BUDGET VOTE SPEECH DELIVERED BY MEC MASE MANOPOLE AT THE NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE. 2025/26 FINANCIAL YEAR

Honourable Speaker Ms Newrene Klaaste

Honourable Premier, Dr Zamani Saul

Members of the Executive Council

Honourable Members of the Legislature

Leaders of Local Government

Traditional Leaders

Snr Government Officials

Agricultural & Environmental sector leaders & Partners present;

Distinguished Guests and People of the Northern Cape;

Comrades, Ladies and gentlemen

It is once again an immeasurable privilege and honour to be tabling the Budget Vote for Agriculture, Environment, Rural Development and Land Reform. We can confirm Honourable Speaker that the Department remains firmly committed to advancing an inclusive and climate-resilient approach to agricultural development one that not only fosters economic growth, but safeguards the essential natural resources that sustain it.

Agriculture and the environment are not just vital for food security and sustainability, they are central to our vision of a modern, growing, and successful Northern Cape. These sectors remain among the most significant drivers of inclusive economic growth, poverty alleviation, and job creation across our vast and often under-resourced rural landscape.

Growing the Provincial Economy

Hon. Speaker, The Northern Cape province currently contributes approximately 2.3% to the National Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and agriculture accounts for around 7% of the Provincial GDP. This sectoral contribution is projected to grow significantly over the Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) period.

The Department has set a bold but achievable target of increasing agriculture's contribution to 10% of Provincial GDP, driven by the planting of high-value crops, the revitalisation of irrigation schemes, and expanded investment in agro-processing facilities that add value and create jobs along the agricultural value chain.

We are also strengthening the financial ecosystem that underpins rural development. Engagements with the LandBank are at an advanced stage, and we are finalising a Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate co-funding of strategic projects, expand access to credit, and de-risk investments in high-potential but historically underserved farming areas.

JOB CREATION

Hon Speaker, Job creation remains one of the most defining challenges and responsibilities of our time. In the 2025/26 financial year, the Department will continue to implement targeted interventions that link agricultural development directly to job creation. Key commitments include:

The creation of **750 job opportunities** across the province through sector-linked public employment initiatives and of these:

- 400 EPWP job opportunities will again be created through CASP and Ilima/Letsema infrastructure projects
- 210 job opportunities will be created within the environmental sector through public employment programmes

 140 job opportunities will be created through the LandCare programme, enabled by a R8.875 million allocation

FOOD SECURITY

Hon Speaker, Food security is not merely about nourishment, it is about survival, dignity, and stability. In the Northern Cape, where vast geographical distances, spatial inequality, and erratic climate conditions converge, the need to ensure household-level and community-wide food access remains one of our most urgent developmental imperatives.

Hon. Speaker, In the 2025/26 financial year, the Department will scale up and refine its food security interventions to ensure deeper impact and greater sustainability. Key commitments includes:

- Continuing support to atleast 1 300 subsistence producers with input packages, including garden tools, seeds, and poultry starter kits.
- Strengthening the Balelapa Initiative through cross-departmental alignment, encouraging backyard garden and community farming as core elements of antipoverty strategy.
- Expanding institutional food gardens in under-served districts, especially those reporting high food insecurity in the General Household Survey.
- Allocating R8.862 million once again through Ilima/Letsema for these targeted interventions.



TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING OF PRODUCERS

Hon Members, A thriving agricultural sector is not built on land and inputs alone it is built on knowledge, skills, and the ability of producers to adapt, innovate, and lead.

- Through the CASP Training Budget, the Department has allocated R8.651 million in the 2025/26 financial year to deliver structured agricultural training and learnerships aimed at transforming producer capacity and farm profitability.
- A total of 1,000 producers are targeted to participate in both credit and non-credit bearing programmes designed to enhance skills across core areas of production, financial management, sustainable land use, and climate change adaptation.
- These courses focus on both traditional agricultural disciplines and modern innovations ensuring producers are equipped with the latest knowledge in climatesmart technologies, market requirements, and resource-efficient farming.

This approach ensures the Department's training efforts are not only credible and accredited but aligned to real market needs, local production conditions, and the long-term viability of our farmer base.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Hon Speaker, We also faced agricultural threats from invasive pests. In the 2025/26 financial year, we will scale up our response capabilities to ensure that the province is not only reactive, but increasingly proactive and prepared for the environmental threats it faces. The following key commitments are being prioritised:

 An allocation of R2 million (two million rand) has been set aside for Disaster Risk Reduction to intensify drought mitigation, emergency fodder distribution, and pest response planning

- Completion and implementation of the Level 2 Disaster Management Plan, designed to improve interdepartmental coordination, response timelines, and cross-sectoral readiness
- Support to Junior LandCare projects and climate-data collection initiatives in districts most vulnerable to climate shocks
- Enhanced collaboration with FPAs, municipalities, and SAPS to improve early warning systems, training capacity, and fire management interventions in high-risk zones

2.1.3. Climate change

South Africa is committed to transition to low carbon economy and climate resilient society by 2050. In the province, the effects of climate change can be seen through extreme weather changes, increased impact on water and other ecosystem services which require an urgent response for adaptation and mitigation. The department will focus on the following interventions over the MTDP period:

- Approval of the Provincial Climate Change Strategy as well as ensure compliance to the Climate Change Act which was promulgated in July 2024.
- Collaboration with research organisations such as the ARC and tertiary institutes
 where the research with beef cattle will continue especially researching the "effective
 way to reduce the carbon footprint from beef production".
- Continue with public awareness about climate change and how diverse communities could ready themselves to deal with it as climate continues to change, and extreme weather events becoming more frequent.
- Disaster Preparedness: Finalise the Disaster Policy.
- Programmes to conserve and rehabilitate ecosystems and biodiversity assets: These
 includes implementation of the LandCare programmes, placing land under
 conservation through expansion of the protected area

VETERINARY SERVICES AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon Speaker, Feed exports to neighbouring countries such as Namibia and Botswana have increased substantially due to drought conditions beyond our borders, reinforcing the Northern Cape's strategic role in the regional agricultural supply chain. However, this demand has also placed pressure on local availability and price stability, a balance we continue to manage closely.

Hon Members, In the **2024/25 financial year**, the Department set out to expand veterinary trade facilitation by supporting certification systems, enhancing veterinary capacity, and enabling local producers to access foreign markets with confidence.

We are pleased to report that tangible progress was achieved. One of the most significant milestones was the **commencement of trade with Saudi Arabia**, which followed intensive negotiations to finalise the required animal health certificate. This led to **Beefmaster becoming the first South African establishment to export beef to Saudi Arabia**, marking a major breakthrough for the province and the country.

Hon Speaker, This progress, however, does not come without its challenges and in addressing **Delays in certification turnaround times** the Department will strengthen veterinary trade capacity in the **2025/26 financial year** by:

- Expanding our pool of export-certifying veterinarians to prevent delays and reduce the burden on current officials
- Increasing our provincial target for health certificates issued to accommodate new markets
- Deepening engagement with national trade structures to ensure that the Northern
 Cape remains at the forefront of negotiations and market opening opportunities

Moreover, the province will prepare for further export expansion opportunities to the Middle East and BRICS markets, with several abattoirs already expressing interest in securing additional export status.

The European Union has also initiated an audit process for the export of ostrich and zebra

meat, and we are pleased to note that the audit of Northern Cape facilities commenced on 10 September 2024. This marks the next step in unlocking access to high-value EU markets an opportunity that could further enhance our export profile and bring greater returns to producers.

LAND CARE

The LandCare Programme is one of the Department's most important tools for ensuring the sustainable use of agricultural land, the restoration of degraded ecosystems, and the economic empowerment of rural communities through conservation-based employment. It reflects our commitment to climate-smart, inclusive, and environmentally sound agricultural development.

Hon Members, In the 2025/26 financial year, we will accelerate our efforts to scale both the ecological and socio-economic benefits of the programme. The Department has allocated R8.875 million to implement eight LandCare projects across targeted districts. These interventions are expected to create at least 50 EPWP work opportunities, further reinforcing the programme's developmental impact.

The following are among the key LandCare interventions to be implemented:

- In John Taolo Gaetsewe District, four LandCare projects will focus on climate data collection to support the development of early warning systems that help farmers make informed production decisions
- In Frances Baard District, the Department will revive the Barkly-West nursery, with a strong emphasis on skills development and job creation for unemployed youth
- In Pixley Ka Seme District, a major restoration project will address severe
 degradation caused by invasive Prosopis species and soil erosion in areas such
 as Strydenburg and Hopetown. This will include both chemical control and
 bioengineering techniques

At the **provincial level**, the Department will continue to support **firewood-making enterprises** in **Niekerkshoop** and **Delportshoop** to promote sustainable use of natural vegetation and support local agri-processing efforts.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Hon Speaker, The Department also continued to support registered waste transporters across the province now numbering more than 50 operators helping to formalise and regulate a sector that holds significant potential for green job creation and small business development.

In the **2025/26 financial year**, the Department will strengthen its role in advancing a circular waste economy and restoring environmental health in high-risk communities. Key commitments include:

- Expanding compliance monitoring and enforcement operations at municipal waste sites, in collaboration with regulatory partners.
- Providing technical support and capacity-building to municipalities to strengthen landfill management and reduce unauthorised dumping.
- Facilitating the transition of waste transporters and informal collectors into recognised green economy SMMEs, by supporting access to equipment and compliance systems.
- Strengthening the Department's intergovernmental forum with COGHSTA and DWS to improve joint planning on waste and sewage infrastructure upgrades.

Hon. Speaker, Sound environmental governance is not a bureaucratic exercise, it is a cornerstone of sustainable development.

In the 2025/26 financial year, the Department will intensify its focus on:

 Providing technical and legal support to municipalities to improve compliance with waste, water, and land use regulations

- Reducing backlogs in environmental authorisation applications to accelerate service delivery and infrastructure projects
- Conducting awareness campaigns to strengthen community understanding of environmental rights, responsibilities, and redress mechanisms
- Compliance must never be viewed as a hindrance it is the bedrock of fair, lawful, and sustainable development. The Department remains committed to strengthening environmental oversight as part of our broader developmental mandate.

TRANSFORMATION IN THE SECTOR

Hon Speaker, Agricultural and environmental transformation is both a constitutional obligation and a developmental necessity.

In the **2025/26 financial year**, the Department will strengthen its transformation agenda with a sharper focus on enterprise development, land reform support, and inclusive access to resources. Key priorities include:

- Finalising and implementing the Provincial Farmer Development Strategy, which will serve as a transformation blueprint to align all support programmes to national equity targets
- Supporting 60 land reform farms with post-settlement production inputs,
 mechanisation support, and mentorship
- Operationalising the LandCare nursery revival project in Barkly-West as a skills hub for previously disadvantaged youth and women in agri-enterprise development
- As part of our commitment to women empowerment in agriculture, the Department
 will commercialise 10 female producers over the next two years through access to
 Conditional Grant Funding, with the goal of improving production output, expanding
 farm operations, and facilitating entry into formal markets
- Recognising the Northern Cape's vast but under-leveraged potential for agricultural
 innovation even under arid conditions the Department is in the process of

preparing to host a Provincial Commodity Group Symposium. This platform will bring together commodity organisations, producers, and market actors to develop strategic partnerships that align production models with market demands, climate resilience, and inclusive economic growth

To strengthen transformation in the livestock value chain, the Department has
initiated the development of a provincial stud breeder database under the
Livestock Improvement Programme (Kaonafatso Ya Dikgomo). This initiative will
focus on enhancing genetic quality, improving access to livestock markets, and
promoting sustainable and climate-resilient livestock farming practices.

To drive this work, the Department will ensure that **CASP** and **Ilima/Letsema** allocations continue to prioritise black, youth, and women-owned enterprises and that all supported projects include transformation indicators in their funding criteria.

Hon. Speaker, The wild life industry remains one of the highly marginalised sector , DAERL in line with relevant national policy imperatives has taken a conscious decision to establish a game donation scheme/program whereby surplus game will be donated to historically disadvantaged individuals (HDIs) that have largely been excluded from the game farming industry.

The aim of the DAERL game donation scheme/program is to redress the exclusion of HDIs from the game farming industry by creating opportunities where HDI farmers can establish their own wildlife enterprises. This is achieved through mechanisms for the transparent and equitable supply of founder herds of game to applicants thereby supporting them to establish viable wildlife enterprises, whilst also raising awareness for conservation, protected area management and sustainable utilisation principles in the wildlife industry.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Hon. Speaker, Youth empowerment is central to our mission of building a capable and inclusive sector. With over 60% of our population under 35, our strategies must deliver real, transformative opportunities — not just promises

- Some of the Unemployed graduates placed in commercial enterprises are permanently employed by the host farmers as Junior Farm Managers due to their commitment, hard work and dedication. Department in collaboration with different Commodity Groups as well as Land Bank are in negotiations to permanently appoint agricultural graduates after the completion of the internship programme.
- The enrolment of 15 youth participants in the Open for Business programme, which promotes youth-led enterprise development in agriculture and environment
- The rollout of Junior LandCare, focused on building environmental awareness and food production skills among school learners
- Youth involvement in EPWP-linked roles across LandCare, infrastructure, and conservation projects

Hon. Members, In the **2025/26 financial year**, youth empowerment will be elevated into a cross-cutting development priority integrated into every programme and funded project. Key commitments include:

- The placement and training of the 4th cohort of 80 agricultural graduates through the Unemployed Agricultural Graduate Programme, in collaboration with Organised Agriculture and Commodity Groups. These graduates will be embedded in commercial farming enterprises to gain real-world experience and build employability in high-impact areas of the sector.
- The Appointment of 30 Assistant Agricultural Practitioners across the province to strengthen Extension and Advisory Services, improve programme delivery, and provide structured employment pathways for qualified young professionals. This intervention speaks directly to the dual challenge of youth unemployment and the need for strengthened farmer support services in the most remote areas.

- The inclusion of youth participation criteria in CASP and Ilima/Letsema beneficiary selection, ensuring that young producers and agri-entrepreneurs are prioritised
- A partnership with the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment to scale up Eco-Schools, green career expos, and youth-focused conservation initiatives

Hon. Members, In the **2025/26 financial year**, the Department will consolidate these innovations and introduce new measures to strengthen research and technology as enablers of service delivery and transformation. Key priorities include:

- Launching a Digital Extension Support System, targeting smallholder farmers with location-specific production advice, weather alerts, and pest outbreak warnings
- Finalising a Provincial Knowledge Management Strategy, focused on capturing lessons, sharing insights across programmes, and applying evidence in planning and budgeting
- Supporting district-level pilots on remote sensing for veld management and mobile data collection tools for extension officers
- Expanding the use of cost-recovery diagnostic services in the veterinary lab, positioning it as both a technical resource and a revenue generator
- Strengthening partnerships with research councils, higher education institutions, and commodity bodies to support co-funded innovation projects

Hon Speaker, The Department together with the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) signed an agreement regarding the Hemp trial at the Eiland Research Station in Upington. The trial is in its second year and will run for a period of five years. The Department, in collaboration with the ARC has trained extension Officers in the province and is working the programme to train Hemp permit holders. Hemp permits are issued by the DALRRD and applicants submit their application directly to DALRRD. To date the province, has 18 hemp permit holders.

Budget Allocation Per Programme 2025/26

Honourable Speaker, the Department's total budget for the 2025/26 financial year amounts to R735.014 million – This budget has been strategically allocated across our eight programmes, in alignment with our service delivery imperatives and developmental priorities.

The budget allocation to each programme in 2025/26 is as follows:

Programme 1: Receives an allocated R219.555 million

Programme 2: Sustainable Resource Management - Allocated R31.117 million

Programme 3: Agricultural Producer Support and Development - The largest share is allocated here – R256.289 million

Programme 4: Veterinary Services - Receives an allocated R53.756 million

Programme 5: Research and Technology Development Services - Receives an allocated R63.890 million

Programme 6: Agricultural Economics Services – Receives an allocated R11.679 million

Programme 7: Rural Development – receives an allocated R20.200 million

Programme 8: Environment and Nature Conservation - Receives an allocated R78.528 million

Hon. Speaker, This allocation is more than a financial summary it is a reflection of our Department's values, focus, and delivery priorities. Every rand has been assigned with purpose: to drive inclusive growth, ensure ecological sustainability, and deliver real results to the people of the Northern Cape.

Hon. Speaker, In conclusion, our mandate is not only defined by the projects we fund or the plans we table, but by how meaningfully these translate into dignity, livelihoods, and opportunity for every household across this province. This Budget is therefore an instrument

of transformation a call to action for inclusive growth, smart farming, resilient ecosystems, and a more equitable rural economy.

Hon. Speaker, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Honourable Premier, Dr Zamani Saul, for his unwavering and people-first leadership, which continues to inspire ethical governance and progressive delivery across this province.

No conclusion would be complete without acknowledging the movement that shaped my political outlook my political home, the African National Congress, the South African Communist Party, COSATU, and all its affiliates. I thank you for your ideological clarity, your discipline, and your guidance as we pursue the values of justice, equality, and collective upliftment.

To the Acting Head of Department, Adv. Thulane Binase, the executive team, officials, and the Ministry thank you for your commitment to serving our communities with diligence and heart.

To my colleagues in the Executive Council, Members of this Legislature, and all public servants, may we remain resolute in our shared responsibility to serve every citizen of the Northern Cape irrespective of race, background, or political affiliation.

And lastly, to my family, my loved ones, and especially Mme Motswadi your strength is my anchor, and your support, my sanctuary.

Honourable Speaker, I hereby table Budget Vote 12 for the Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform for the 2025/26 financial year with humility, pride, and the full belief that our province's future is still being written through the work we do together.

Ke a leboga, Thank you, Dankie