



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

DWS and AGRI-SA meet to address drought challenges facing the agricultural sector in the Western Cape

05 January 2018

Pretoria: A delegation of the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), led by the Minister, Ms Nomvula Mokonyane, yesterday 04th January 2018, met with a delegation of AGRI-SA led by its President Mr Dan Kriek. The meeting was initiated by the common interest regarding the need to address the challenges of the debilitating drought engulfing the Western Cape, with particular emphasis on the impact on the agricultural sector.

The meeting looked at and engaged on the following issues:

1. Current status of water supply in Western Cape and seasonal weather outlook.
2. Impact of restrictions and compliance with restrictions:
3. Overview of interventions in the agricultural sector and what further interventions should be considered:
4. Status of groundwater and Control of groundwater abstractions:
5. Implementation of the regulations on water metering: and
6. Unauthorised water use: compliance and enforcement:

Whilst there was general consensus on the critical input by the sector into the Western Cape economy and that of the country broadly, there was agreement also that water conservation remains top of mind with responsible water use the responsibility of all, especially the agricultural sector which uses the bulk of all available water.

Minister Mokonyane impressed upon all that, “the situation is currently not positive and it does not seem that it will be so in the foreseeable future. There is need for all to comply with the restrictions in place for better water use. There is also appreciation of the need for inclusive interventions, so that there should not be more pressure exerted on this critical sector. We have to find one another for more cooperation and appreciation of the critical stage the province is in and the possibility of the movement towards Day Zero”.

“The economic impact across the board will be immense if no water is available for the sector, with a resultant social impact too. There is therefore a need to keep this sector of the economy alive. As AGRI-SA we agree with the need for enforcement; illegal irrigators will also not be defended. We need to be cognisant of the 100 000 jobs lost over the last year, with a potential for this to increase. The question of efficient disaster relief to help farmers will also have to be addressed”, said Mr Kriek, President of AGRI-SA in response.

He continued to point out that the question is: “what is expected from the sector? We are also concerned about unauthorised water use; we therefore take the issue of verification very seriously. Minister, we wish to assure you that all support from AGRI-SA will be availed, and



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that compliance is a non-negotiable. We will use all our platforms and means to send the necessary messages to the farmers.

In his presentation, Mr Trevor Balzer, the Deputy Director-General for Strategic and Emergency Projects, gave a broad outline of the dire state of the water situation in the Western Cape, emphasizing that due particularly to the lack of compliance with restrictions that are in place, over abstraction and illegal water use and storage, the situation has worsened over time. He reiterated the fact that unless there is a conscious move towards behavioural change, combined with a concerted effort to ensure compliance by the DWS, the situation within the systems and catchment areas will continue to deteriorate.

“Whilst a lot of work is underway to bring some relief to the agricultural sector and in the province, it is also important that general behavioural change be a way of life,” DDG Balzer said.

Minister Mokonyane said that: “the DWS will embark on a more vigorous enforcement process, with more resources being brought in from other provinces to strengthen capacity in the Western Cape DWS office. We will continue encouraging other means like water harvesting for future use in order to relieve pressure on current supply. We will work together with the sector, province, COCT and other affected municipalities, Departments of Agriculture, Rural Development and COGTA.

“Recovery could be protracted; therefore we encourage reuse and looking into solutions. Behavioural change can assist all of us to survive this situation and want to ensure all that we will continue to work hard to avert Day Zero, whenever that is predicted. We also acknowledge, thank and encourage those that have complied and encourage them to continue doing so.

“This meeting needs to be seen as a stepping stone to continued interaction between ourselves and the sector”.

ENDS

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