

## **MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR OUPA KHOABANE.**

On the 04 September 2015 in Gazette No 83. The Premier of the Free State Province, Mr. E. S. Magashule declared Free State as state of disaster following the impending country wide El Nino drought conditions.

### **The Drought Condition**

The weather forecasting system indicates a high probability for below –normal rainfall for the mid and late summer season for the whole country. The Free State Province like the rest of the country has severely being affected ensuing drought conditions. This dry spells are as a result of the effects of climate change exacerbated by the 95% chance that the El Nino phenomenon will continue through the remainder of the 2015 and will likely weaken by the end of the rainy season around March 2016.

In agricultural terms drought can be classified in terms of lower than normal soil moisture and severely high temperatures which were experienced in the middle of February 2015 which coincided with the pollination time of most Rangeland grasses (especially Themeda triandra) and Cash Crops (especially Maize) which have caused up to 30% loss of maize production as per the Crops Estimates Committee. It is further on predicted that for the coming plant season we expect 2 to 3% loss of area planted thus leading to poor harvests. The effects of this are already felt in the economy through increases in food prices and loss of livestock mainly by subsistence and small holder farmers.

### **Extend of drought in the Free State**

The grazing area that has been affected by drought in the Free State Province is in the order of 14 649 ha, according to farmers who completed drought assessment forms.

More than 109 245 Large Stock Units are affected. We are beginning to experience livestock mortalities in the following areas: Mangaung Metro (Thaba Nchu, Botshabelo and Bloemfontein), Xhariep (Edenburg, Rouxville and Zastron), Thabo Mofutsanyana (Senekal, Paul Roux and

Rosendal), Fezile Dabi (Koppies and Heilbron) and parts of Lejweleputswa. This brings the total number of affected farmers to 3 655, and this include black and white farmers.

### **The Free State Roll –Out Plan**

The Department has put up a plan to roll out the drought support to 2907 subsistence and smallholder farmers in the Free State. This constitutes 79% of the 3 655 affected farmers in the Province focusing on communal and commonages. The available funds to initiate the roll out plan is R39 Million. The farmers are spread throughout the five districts namely Thabo Mofutsanyana, Fezile Dabi, Lejweleputswa, and Xhariep as well as Mangaung Metro.

### **The Plan will include the following:**

1. The Distribution of fodder in the form of protein based pellets for all the 2 907 targeted smallholder and subsistence farmers.
2. The provision of infrastructure support for stock water reticulation support to 132 small holder and subsistence farmers.
3. Provision of Veterinary Medication and Feed Supplements to all 2 907.

The Drought Relief Plan started in Bloemfontein, **Mangaung Metro** on the 13 November 2015 where 300 bags of protein pellets have been delivered and about 600 bags will be delivered today. As an example Mr Lebusa from Swartkoppies farm in extent of 1730 hectares in Bloemfontein runs the farm with a total of 400 livestock has lost up to date 17 cattle, 18 sheep from 280 sheep. He needs feeds for the remaining livestock (pigs, cattle and sheep).

Mr Abel Mzuzwana from Eengevonden farm in extent of 1 573 hectares have been affected by drought since last year, he lost 34 cows. This year he has lost 24 cows, 15 sheep and 7 goats. He is currently running a farm with 60 goats, 48 sheep and 214 cows; and he is experiencing a shortage of fodder and water.

We have also handed over 456 bags of feed and lucern bales to commonages in Deelporsrust near Welkom, 570 bags delivered in Allenridge, 28 bags for Bultfontein, 194 for Tuinenessen, and tomorrow we will deliver 290 bags for Hertzogville, 250 for Boshoff and Ventersburg with 240 bags which bring the total amount of bags for **Lejweleputswa** to 1248 bags.

In **Fezile Dabi**, we have already handed over 400 bags in Tweeling, 500 for Cornelia, 156 for Frankfort and Villiers 190 bags which added to the total of 1250 bags. We will continue to escalate this initiative to other affected farming areas across the Province.

**We are working closely with the following external and internal stakeholders:**

- Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (**DAFF**),
- Provincial Disaster Management Centre (**PDMC**) and
- National Disaster Management Centre (**NDMC**),
- National Agricultural Farmers Union (**NAFU**),
- African Farmers Union of South Africa (**AFASA**),
- Free State Agriculture, Department of Cooperative Governance, Traditional Affairs and Human Settlements (**COGTA**).

**Total Cost / Financial resources required**

Emergency Funding for livestock feed in the form of Protein Based Pellets to the value of R78 million and an additional R25 million is needed urgently. Working closely with departments we will establish operationalize more boreholes and water reticulation projects support.

R105 million is the Grand Total Cost request.

As an emergency support, the Provincial Treasury and the department will avail R39 million to affected farmers. The funds will be for Fodder and water reticulation Projects within the scheme and will be in terms of the following:

<b>PROJECTS</b>	<b>ESTIMATED AMOUNT</b>
Feed in the form of Protein Based Pellets	R78 million
Water Reticulation Support project	R25 million
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>R103 million</b>
Professional Service Provider (PsP) Fees	R1 million
Operational Costs (Km's for PD Officials)	R1 million
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>R105 million</b>

We have line up our Extension Officers, Vets, Animal Health Technicians and Disaster Unit to assist and provide technical support to our farmers.

I thank you,

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**