

INPUT BY THE NORTHERN CAPE MEC FOR Agriculture, Rural development & Land reform, HON MASE MANOPOLE BRIEFING ON INTERVENTION TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN AGRICULTURE – IN TERMS OF RULE 84 THE VIRTUAL NCOP PLENARY SITTING.

**Honourable House Chairperson;
Chiefwhip of NCOP
Honorable Minister
Deputy Ministers
Honourable Members; Permanent & Special delegates MECs
Salga Representative**

Good day.

As the Northern Cape Provincial Government, we have no doubts whatsoever that our efforts as a country in terms of implementing the recommended strategy to flatten the curve and slowing down the rate of transmission is well on track and bearing positive fruits.

Honourable House Chairperson, Covid-19 forced us to reorganize our systems the way we used to do government business and provide services to our people, while we are in women's month it is prudent for us to find a way how we elevate women's farmers & workers & dwellers issues in this difficult time of Covid-19 as well as the impact of GBV to all women in the sector, I dedicate this briefing to the Brand family who were kidnapped then brutally killed as well others farmers killed may their soul Rest in Peace, and all women in sector as we strive to transform the sector to be inclusive especially women, lets be part of the generation that ends gender inequality.

The Northern Cape is grappling the effects of a drought that has been described as the worst ever in the history, and this has meant that the agricultural sector has been greatly affected. The agricultural sector and farming in particular is by its very nature risky, decisions that are taken on a regular basis cannot be predicted with 100% certainty. These include weather, price fluctuations and the changing market among others. However, the risk that was never anticipated and factored into these risks was the health risk that we face as a country and a Province. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on a Province that was already struggling with food insecurity, joblessness and unemployment which has also meant that some of our

farmers have not been able to access the international markets due to the lockdown restrictions.

Crop and livestock performance depend on biological processes that are affected by the weather, and by pests and diseases. Low rainfall or drought may lead to low yields; hail or heavy rains could damage or even wipe out crops in other instances. The health pandemic has shown that, as an exogenous factor, it can affect the sector greatly

Agricultural production

The Northern Cape is characterized by a very diverse agricultural sector with two distinct branches ie: Extensive livestock production and intensive crop production under irrigation.

Risks Management

The mitigation strategies implemented to date in trying to mitigate the risks posed by COVID-19 include the National Department's R1,2 billion COVID RELIEF DISASTER FUND that was targeted at small holder and communal farmers to support food security initiatives. 8857 applicants from the Northern Cape, 1427 applications were approved to offer assistance to farmers with production inputs to support food production in the country up to the value of around R46 million.

Commodities which were identified to be supported were poultry, vegetables, fruits, livestock and winter field crops.

Of the 1 435 approved applications, 240 were women, 140 youth and 19 people living with disability and males were 1 028.

The livestock category has been the most requested commodity by farmers, followed by poultry and vegetables. Each of the approved farmers have received inputs in line with the size of their farming operations up to a maximum of R50 000.

The high number of application forms were collected in the John Taolo Gaetsewe district with 4 174 submissions, followed by Namakwa with 1 705.

The ZF Mgcawu recorded 1 375 application forms with Frances Baard at 1 123 and lastly Pixley ka Seme, recording 483 submissions.

Out of all the regions, Namakwa received the highest number of approvals to the total of 689, followed by Pixley ka Seme at 220.

The ZF Mgcawu region got an approval of 203 applications, while John Taolo Gaetsewe receiving 169 and Frances Baard, 154.

The farmers appreciated the relief, Minister indicated the appeal process will follow and other form of support must be provided within the constrain budget.

Honourable Chairperson, furthermore The Department Personnel formed part of the technical response team to provide technical assistance to Covid-19 interventions in all district, technical assistance and was also to provide to existing projects and constructions continued for some projects, several meetings were also conducted and discussion are still underway with private sector to try and explore ways of processing and transporting fodder for animals to farmers. The department also utilized 4 local radio station in order to make presentation on Primary Animal Health Care (PAHC) to the local farming community as form of continuous support to them.

Provisions of PPEs to

NORTHERN CAPE DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR FARM WORKERS

District	Number of Masks	Number of Soaps
Z.F. Mgcawu	7000	5400
Pixley Ka Seme	10 500	5184
Frances Baard	8000	2160
Namakwa	7500	8856
John Taolo Gaetsiwe	7850	8856
Total Amount distributed	40 850	30 456

Still to be distributed : Masks & soaps

222 000 cloth masks

10 656 soaps

MITIGATION STRATEGY

- Department will train and capacitate more farmers on Financial and Marketing issues.
- Intensify production – irrigation and adoption of technologies.
- Capacitate smallholder sector through targeted support by Extension & Advisory Services
- Increase export market access opportunities
- Develop infrastructure
- Expand production area wherever there is room for expansion
- Encourage consumption of local products
- Improve the image of the sector to attract youth

Honourable Chairperson as inclusion; The persistent budget cuts to the Province both in terms of equitable share and conditional grants has therefore meant that we are unable to make the requisite intervention to assist the sector, in particular, emerging and smallholder farmers, however department is working very hard to be creative and navigate through in this difficult epoch we find ourselves in, we should not fail to provide support to our farmers, in order to ensure that we achieve strategic goal of the government by transformation of the sector which should be inclusive of women, youth and disable people.

Honourable Chairperson and Members, we owe it to each other to do the right thing!

I thank you.