

## AFASA DROUGHT REPORT SUMMARY

28 OCTOBER 2019



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The African Farmers Association of South Africa (AFASA) is an umbrella body of majority black diverse farmers and farming communities in South Africa. AFASA has since from 2011 developed into a credible voice of farmers advocating for the development of African farmers, at communal and freehold land, covering subsistence, small-scale and medium-sized commercial farmers. AFASA mainly advocates for the support and advancement of farmers at all stages in particular progressive policies and legislation and targeted programmes. AFASA also exposes farmers to opportunities in all facets of the agribusiness value chain and capacity support to increase production to help farmers graduate to viable and sustainable commercial farming. To this end AFASA is currently concerned about the state of drought in the country and its impact on farmers in different provinces. To assist farmers, AFASA engaged in a fact-finding engagement with farmers to assist in raising awareness and systematically address the scourge of drought. This briefing note is to assist in bringing attention to particularly disadvantaged communities as the plight of communal areas is often understated and as such not adequately assisted. Below is a summary of AFASA's assessment in the most affected provinces, Northern Cape, KwaZulu Natal, Eastern Cape and Free State.

## 2. KEY FINDINGS

Contrary to belief that the water crisis of the last few years would improve, **drought** has continued into **2019**. The concern is that multiple regions have seen significantly reduced levels of rainfall causing panic on the eve of the planting season. A report from FAO noted that, while rainfall had picked up in late December 2018, several areas within the region were suffering from a severe **drought** and accompanying effects.

AFASA is pushing for a heightened awareness of the plight of farmers and impact overall, with a different approach to drought-related intervention beyond drought relief. that goe. Droughts in South Africa have affected the national economy and local communities. The drought has created mounting pressures on the nation's agro-economic system, including household food insecurity, increased unemployment, migration, negative impacts on upstream economic activities (e.g. less purchase power) and increased debt service costs for farming enterprises.

Citizens of neighbouring countries (such as in Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana and Swaziland) that rely on food import from South Africa are also affected by reduced agricultural productivity in South Africa. Reduced availability of basic foods (such as maize meal) on the markets and higher prices are currently affecting food insecurity in the southern African region.

Since January 2018, the agricultural sector shed 31,000 jobs in provinces severely affected by the drought and lost approximately R7 billion (turnover) due to drought, and 70% of respondents indicated that they struggle financially and that they find themselves in a weak financial position.

Over 50% were reported to have communicated the need to retrench farm workers as a result of prevailing and long-term drought conditions, approximately two-thirds of the respondents reported severe to critical stress levels of groundwater and surface water.

The general condition of pastures was reported to be worse than expected, which also increases the risk for veld fires and more than 50% of respondents also indicated some form of depression, anxiety or other behavioural health issues experienced by drought.

Currently there is a huge impact on our GDP contribution, the combination of the drought and the weaker exchange rate has already impacted severely on the agricultural commodity prices. Furthermore, reduced production volumes will impact on South Africa trade balance. The assumption sectors that would normally contribute to a positive trade balance, will shift to a negative trade balance.

Approximately 70% of the respondents with livestock as their main commodity, indicated that water availability is currently at severe stress levels and Water availability for domestic, municipal and industrial uses seems to be at moderate to severe stress levels.

More than 80% of respondents reported that the current drought scenario had a negative impact on local recreation or tourism-revenue based activities and level of fodder availability is very limited also the environmental factors will also have an impact on meat and cash crops(vegetables). Water will be held for long-term crops because it brings in more income, so vegetable will not be planted. In short term we will see shortages of vegetable, consumers need to be concerned about supply price and the situation will worsen towards the end of the year.

70% indicated that they struggle financially and that they find themselves in a weak financial position and Support from financial institutions was more evenly ranked across different support levels, but with the highest weighting on average to non-existing support levels.

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More than 50% of respondents also indicated some form of depression, anxiety or other behavioural health issues experienced by farmers, the heat waves are also a problem whereby it affects yield, and this results in production loss

### **3. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS**

#### **Immediate Action:**

- Shift away from fragmentation to align national and provincial strategies, within the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, as well as COGTA, Water Affairs and Environment, Forestry and Fisheries.
- Transparency and accountability in terms of plans and targeted beneficiaries
- Distribution method from government to the affected farmers must align with the farming organisations, and the farming organizations must also present clear and transparent plans.
- Financial and fodder support
- Water access with Support for boreholes
- Planting season support prioritization
- Access to relevant information at all levels (agroecological analysis and rain patterns, etc.)

#### **Intermediate Action**

- Climate smart strategies with introduction of appropriate crops and use of technology
- Restructuring grazing plans and approaches in farming areas in anticipation of dry seasons
- Improved infrastructure in farming areas
- Improved Farmer support (extension service, finance and access to markets- including state procurement)
- Assist black farmers in a district-based fodder production plan for self-reliance.

Currently in the provincial Department of Northern Cape as well as district leadership they have committed themselves to certain short-term goals to implement the distribution of fodder as part of the amount of R30 million committed during the visit by the Deputy President and Minister Didiza.

#### **4.THE WAY FORWARD**

There must be an urgent discussion with government, financial institutions as well as agribusiness to determine how best to assist farmers and farmworkers in drought-stricken areas, especially farmers that are experiencing successive years of severe drought.

The agriculture sector needs the following to sustain its long-term viability:

- Financial assistance
- Extending production loan terms
- Extending of credit
- Provide bridging capital
- Distribute fodder

The persistent drought in specific areas of our country and the recent outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease (FMD) that led to the loss of our FMD free zone status, can place tremendous pressure on food inflation and food security. Everything must be done in our power to ensure the long-term sustainability and profitability of our farmers.

AFASA is ready and prepared to present its current initiatives and efforts that include raising a Drought Fund to collaborate with various stakeholders to assist farmers and farm workers with immediate drought relief.

**NB. See the below (Few) photos of our members who were affected by the drought**





**Northern Cape**

**Eastern Cape**



**Kwazulu-Natal**



**Free State**

**See the attached spreadsheet list below of farmers who were affected by drought in different provinces**