



agriculture, land reform & rural development

Department:
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Honourable Speaker
Honourable Minister Didiza
All Ministers and Deputy Ministers present
Members of the Portfolio Committee
Honourable Members of the House
Esteemed Guests
Officials of the Department
Ladies and Gentlemen

Honourable Speaker, we speak here today being humbled by the practical experiences and the conditions imposed by COVID-19 which have reminded all of us in a more practical way that Frederick Engels and Karl Marx were correct in asserting that “ mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, etc ...”. This is what our work is about in the department of Agriculture , Land Reform and Rural Development .

We are about getting our people to develop an economic relationship with their rivers , the glades and the tributaries , we are about making our people to reconnect with their environment and see the possibility of building wealth from the rising of the sun and ,the possibility of life from the soil , to see the possibility of building pharmaceutical empires from the leaves , to see the possibility of clothing and textile from plant stems and trees , and not only to treat their live stocks as a symbol of cultural pride but to see it also as a gate to endless economic opportunities. We want our people to go beyond being the providers of raw materials but to participate in the entire value chain from their own natural resources .

If I were to paraphrase comrade Chris Hani , we are not about big concepts and heavy theory. We are about decent shelter for those who are homeless. We are about water for those who have no safe drinking water. We are about health care, we are about a life of dignity for the old and safety for our children. We are about overcoming the huge divide between urban and rural areas.

We want to see the interconnectedness between commercial farming , subsistence farming , local business including chain stores. We want to ensure an interlink between agriculture and manufacturing , processing including construction . We are destroying the artificial wall between the rural and urban economy

Honourable Speaker, we have come here inspired by the people’s vision inscribed in that noble historic document , the Freedom Charter which instructs that “ Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it to banish famine and land hunger;
The state shall help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers;
Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land;

All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;
People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.”

In this context , Honourable Members, I would like to draw the attention of this House to the following specific commitments in the 2020 / 2021 Annual Performance Plan that the Covid-19 Pandemic has forced us to revise.

1. FARMER PRODUCTION SUPPORT UNITS: FPSUs

Honourable Speaker, the work was started by our predecessors to facilitate Integrated Spatial Planning in rural areas to ensure that there is alignment between sector departments, parastatals, private sector and the municipal development agenda, and this strategic focus continues under this new Department.

With the launch of the District Development Model which is aimed at ensuring strategic coordination and alignment of government work at all levels , it is clear that integrated Rural Development Plans (RDPs) have become an imperative for making the required impact in rural communities .

Our strategic objectives remains that of taking forward the work of establishing Argi-Parks and as part of being realistic about this task , we have decided that the strategic point of departure should be to establish Farmer Production Support Centres, with services aimed at assisting households and farmers to improve the productivity of their assets: land and Livestock in particular.

This will assist in ensuring that we are able to map the economic potential in each and every district based for an example on studying various soil types and climatic conditions. We will know how many farmers exist in each district and their specific areas of focus . This will allow us to determine in advance the type of support and programs to be directed to relevant existing entities.

Our approach is informed by the fact that “the overriding spatial challenge is overcoming the legacy of apartheid, densifying and integrating urban and rural development nodes and activity corridors. This requires government departments and spheres to work together in new ways that achieve coordinated impact”. (ANC 54th National Congress Resolutions : 20017)

In this context , this year we intend to ensure that no less than 15 Farmer Production Support Units are provided with the necessary infrastructure for making them functional.

As a department , we have crafted the Comprehensive Land and Agrarian Strategy (CLAS). This strategy focuses on developing Commodity Corridors and Commodity Production Schemes in each District, thus giving districts their competitive advantage. We want to have a clear mapping and understanding regarding the strategic economic position and competitive advantage for each district.

*For an example, through our Partnership in rural Cotton Production Scheme with the Agricultural Research Council and Cotton-SA, we have, thus far, supported 1

270 cotton farmers in 90 Cooperatives in the training, production, packaging and marketing of cotton in Mpumalanga, Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal.

Our Farmer Production Support Unit in Nkomazi at Mpumalanga is the fastest growing in the cotton production scheme thus far. It supports over 29 Cotton producing rural Cooperatives with a total of 938 members cultivating just over 1 500 Ha of rural crop fields. We intend to bring an additional 3 000 Ha of rural fields in to production in the next two years, thus involving more rural households into self-employment.

Cotton production is labour intensive. Currently we are achieving job creation of between 1 and 2 persons per hectare.

*Through our collaboration with the National Wool Growers Association we are supporting over 40 000 wool producing small farmers and subsistence households in over 1 400 rural villages in just the Eastern Cape alone.

South Africa produces over 50 million Kgs of wool annually. 13% of that, (that is, over 6,5 million) is produced by rural village farmers in the few districts we are engaged with in this partnership with the National Wool Growers Association (NWGA)

Based on the latest figures for 2019 / 2020 which we have received from our strategic partner, the National Wool Growers Association, more 240 000 family members of the village wool growers are benefiting.

Our development and upliftment interventions are simple. We remove old unproductive rams from village flocks and replace them with high quality rams for improved wool production for the international market. 49 000 rams have been distributed since 2002. 80 000 rams are our target in this MTSF. 350 Wool Shearing Sheds have been delivered; We have provided Wool-sorting and Weighing Equipment, We are providing training in no less than 13 Learning Areas in basic wool sheep production to rural wool farmers;

In this regard we would like to congratulate Bongolwethu Mgedezi who received the First Place in the latest World Sheep Shearing Championship Semi-Finals; Mayenzeke Shweni who took Second Place and Bonile Rabela who was on the Third Place.

Rural wool growers are now participating in international wool markets. These include Italy, Hong Kong, the Czech Republic, Germany, the United States of America and France. International sales of wool from rural wool producers fetched over R339m during the 2018/19 financial year.

This commodity scheme is impactful: Over 9 000 jobs have been created; 126 Temporary jobs provided through sheep shearing infrastructure; 84 through fencing; 832 Sheep Shearers trained. Between 2004 and 2015 the number of Children going to bed hungry have been reduced from 41% to 24%; Households involved in Savings have increased from 49% to 84%; Households that have to borrow money for school fees have dropped from 77% to 48%.

*By the end of next year, the Department's cooperative Agreement with two organizations in the Goat Agri-Business Programme which include Mdukatshani and the Heifer Southern Africa, in Kwa-Zulu would have attained the goal of reaching and including around 7 000 rural subsistence households in improved goat production and marketing. We are assisting rural goat farming households in 5 out of 10 Districts in KZN so far.

The aim of the collaboration we entered into in 2016, is to increase rural goat production and to commercialize rural goat herds. By the end of 2020 / 2021 we shall have increased the number of Youth Micro-Businesses to 700.

*Our rural Commodity Schemes in Sugarcane last year, supported up to 6 404 Small Growers that are affiliated to the South African Farmer Development Association (SAFDA) and more than 10 527 Ha of rural crop fields into production. The target is to reach over 14 000 Small cane growers in KZN, the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga in the next two years.

To-date we have supported well over 750 rural livestock producers in quality red meat production through their value chains in our collaboration with the National Agricultural Marketing Council. This support includes amongst others, the construction and the equipping of Custom Feedlots in villages to supply quality meat and marketing.

The new Department is fully cognizant of the need to gradually discourage rural producers from the anti-developmental dependency on grants, year after year. This is why, under the Comprehensive Land and Agrarian Strategy, our focus will be on facilitating a process of organizing rural farmers into commodity associations that own Cooperative Finance Institutions, for sustainable productivity.

This year we shall add another 12 rural village based Custom Feedlots (CFLs) to the 19 we have completed in the last two years. These Custom Feedlots serve as Farmer Production Support Units dedicated to the improvement of rural livestock. The farmers' own cooperatives are governing and co-managing the Custom Feedlots with the Agricultural Graduates we are employing in support of the National Red Meat Development Programme. Farmers have opened Savings Bank Accounts and have agreed to devote a percentage of their livestock sales towards achieving long-term financial sustainability. The rural livestock farmers shall supply well over 1 500 animals this year into the export market. This market offers more than 29% above the local red meat market. We started by shipping 65 animals to Mauritius in June this year and generated R717 000.00.

The 29 Auctions we are planning this year will take us even closer to the goal of financial sustainability.

Our leading Farmer Production Support Unit so far is the Makhholokweng FPSU in the Free State's Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality. We have supported over 58 rural village farmers and Land Reform beneficiaries in the grain commodity production scheme. This will help bring 2 200 Ha of land into the production of Sugar Beans for the national and export markets. The Sugarbean harvest has gone

well this year to meet the expected 2 640 Tons. Farmers have negotiated and exceeded the expected price of R12 500 per year to achieve over R14 000.00 per ton.

The support generally provided through a functional Farmer Production Support Units includes mechanisation, equipment, management, mentoring, production inputs such as fertilizers, seeds and seedlings as well as Skills Development.

2. THE NATIONAL RURAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPSE

Honourable Speaker, the young and rising generation constitutes a representative of the future in the broadest sense; the future of any society depends on the practical and spiritual moulding of the youth. Classes and strata act not only for their own good but also for the good of their rising generation. The youth grows and is moulded within a specific social environment - be it in the comfort and sleek surroundings of the capitalist home, school and boardrooms, the squalid conditions of the working class ghetto, the backward and wretched environment of the rural poor, or the confines of a petty-bourgeois upbringing.

The stage of youth is one of assimilating knowledge of all kinds. Avidly searching for a rational understanding of the surrounding world, the youth therefore displays curiosity, rebelliousness, impassioned and uncontrolled enthusiasms; it quickly forms judgements as it abandons others. Such a stage is crucial in the moulding of stable social being; thus all classes and strata wage relentless battles for the hearts and minds of the youth.

The youth is as enthusiastic in its search for knowledge as it is militant in the fight for the realisation of the ideals it holds dear. Having evolved an understanding of the `right and the wrong`, it displays great zeal and verve in fighting for what it conceives as just. Within the different class formations it acts as a powerful driving force, a dynamo of the class, national and international battles. It is to be found in the front trenches of practical and theoretical struggles displaying both initiative and self-sacrifice. (The Role and Place of the Youth in Society, the ANC and the Struggle :1985)

We therefore saw it important that as part of driving rural development , it is both inevitable and strategic to place young people as strategic role players in this developmental work. We want their endless energy , we want their endless ideas , we want them to dream with us . Work with us to the future where we can actualise rural development

In this regard , our strategic point of departure is Skills Development which we see as the bed-rock of rural productivity. This is why our focus on the engagement of rural youth in the system of improving rural living is of such principal importance.

Honourable Speaker, as of today, a total of 12 862 youth since 2010, have been certified (graduated) in skills development programmes across nine economic sectors. A further 1 916 AA youth have completed their training and will receive certificates during this financial year.

Currently, there is a total of 1 464 youth participating in various skills development programmes across our nine provinces. These include programmes such as Animal Production, Plant Production, Poultry Production, Fresh Meat Processing, Environmental Management, Occupational Hygiene and Safety, Clothing, Textile, Footwear and Leather Manufacturing Processes, Construction, ICT Systems Development, Fire and Rescue Operations, Road Transport and Water and Wastewater Process Control Operations.

Post the two year programme, the youth must be involved in economic activities that will bring about sustainable livelihoods, not just for themselves but for their families and communities at large, as Agents of Change for socio-economic transformation.

Young people have to know the development priorities of their own communities. They must be actively involved in mobilizing their own communities to participate in planning, identification and prioritization and implementation of their own development initiatives.

We expect NARYSEC youth, to be involved in economic activities that will bring about sustainable livelihoods, not just for themselves but for their families and communities at large, as Agents of Change for socio-economic transformation.

Madam Speaker, Here are the rural development specifics which the Department is committing in the remaining months of this financial year:

a) Budget allocation for rural infrastructure development is R495 Million, this includes infrastructure to support the 15 Farmer Production Support Units already mentioned.

b) A total of 1 001 youth were recruited during January 2020, as part of the DDM pilot projects in OR Tambo, eThekweni and Waterberg districts. The NARYSEC budget of R273 Million for this financial year will be, amongst others, utilized for stipends and training of these DDM youth, as well as other youth who were recruited in 2018 and 2019 and who are still in the system.

c) An amount of R7 Million will be used in Technical Research and Development.

d) All of the above initiatives will contribute to improved rural livelihoods and job creation

Honourable Members, allow me to conclude by thanking you all, in particular the Portfolio Committee for its continued support, effective oversight role, vigilance and guidance in our rural development efforts. We promise to redouble our efforts as we deal with the impact of the already existing reality of poverty, unemployment and inequality which has now been compounded by COVID -19

As Frantz Fanon taught us “Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity.” As this generation we have taken rural development as our mission and we will do our level best, with the limited resources to fulfill it!
I thank you all!