

**BUDGET VOTE DEBATE; VOTE 12, ADDRESS BY MEC FOR
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS ,
RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LAND REFORM- MASE MANOPOLE
(MPL)**

Honourable Speaker Newrene Klaaste

Honourable Deputy Speaker Mangaliso Matika

Honourable Premier Dr Zamani Saul

Honourable Members of Executive Council

Honourable Members of the Provincial legislature

Leaders of Local Government

Traditional Leaders

Sector Leaders

Distinguished guests and people of the Northern Cape

Comrades and Friends

Members of the Media.

Hon. Speaker,

It gives me honour to address this august house in this chamber to table second budget policy statement of the department after successful merger of two former departments of DENC and DALRRD.

Please allow me to join many of our people in paying tribute and homage to Ms.Tina Joemat Petterson former MEC of Agriculture who has unselfishly paved a way by making a significant and noteworthy contribution to the sector of agriculture.

Our interventions in policy, legislation, and programmatic intervention must bring us closer to building an inclusive society, without leaving anyone behind.

The challenges of poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment must challenge us to continuously find solutions that can respond to these challenges. Apart from racial discrimination we also have a transversal dimension, it is for these reasons that women, youth, and persons living with disability empowerment in both land and agrarian sectors should be integral.

The participation of the majority of women in the agricultural sector has always been limited to subsistence farming and working in commercial farms, largely because land access has always been a constraint.

Natural Disasters

Hon. Speaker,

The province experienced natural disasters that hampered growth and development in the sector, in particular it experienced floods, drought, pests (brown locust) and veld fires, currently drought conditions are only experienced in the Northern part of Namakwa district and specifically in the Richtersveld,

And as part of Disaster support; key intervention amongst others is the alleviation of the impact of drought and veld fires through Lucerne production which is ongoing at Eiland, Rietriver and Vaalharts Research Stations. And due to persistent weather pattern which poses high risks of disaster the department

expanded the fodder bank by partnering with Farmers Association for planting lucern and yellow maize.

On Fodder Bank

Currently the fodder banks have stock piled fodder (estimate 570 tons, with a farm gate value of R2.284m.) to be able and assist in the drought situation in Namakwa district and as part of support to the expected veld fires in the coming veld fire season. We will continue to increase the capacity of the fodder bank, produce high quality fodder and remain productive for dry seasons.

OVERVIEW: AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIROMENTAL ECONOMY

Hon.Speaker

This budget is also presented in the midst of a turbulent global economy with rising cost of living, stagnant employment, and deepening poverty and inequalities.

Our province is known for its harsh climate, with extreme temperatures, limited rainfall, and frequent droughts. These climatic challenges together with the rising cost of energy and production inputs have a significant impact on the agricultural sector, making it difficult for farmers to produce crops and livestock and pose challenges development and sustainability of the sector.

Increased cost of production is also compounded by the need for expensive back-up systems to ensure that crops can be irrigated, and cold chain requirements can be met.

There is a need for innovative solutions to overcome these challenges and improved use of resources, optimization of production and higher efficiencies can only be achieved through increased investment in research and development. Additionally, there is a need for investment in renewable energy to mitigate the impact of electricity blackouts on farming operations.

Despite these challenges, the Northern Cape Province has been able to position itself as a major player in the agricultural sector through the production of high value crops and animal products, providing a significant source of income for the region while also ensuring environmental integrity and sustainable use of resources.

Production of crops under irrigation were severely affected by load shedding and the high flow of the Vaal and Orange Rivers during the fourth quarter. The final estimates for wheat production in the Northern Cape Province came to 342 300 tons from 47 000 ha. The combined area for white and yellow maize is 44 500 ha, and production is estimated at 624 500 tons. The revised area for soybean is 1 000 ha with a yield of 3.5 ton/ha.

The table grape production for the 2022/23 season was 16.4 million cartons (4.5kg equivalent). The raisin season is not finalized, with approximately 47 000 tons been delivered, but production is expected to be in the region of 60 000 tons. Wine grape production was approximately 29 000 tons. Vine production in the Province was lower than normal, primarily due to climatic conditions, electricity supply and the high flow of the Orange River, which prevented farmers from accessing their vineyards.

Budget Allocation

The department has been allocated an amount of R706.850 million for the 2023/2024 financial year.

This allocation includes the funding of four conditional grants which amount to **R208.815 million**. Conditional grant allocations are particularly significant for the department and they make up about 30% of the funding envelope of the department.

The overall allocation of the department increases by 3.0% when compared to the original budget of the previous financial year of 2022/2023 and the budget allocations do grow consistently over the forthcoming MTEF period at an average of 3.4%.

Budget allocation per programme for 2023/2024 is as follows;

Programme 1 Administration **R 203.667 Million**

Programme 2 Sustainable Resource Management **R 27.439 Million**

Programme 3 Agriculture Producer Support and Development
R 244.962 Million

Programme 4 Veterinary Services **R 50.136 Million**

Programme 5 Research and Technology Development Services
R62.544 Million

Programme 6 Agriculture Economic Services **R12.325 Million**

Programme 7 Rural Development **R25. 467 Million**

Programme 8 Environment and Nature Conservation **R 79,482 Million**

ON LANDCARE

Hon.Speaker

The Landcare programme provides agriculture support services to farmers in order to ensure sustainable development and management of agricultural resources, leading to improved productivity, food security, job creation and agro ecosystems.

In this respect, four projects are planned which will primarily focus on chemical control of invader species, bush encroachment and awareness programmes.

The above-mentioned initiatives will take place though eradication of alien invader plant species in **Pixley Ka Seme district**, projects sites are identified in Niekerkshoop, Victoria west, Van Wyksloof, Van Wyksvlei and Britstown (Continuing project).

The Bush encroachment control (control 3000ha of *Senegalia mellifera*) in **John Taolo Gaetsewe district**, Joe Morolong local municipality. Projects sites identified are in (Loopeng, Gatalakgomo, Compton, Kokonye, Bojelapotsane, Harthasdale, Goodhope, Pietbos, Erfplaas, Permonkie and Windgate. (New Projects).

The department will convert 50ha of cropland to Conservation Agriculture production system, in the **Frances Baard district**, Phokwane local municipality, (Phokwane and Hartswater) and conduct LandCare awareness campaigns in all five (5) districts of the province. Awareness campaigns all cover topics such as: Veld management, Soil erosion control, passive and active restoration of degraded rangelands.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

The department will focus on providing support to household in order to curb food insecurity and it will also provide support to all categories of farmers with special emphasis on Red Meat Commodity , Grain commodity and Vineyard Commodity, as well as improvements of on-farm and off-farm infrastructure. The on-farm support for livestock farmers is in the form of livestock water and livestock handling facilities, the plan during 2023/24 is to support 600 red meat producing smallholder farmers.

Furthermore 20 grain producers and 75 vineyard farmers will be supported with production inputs and advice on production and marketing. In support of food security in the province the programme intends supporting 700 smallholder and 1200 subsistence producers.

The subsistence producers will be supported with garden and poultry starter packs to address poverty and food security. Food gardens will also be established at schools and other institutions such as soup kitchens, community gardens and early learning centres all this work will be done in collaboration with sector department of Education and Social Development.

INTERVENTIONS:YOUTH IN THE SECTOR

The department continues with the implementation of Unemployed Agriculture Graduate Programme by placing unemployed Agricultural graduates in commercial and agricultural enterprises across the province for two years in order to gain workplace experience, this will include the experiential training and on-farm mentorship of unemployed agricultural graduates and entrepreneurial development.

For the reporting period there were 46 graduates placed at different commercial enterprises, 09 started their own projects using the stipend, 5 absorbed by the Department, 7 permanently employed and 1 studying abroad.

Drawn from the commitment in the SOPA by Hon. Premier Dr. Zamani Saul the process has started for new intake, the advert is out for 2023/24 which close On 30th June 2023 for about 80 graduates.

The programme seeks to contribute and accelerate food production through development of a pool of young producers, to bridge the gap aging producers and reduce unemployment and poverty amongst the youth. The principal challenge identified is youth's insufficient access to knowledge, information and education while we recognize that Rural youth are the future of food security.

INTERVENTIONS : WOMEN IN THE SECTOR

The programme will also continue aiding 700 farmers (focusing more on women and youth) in the form of skills training and capacity building through farmer's days and other dedicated days. The department will dedicate an official to oversee all programmes with regard to women, youth and people living with disabilities working closely with the new Ministry based in the Premier's office.

A new approach has been adopted on how best to intervene in a more decisive and purposeful way on all vulnerable groups in the sector.

VETERINARY SERVICES

Hon. Speaker,

The aim of the programme is to provide veterinary services to clients to ensure healthy animals, safe animal products and support the health and welfare of the people of South Africa.

Abattoirs in the province are facing various challenges such as rising input costs due to fuel prices and constant load shedding as well as low sheep numbers that have not yet recovered from the previous drought. The continuous power outages have also affected service delivery, making it difficult for Veterinary Public Health officials to perform their duties. These factors have contributed to a 17% decline in operational abattoirs in the province from 48 in 2022 to 40 in 2023, resulting in an estimated 181 job losses.

Hon. Speaker,

In the province, there is an increasing concern regarding the illicit trade of game meat. Public tip-offs have been instrumental in thwarting some of the unlawful activities which involve the illegal slaughter of game at unapproved establishments and the transportation of carcasses in vehicles that pose a risk to public health and safety.

The Department will be providing support by having the abattoir approved where the partially dressed game carcasses can be de-skinned on the farm after harvesting as per Game Meat Regulations. The game meat industry has the potential to make a significant contribution to food security within the province. Currently, legislation is being developed to support and facilitate

the production of game meat. This legislative framework aims to enhance meat production, promote job creation and ultimately improve food security in the region.

RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

This programme receives about 9 percent of the equitable share allocation of the department. The objective of the programme is to render expert and needs based research, development and technology transfer services impacting on development objectives.

The Research Programme which is tasked with providing expert, problem focused and client centric agricultural and environmental research, technology development and transfer impacting on development receives a budget of R62 544 for the financial year. The emphasis of the programme continues to be on the beef research, small stock and lucerne. The beef research will continue with the cross breeding as well as a sperm analysis using the computer assisted sperm analysis system.

A project on Artificial insemination will be piloted at Vaalharts. Furthermore, research information sharing sessions are planned for this year where the research information on the results of the cross-breeding as well as the Tankwa goat will be shared.

Linked to the wildlife industry, we are looking forward to the expected completion of a research project that will provide some insights into how to improve game management during periods of drought.

AGRICULTURE ECONOMIC SERVICES

The Programme's mandate is the facilitation of market access for smallholder farmers and agribusinesses, support to existing cooperatives and establishment of new ones, conducting feasibility and viability studies for proposed projects, provision of agricultural information and statistics along with the overall economic assessment and analysis of the sector and reporting on the findings.

On Market access

Already the department has taken three smallholder agribusinesses to a Food and Beverage EXPO in Singapore where they displayed their produced and engaged potential clients.

Cannabis Master Plan: Hemp Industry

While Parliament is still ceased with the bill the Inter-Ministerial Committee gives direction for interim measures on commercialisation of hemp.

The Department will be assisting farmers interested in the production of Hemp with information. The information sessions have been held in three districts with further engagements planned. The information provided include regulations, production requirements, permit application process and procedures among others. The department has also identified a site for trials which will be run by the department.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE CONSERVATION

The programme has the responsibility to conserve and protect the natural environment so that society may prosper in a sustainable manner.

On Waste management

As part of improving waste management the department will engage different municipalities partnering with local SMMEs within the waste sector looking at economical sustainable project and an amount of **R 350.000,00** has been set aside as a start and a contribution towards this goal.

The department working closely municipalities will continue to mobilize resources to upgrade different landfill sites.

Greening & Cleaning Programme

The department will continue to green and clean the environment through the recently appointed 210 EPWPs in all Districts. This programme in partnership with municipalities will scale-up sustainable projects and programmes for greening and cleaning in and around our townships.

EIAs-IMPROVED CAPACITY TOWARDS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In contributing towards a new wave of economic developmental path taking place in the province it has become more urgent that we increase our capacity to respond to this reality. The department has currently appointed 5 individuals who will be attached to a district whilst resource mobilization continues to increase this desired outcome.

Environmental Quality Management

The department will procure three (3) continuous air quality monitors to the value of one million rand (R 1 000 000.00). These monitors will be placed in Hotazel, Springbok and De Aar.

The monitors for Kimberley and Upington will be procured within the next financial year. The department will continue to build capacity with regard to air quality within the local authorities.

Biodiversity Management

The department as part of its transformation imperatives will donate 260 heads of game to historically disadvantaged individuals. Founder herds will be donated from the surplus game on the Rolfontein, Doornkloof and Goegap nature reserves and the program will be rolled out in close cooperation with our sector partners i.e. SANParks and the DFFE.

Expansion of the Protected Area Estate

In pursuance of the targets set as part of the Convention on Biodiversity, the department will continue with expansion of the Northern Cape's protected area estate. We will endeavor to declare an additional 20 000 hectares of privately and communally owned land as protected areas. During this financial year we will also assume the full management authority functions at the Gamsberg Nature Reserve which was established as part of the biodiversity offset agreement with Black Mountain Mine.

In terms of Youth Empowerment, as part of the Kangnas Mainstream biodiversity offset agreement 20 youth from the surrounding areas will continue to receive biodiversity employment at Goegap Nature Reserve.

Game Industry

As part of transformation imperatives the department will donate 260 heads of game to historically disadvantaged individuals. Founder herds will be donated from the surplus game on the Rolfontein, Doornkloof and Goegap nature reserves and the program will be rolled out in close cooperation with our sector partners i.e. SANParks and the DFFE.

Development of Provincial Nature Reserve Tourism Facilities

The department in close cooperation with National Department of Tourism, DEDaT and NCEDA will implement a critical infrastructure maintenance/ upgrading program valued at **R 13 million** at Doornkloof, Goegap, Rolfontein and Witsand Nature Reserve. The aim of this project is to improve the tourist / visitor experience at the nature reserves and increase revenue generation.

Conclusion

Our real challenge is household food security, making sure that every individual, in every household, is food secured, and has a predictable supply of enough food. Up to **10 million** South Africans are vulnerable to food insecurity – where a small change in circumstances can bring about hunger.

Government assistance is often a major source of income for many of these households, given the high level of rural unemployment and dwindling migrant income transfers. For smallholder farmers, the government and private retailers should implement a preferential procurement system. Access to land,

finance, markets, and entrepreneurial spirit is the cornerstone of every successful farming enterprise. Community-led cooperatives with government and private sector support will create sustainable food production hubs.

We have to set immediate priorities and these should include the following:

- research, structured education, and training;
- farmer support and development;
- market access; and
- the climate crisis management.

Finally Hon. Speaker and Hon. Members, Please allow me to express my deepest gratitude towards the Hon. Premier Dr Zamani Saul, my colleagues in the Executive Council, Departmental staff led by AHOD Mr. L. Wa Modise and Ministry staff led by Mr. K. Mohibidu, role players in both Agriculture and Environmental Sector and lastly but most importantly ,let me appreciate the continues guidance through commentary and observations from the Chairperson and the Portfolio Committee of Agriculture and Environment, I appreciate your zealous leadership.

I thank you