**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1094 / NW1226E**

**MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES:**

**Honourable KP Robertson to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:**

**QUESTION:**

1. What are the reasons why 49 non-operational tractors at his departments’s Umzinti training facility in Mpumalanga have not been repaired for more than 12 months;
2. Is his department ring-fencing finances for the continued maintenance of the specified tractors;
3. What is the impact on emerging farmers when the land of beneficiaries cannot be properly prepared due to a lack of operational tractors?

**REPLY:**

**DAFF has engaged Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs (DARDLE). They provided the following answers:-**

1. The DARDLE has collected all the tractors that used to be allocated to cooperatives into one central place after realizing that there were challenges in this method when it comes to servicing farmers on the ground who were not members of the cooperatives. Furthermore, the maintenance of the tractors was also a challenge. Mzinti Training Centre was then selected for the safekeeping of the collected tractors. This move assisted the department to be able to evaluate the current status of all the tractors that were collected.

The centre currently has 58 tractors, of which 16 are in good working condition, which comprises of 4 new tractors bought in 2015 and 12 tractors that were repaired.

DARDLE acknowledges that 42 tractors are not functioning. This fleet was bought in 2006/07 financial year and has not been properly serviced all these years as they were with the cooperatives. The assessment conducted by the department revealed that 14 have serious mechanical challenges like engine replacements, gearboxes etc and this will require huge sums of money to repair. The DARDLE has therefore requested the Mpumalanga Department of Public works Roads and Transport to auction them so that they can be cleared in our asset register. The department is awaiting the auction date.

1. Yes, the DARDLE has set aside budget to continue servicing the operational tractors and also to repair the 28 tractors that could not be repaired during the last financial year.
2. The impact is minimal due to the fact that the department has in the centre 16 operational tractors. DARDLE has in the past financial year 2015/16 appointed 14 private service providers to complement the existing fleet, to ensure that farmers receive the expected services from the department.