

WORKING FOR WATER'S 1999/2000 ANNUAL REPORT REFLECTS CONSIDERABLE ADVANCEMENT TOWARDS PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

"As Working for Water celebrates its fifth year existence, the programme reports another fantastic year of delivery...", Ronnie Kasrils, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry.

[Cape Town, 21 August 2000] Working for Water's annual report reflects a productive and rewarding year in terms of empowerment and employment opportunities, educational initiatives in terms of health and the environment, and numerous projects specifically directed at protecting and enhancing the environment.

Highlights from the annual report reflect that 20 999 people (approximately 10 492 person years) were employed by the programme. Of these, 56% were women, 23% youth and 1% disabled. A total of 238 823 hectares were cleared at an average cost of R 730.00 per hectare, including management overheads.

884 emerging contractors were trained, of which 33% were women, 10% youth and 0,5% disabled. 15% of these are collective business models, and SMMEs comprised 85%.

96% were from historically disadvantaged communities.

A total of 80 456 training days were provided, with 56% of the training aimed specifically at women and 39% at the youth.

In order to illustrate its commitment to the environment, Working for Water is ploughing much effort into integrated control and is investing substantially in research on biological control. The programme has invested R 9-million into bio-control research over the past three years.

MORE

ENVIRONMENT TWO AND LAST

Historically, 103 bio-control agents have been released in South Africa against 46 weed species; with 22 of these now being under complete or substantial bio-control. The bio-control research initiative has expanded substantially, and now includes species such as Australian wattles and pines from Europe and North America, which have been previously excluded from bio-control research because of their commercial value.

Says Dr Preston, “A key priority for the Working for Water programme to now establish a greater co-ordination between researchers and those implementing bio-control initiatives within the programme, as well as to develop the capacity to manage and implement bio-control initiatives in the field”.

The programme recognises that education is a key component in raising levels of awareness amongst landowners, nursery wholesalers and retailers, and the general public around the threats and impacts posed by invading alien plants.

“Responsible land management can only stem from a target audience that understands the severity of the impacts of invading alien plants”, says Dr Preston.

In addition to current successful educational initiatives such as ‘Hack Day’ – a programme which encourages communities, schools, business, labour and Government to join forces in the fight against invading alien plants and to increase awareness around the crisis – a number of other projects such as ‘Weedbuster Week’ and the ‘Green Schools Programme’ are also in the pipeline.

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