



## agriculture, land reform & rural development

Department:  
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

ADJUSTMENT BUDGET SPEECH: VOTE 29

DEPUTY MINISTER MCEBISI SKWATSHA (MP)

21 JULY 2020

Honourable House Chairperson  
Honourable Minister Thoko Didiza  
Deputy Minister Sdumo Dlamini  
Ministers and Deputy Ministers  
Honourable Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee  
Esteemed Members of Parliament  
Director-General  
Our Stakeholders & Entities  
Executive Management from the Department  
Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delivering this speech in honour of our people who lost their lives to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Many are still recovering from the disease, and we wish them speedy recovery.

We are debating during the month July that is internationally recognized as a tribute to our beloved former President Nelson Mandela. Poignantly, last week on Friday the international icon's youngest daughter, Zindzi, was laid to rest.

As we battle the challenges of Covid-19, we should take solace from the words of President Mandela: "Everyone can rise above their circumstances and achieve success if they are dedicated and passionate about what they do."

This message is crystal clear: we should not give up. Instead we should double up our collective efforts to deliver meaningful services to improve the lives of people in previously disadvantaged communities.

As part of the New Normal Way, we have to reorganize the delivery targets in our Annual Performance Plan to suit the constraints of the radically revised Special Budget Adjustment that was delivered by the Minister of Finance, Tito Mboweni, in June.

We are still committed to implement spatial transformation; effective land administration and land redistribution, notwithstanding the budget cuts.

We have tried our utmost not to compromise the quality of our essential services.

But it will not be easy.

### 1. Restitution of Land Rights

Land dispossession remains one of the most painful reminders of the legacy of the oppressive apartheid era. One of the legislative instruments introduced by this democratic

government to eradicate this unjust situation is the Restitution of Land Right Act No 22 of 1994. This Act seeks to compensate people who lost their rights due to racial discriminatory laws such as the 1913 Native Land Act.

Our government has made progress to compensate the people who lodged their claims by 31 December 1998. But we are mindful that many claims are still outstanding.

The Commission on Land Restitution of Land Rights, the budget is R3,28 billion-after it was reduced by R403-million.

In the short term, we have revised the targets on settlement of land claims. The focus is more on claims that have already been researched and ready for settlement. To this end, the Provincial Targets of the number of land claims to be settled has been decreased from 454 to 244. And the number of land claims to be finalized has gone down from 479 to 295 cases. In the long term, these changes will create a backlog in service delivery, but our teams are geared up to the task.

To maximize the rendering of its services during these trying times, the Commission has revised the criteria to enable the settlement of remaining restitution claims in the most sustainable and affordable manner. It will also use Section 6(2)(d) of the Restitution Act to “ensure priority is given to claims, which affect a substantial number of persons or persons who have suffered substantial losses because of the dispossession or persons with particularly needs”.

Most of our officials had to work from home. They could not access sites for research and verification purposes. They did not have direct contact with claimants and landowners. Nor could they meet service providers directly.

But they soldiered on.

## 2. Land Reform

We are aware of the challenges that are experienced by the Communal Property Associations. These conflicts have had a negative effect in the effective delivery of the land reform initiatives.

With the limited budget, we will continue to ensure the CPAs are capacitated and supported so that they can operate effectively on the land allocated to them. Currently, more than 1500 CPAs have been established nationally. We plan to support 477 CPAs so that they should be able to deliver on their mandates.

## 3. Land Redistribution and Land Tenure

Honourable members, land redistribution and tenure reform is one of the core branches spearheading the process of correcting the injustices caused by land dispossession of the past. The land redistribution unit caters for the acquisition of land for various purposes and the allocation of the properties to deserving land reform beneficiaries.

The land allocation process prioritizes women, youth, and persons with disabilities, as this is consciously aimed at protecting vulnerable groups and increasing their participation in the agricultural sector.

In the 2019/20 financial year, the Department acquired 77 000 hectares of land for agricultural purpose, this included land for livestock grazing, crop production and horticulture.

We were hopeful to continue in this trajectory, as we empower our communities. But this will be slowed down.

This financial year, the budget for Land Acquisition and Land Development now stands at just R447-million (R447 394 000) after being reduced by R443-million (R443 606 000) from R891-m.

The Department planned to acquire 50 000 hectares of land, but due to the budget cuts, it will only acquire 23 000 hectares.

## TRANCRAA:

We also had to revise- downwards the targets in respect of our interventions in TRANCRAA areas from 21 to 10. (Transformation of Certain Rural Areas Act).

With respect to Land Development Support, the Department planned to support 200 PLAS farms with both agricultural infrastructure and production inputs, but the target has been re-adjusted downward from 200 to 146. The Department will only honour commitments in both

land acquisition and land development support programs.

Under Household budgets, - the funds to finance food security and other related projects - the whole R258-million budget was surrendered to cater for the budget cuts. Sadly, this means the Department will not be able to fund some of the food security related projects.

But not all is gloomy.

Labour Tenants:

Honourable members, it will be amiss not to dwell on the efforts that will go a long way to improve the lives of some of the neediest groups in our society – the labour tenants.

The budget for the acquisition of land for Labour Tenants is not affected, as there is a court order on this matter. We plan to settle 500 labour tenants' claims and acquire 947 hectares of land for labour tenants and farm dwellers.

We are in the process of strengthening the implementation of the Land Tenants Act No3 to safeguard the interests of this vulnerable group. To this end, a Special Master has been appointed in December 2019 to monitor the implementation of the court order supporting labour tenants.

To ensure the smooth functioning of the Office of the Special Master, we have budgeted R27-million for it.

#### 4. Office of the Valuer-General

Let me deal with the Office of the Valuer-General, one of the key players in the land reform claim process. OVG, Honourable members, was established in terms of the Property Valuation Act 17 of 2014 to place value on the land that is to be used to redress the injustices of the past.

But this crucial mandate is going to be impacted due to the budget cuts. The OVG budget has been reduced by an amount of R44-million and now stands at R100-million, adversely impacting efforts to strengthen OVG's capacity. This shortage of the human resource will make it difficult for OVG to complete the backlog valuation on time.

#### 5. Conclusion

Notwithstanding the Covid-19 challenges, our Department provided support to farmers and farmworkers to minimize the impact of the pandemic. Our interventions were not enough, but the beneficiaries appreciated the assistance. We are grateful for the humanitarian support from Golden Harvest that sponsored and distributed the much-needed fresh-produce parcels to the needy communities.

We wish to send our condolences to the families of farm workers who died in a horrific road accident in Touws River.

We wish to reiterate our Department's commitment to ensure complete compliance to the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and other legal prescripts, as we use these limited resources effectively and efficiently for the benefit of our citizens, especially the poorest of the poor.

In line with the normal government policy, wasteful, fruitless, and irregular expenditure will not be tolerated. Nor will under-spending and corruption be condoned.

In conclusion, we are determined to serve our people diligently and effectively despite the inevitable budget cuts.

And we dare not fail them.

Thank you.