

MEC Alan Winde - Western Cape agriculture mid-term budget allocation

We are tabling this adjustment budget during an exciting time for the Western Cape's agriculture sector. Africa's largest agriculture gathering, the African Agri Investment Indaba, is currently taking place in Cape Town. The continent's leading investors, agribusinesses, senior government officials and industry experts are in our region to discuss how we can expand agriculture in Africa, to become the world's food basket.



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In addition to boosting production, we envisage an agriculture sector on our continent which is owned by its own people, and which drives inclusive growth. We are committed to building a sector where hard working employees are able to access opportunities to improve their circumstances and the lives of their families. A sector in which all people, regardless of rank, are treated fairly.

In the Western Cape, we are seeking to add up to 100,000 agri-processing jobs to the economy under the banner of Project Khulisa. These jobs will largely be created in our rural areas.

Drought relief

With this mid-term allocation, we are providing an additional amount in excess of R25 million for drought relief. These funds will assist emerging grain farmers in the West Coast. At the onset of the drought, many of these farmers, who are important employers in their communities, faced an uncertain future. As yields failed to materialise, it became clear that many would struggle to cover the costs of operations.

The Western Cape Department of Agriculture, through its commitment to supporting land reform, had already placed significant investment into these black farmers. We are determined to walk the road with them, to ensure their enterprises grow into thriving agribusinesses.

This allocation brings to R61 million the total amount the Western Cape Government has committed to drought relief in the past year. It includes an R11 million reallocation from the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme.

My office received a letter from the National Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, advising that the Western Cape has been allocated R12 million for drought relief. These funds are to be distributed directly to beneficiaries. I would like to urge national to ensure this money is dispersed as a matter of urgency. Every delay is another step closer to a farm operation being forced to shut its doors as a result of government red tape. We cannot afford to drag our feet on getting this support to the farmers who need it most.

Smart Agri

Part of our drought relief funding will also go towards Smart Agri, the climate change response strategy we developed in partnership with the industry and academia.

To achieve future growth, we have to protect the sector against the impact of extreme weather events.

Smart Agri, is the result of two years of extensive collaboration between the Western Cape Government (specifically the Departments of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs and Development Planning), the University of Cape Town's African Climate and Development Initiative and a wide range of stakeholders in the private sector.

One of Smart Agri's priorities is conservation agriculture, which advocates minimum tillage, year-round soil cover, and crop rotation. Due in part to conservation agriculture, farmers in the Swartland have seen good yields in the wheat crop, despite a challenging year.

With the introduction of no-till seeding methods, combined with crop rotation practices that were pioneered through the Long-Term Crop Rotation Trial at Langgewens Research Farm in the Swartland, we are currently producing nearly double the amount of wheat on less than half of the area previously planted to this crop.

I am happy to report that 98% of farmers in the middle Swartland are implementing crop rotation.

Opening markets for Western Cape produce

As we make progress in mitigating the impact of the drought on the agriculture sector, we are going forward with our plans to open markets for Western Cape produce.

Under Project Khulisa, we are seeking to boost the number of exports to key markets. To ensure that our produce can be internationally accredited for export, we are constructing a residue testing facility. R6 million is allocated for the development of this facility, which will be commissioned in this financial year.

We have made excellent progress in growing agriculture, and we have a lot more to do. I would like to thank HOD Joyene Isaacs and her team at the Department of Agriculture for their efforts in growing the agriculture sector, and in implementing our Project Khulisa action plans. I look forward to working with organised agriculture, agri-workers and industry agencies to achieve a strong, fair and inclusive agriculture sector.

Western Cape

Issued by: Western Cape Agriculture and Economic Development

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