As we all may appreciate land forms an important economic base for agricultural development, industrialisation and human settlement. Land reform therefore plays a critical role in enabling those who have been historically disadvantaged, to have an asset that can give them a foothold in economic participation. The process of land reform will also ensure social cohesion and inclusion amongst our society.

The government has committed itself in supporting the new entrants into the agricultural economy. We are also encouraged by the expression of support from a number of organisations that are willing to partner with government to make a success of those who have received land from government either through restitution of land rights or land redistribution.

As part of the Economic Recovery plan tabled by the president, agriculture is one of those sectors of the economy that are poised to contribute positively in job creation,



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food security and economic growth particularly as we strengthen our market access for South African agricultural products globally.

To achieve improved economic growth as seen in the first and second quarter, we need to ensure that an enabling environment is created for the sector to succeed. Policy and regulatory environment will require certainty; to eliminate negative perception from would be investors in this sector. Agricultural infrastructure, particularly for irrigation, remains critical in particular in new areas that offer new opportunities for inclusive growth.

We have noted in the past week that a majority of farmers have been impacted negatively by the veld fires that have affected some regions in the Free State and the Northern Cape. Sadly, these provinces have been affected by drought in the past year, while Northern Cape continues to experience the drought presently. We thank the provincial governments of the two provinces for the speedy reaction in assessing the damage and giving immediate relief while looking at the long-term assistance. We also thank farmer organisations for partnering with the provincial governments in providing fodder and other forms of support to those who are affected. We are also aware that when such natural disasters occur, farm workers are hard hit. We hope such relief will also address the humanitarian needs of all.

We are pleased that the Expropriation Bill has finally been tabled in parliament. This important Bill will ensure alignment with the Constitution as well as creating clear framework on how expropriation for public purpose and public interest will be undertaken. It is important that we all need to familiarise ourselves with this legislation and make inputs to the parliamentary process as law makers craft the legislation that will become part of our legal framework.

On 1 October 2020, we gave an update on the State land that has been released as part of the 700 000 hectares announced by President Ramaphosa in his State of the Nation Address in February 2020. In the same press briefing, we announced that the government will be advertising 529 000 ha amounting to 894 farms across the country for release on 15 October 2020. The advert was to run for a month ending 15 November 2020.

During the announcement, we indicated that the State land in question comprises of land that is currently occupied by individuals and communities who are residing in State land without the Lease Agreements; These are communities that applied for the 30-year lease and their applications were never finalised, and those who have never applied for State land but are interested in performing agricultural activities.

We indicated then, that a land enquiry process will be undertaken to ascertain the status of such occupation and how such lands were given to these communities or individuals. This process will ensure that proper procedure for formalisation and regularisation is undertaken. This is a way of enabling the State to have a record of which farm is occupied by whom and what activities are being undertaken in that particular State owned land.



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WHICH STATE LAND MAKES UP THE LAND THAT IS BEING RELEASED?

Questions have been raised about the land in question by various individuals in the academy and political parties. The land in question refers to the land that the then government earmarked for the consolidation of homelands and was then held by the South African Development Trust. In some of these lands, farmers were allocated hectares of land in different sizes depending of the agricultural viability of the land. Some of these lands, like the Makhathini Flats, were managed by Umjindi Management Company. Some lands were then used by communities for grazing, though no formal consolidation had been done. After 1994, an attempt was made to transfer some of these farmlands to farmers. Unfortunately, this process was not concluded. To address the land rights of these various communities, a land rights enquiry is critical.

The advertisement of properties including those that have communities is to ensure that there is transparency and that the government is able to address the legal issues that are necessary to confirm the rights from a process that was left hanging.

PROGRESS ON THE APPLICATIONS PROCESS

Following this press briefing and the advert, we have received 5 838 online applications, which include cooperatives/companies and individuals. A number of physical applications have also been received and will be consolidated after the closing date.

LAND RIGHTS ENQUIRY PROCESS

The land rights enquiry has commenced and a number of farm dwellers, farmers and communities have been met. The process will continue until such time that all State-owned land has been recorded and accounted for.

ALLEGED ILLEGAL EVICTIONS FROM STATE FARMS

There have been allegations made about government officials who have written letters of evictions to individuals and communities on State land. In some instances there have been allegations of our officials demanding bribes of hundreds of thousands of Rands to access land. This conduct is unacceptable and criminal. We want to advise our communities to bring these issues to the Office of the Acting Director-General for attention and to the nearest police station.

It is important to emphasise that the main purpose of this process is not to destabilise farmers who have been farming and producing in farms in the past, but to put in place a State land administration and management system that ensure security of land tenure, stability and provide an opportunity for sustainable food security and economic growth.



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This will also enable government to develop and implement targeted and sustainable support to small, emerging and commercial farmers into active participants in the economic market.

We therefore urge all South Africans to seize this opportunity and submit their applications online or at our provincial and district offices in the seven (7) provinces before the closing date of 15 November 2020.

We will continue to communicate on the screening, assessment and approval process that will follow towards finalisation of this process.

Ends

For media enquiries, please contact Mr Reggie Ngcobo, media liaison officer, on 0828832458.

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