

DALRRD input into the National Veld and Forest Fire Amendment Bill [B24-2021]

Presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Environment, Forestry and Fisheries

Date: 11 February 2022



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& rural development**

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



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Presentation layout

- Purpose of the presentation
- Introduction
- Management of fires (awareness, prevention and mitigation)
- Conclusion



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2

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Purpose

- The purpose of the presentation is to make an input into the National Veld and Forest Fire Amendment Bill as requested by the Portfolio Committee on Environment, Forestry and Fisheries.



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Introduction

- Veldfires are one of the devastating hazards that have social, economic and environmental impacts.
- The long-term effects of uncontrolled veldfires ranges from reduction of biodiversity through destruction of flora and fauna to soil infertility.
- Veldfires further lead to destroyed infrastructure, increased soil erosion and decreased infiltration which are detrimental to agricultural production and hence measures need to be in place for their prevention, mitigation and response.



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Awareness

- The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) has structures in place to prevent, mitigate and manage impacts of disaster risks including veldfires.
- Awareness creation is one of the critical elements of veldfire prevention in the sector. As fire is one of the tools for veld management, the farming communities are capacitated on how to adhere to the requirements of the fire danger ratings when fire has to be used for these activities.



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Awareness

- The permits are issued to the farmers who will use the fire for veld management under Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act and monitoring is conducted on the issued permits for the fire to only be used when conditions are not conducive for spreading.
- Broader awareness campaigns are conducted to educate farmers to prevent and mitigate the fires and also fight them where necessary. These are also done with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DEFF) in the provinces.



Prevention and Mitigation

- Prevention and mitigation are done through communication of warnings and creation of firebreaks amongst other activities.
- DALRRD has the early warning system that communicates daily extreme weather warnings to the sector including that of veldfires.
- DALRRD communicates warnings from South African Weather Service through the system with messages on how to respond to prevent the spread of veldfires.



Prevention and Mitigation

- The farming communities are encouraged to be part of the Fire Protection Associations in order to benefit from the joint resources to better prevent the spread of veld fires.
- DALRRD encourages farming communities and land owners to create and maintain firebreaks as one of the structural mitigation measures of veldfires.
- DALRRD further supports farming communities who do not have resources to create firebreaks using their own means in line with the budget.



Overall management of fires

- DALRRD both national and provinces conduct inspections in the farms to identify the risks that will lead to start and spread of veldfires prior the season. This include looking into the frequency of fires in the area, fuel load, existence of firebreaks and the ability of the farming communities to fight the fire should it start.
- This is also used to identify farmers and land owners who need support with the creation of firebreaks to prevent and mitigate the impact of veld fires.



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Overall management of fires

- In cases where veldfires have been reported, assessment must be conducted and report sent to the DALRRD.
- Where it is deemed necessary to declare a state of disaster following a veld fire, the concerned municipality must do so in line with the disaster management legislation.



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Conclusion

- DALRDD will continue its partnership with DEFF to address issues of veldfires.



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THANK YOU



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