



INTERNET ARTICLE

Drought has a negative effect on farming

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The scourge of drought has slowed down farming in Western, Eastern and Northern Cape which has led to increased unemployment, poverty and inequality among the affected communities, the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), Des Van Rooyen said yesterday.

Addressing a joint media briefing with Ministers Nomvula Mokonyane of Water and Sanitation and Senzeni Zokwana of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Van Rooyen said although there was some significant rain parts of South Africa in January, this was limited to the central and eastern parts. The rain did not improve in the drought-stricken Western Cape and parts of Eastern Cape.

“The reports that the Inter-Ministerial Task Team (IMTT) has received thus far indicate that the situation is deteriorating with dam levels falling week on week and the current national dam levels depict a gloomy picture. The average national dam level at the beginning of the week stood at 59 percent,” Van Rooyen said.

He said that since last month IMTT has met twice to receive reports on the status of the drought situation, considering integrated measures being put in place to mitigate the situation and provide political leadership on heightened measures necessary to arrest the situation.

“In both meetings, we were joined by some of the MECs of CoGTA from the Provinces who shed light about the situation in their respective provinces and the work each one is doing to mitigate the impact of drought on communities and farmers.

“These measures are a testimony that government values human lives and places the interests and welfare of the people above all else. As we know, water is a constitutional right of all South Africans and thus these challenges of drought are threatening to make it difficult for government to realise this important provision in our Constitution.”

“Even as we are seized with the challenges of drought, it is important to note that there are three categories of our people that must be served equitably as part of the transformation agenda, notably:”

- a) Those that are yet to receive water
- b) Those that have just received water – albeit minimal
- c) Those that have access to water

Minister Mokonyane said that given the drought situation, water must be prioritised for human consumption. This week she met with the Western Cape Premier Hellen Zille and her delegation and they both agreed to depoliticise water and ensure that they address the drought issue in the interest of the people of Western Cape. There were 5 125 dams in the country, 323 of whom were owned by the Department of Water and Sanitation. Most of the dams that were built during apartheid were built for particular purposes such as agriculture and recreation while the communities who lived next to them had no access to water. The



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Department of Water and Sanitation wanted to end those purpose-built dams so that everyone would have access to water, Minister Mokonyane said.

Minister Zokwana said food security was a key to survival and that without food production prices would increase a phenomenon that had the potential of shooting inflation through the ceiling. As a water conservation measure, Zokwana urged the farmers to avoid irrigating their crops at midday as water evaporated easily.

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