

Farmers selling stock as cost of feed escalates

Livestock producers across SA are paying up to R1,000/ton more for feed than last year because of the drought, says Agri Western Cape. The drought had resulted in fodder becoming scarce, so producers now had to pay more for animal feed, the farmers' representative body said on Tuesday. Producers who could no longer afford to buy feed had begun to sell their animals at below-average prices to already crowded feedlots.

By [Bekezela Phakathi](#) 9 Dec 2015



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SA is facing its worst drought since 1992, which has caused a decline in farming output and could lead to food price increases. The national government has already declared KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, North West, Limpopo and Free State drought disaster areas. In November the Western Cape provincial cabinet formally requested national government to declare the province a drought disaster area.

Shortages all round

The agricultural sector, which is one of the Western Cape's most important sectors, has been the hardest hit by the water shortages as farmers battle to harvest crops or feed livestock. Agri Western Cape CE Carl Opperman said on Tuesday both commercial and emerging agriculture in the Western Cape were suffering from the serious drought crisis that needed to be managed.

"Grain producers have already suffered huge losses and the crisis is spreading to our livestock producers. The shortage of fodder is not only affecting our red meat producers, but is also putting the dairy and wool industries under severe pressure. If the Karoo doesn't get good rainfall soon, producers there too will have problems to meet their feeding needs," he said.

Relief efforts

Producers in the Western Cape contributed about 120 tonnes of feed to Agri Western Cape's drought relief initiative to be distributed to livestock producers in the province that are experiencing severe grazing shortages after the winter's below-average rainfall.

Loads of lucerne, barley, chaff and wheat straw donated by producers in the southern Cape and the Cape Metropole are being distributed to producers in the West Coast and Sandveld regions where available pasture dried up six weeks ago. Donations of feed from the southern Cape were also distributed to livestock producers in the rest of the country.

Livestock producers in the Swartland said the available grazing in their region would only sustain them until the end of this year. From January they would also have to purchase feed or sell their animals.

Opperman paid tribute to producers who had contributed feed, saying the contributions showed how producers could assist each other in times of need.

Economic opportunities MEC Alan Winde said in November that if the national government approved the provincial cabinet's request to declare the Western Cape a disaster area, farmers would be asked to lodge applications for assistance. "Any assistance provided will be based on strict criteria," said Winde. Minister Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Senzeni Zokwana said in November that the department would be providing R2.6m to assist farmers affected by the drought.

Source: BDpro

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