**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1234**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER [No 13 - 2022 SIXTH PARLIAMENT]; DATE OF PUBLICATION: 01 APRIL 2022**

**1234. Mr N S Matiase (EFF) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development:**

What practical steps have been taken by her department recently to provide developmental assistance to persons living in rural, impoverished areas? **NW1490E**

**THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT:**

The steps are as follows:

**Government’s comprehensive support to farmers:**

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) is part of the multispectral committee that is coordinated by the Presidency to implement the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan (NFNSP). There are a number of interventions implemented under the NFNS Plan towards ensuring food and nutrition security. Efforts are being strengthened on an ongoing basis to increase greater access to support for all farmer categories. The Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES) continues towards to support subsistence producer with the aim of ensuring food production at household level. Under this initiative more than 66 000 subsistence producers have been supported to retain self-employment in the agricultural sector, thereby contributing to food security and economic growth. The PES is implemented amidst deliberate efforts that are also made to transform the agricultural sector and allow new players from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. The number of Extension Officers in the 44 districts across the nine provinces is being increased to strengthen extension and advisory services to farmers.

**Intensifying agricultural production:**

The DALRRD continues to support agricultural producers and increasing domestic food production through departmental programmes such as the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) / Ilima-Letsema.

**Land development and post settlement support:**

The Land development and post settlement is implemented within the current budgetary constraints. The current policy and programmes are being strengthened to ensure an inclusive and holistic approach to support provided and maximise food production on available land.

**Rural Development:**

The Department’s Rural Development Mandate Outcome 6: Integrated and inclusive rural economy. The department is engaged with the finalisation of the Draft Integrated Rural Development Strategy, building on the lessons learnt from the implementation of Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) and the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS). The department continues to play its role to Initiate, facilitate, coordinate and act as a catalyst for the implementation of a comprehensive rural development programme leading to sustainable and vibrant rural communities working closely with provincial and other national department through the District Development Model and Rural District Plans working with all national and provincial government departments and Traditional Councils.

The National Development Plan (NDP) (2012) identifies the following four key points relating to rural development: (i) Rural communities require greater social, economic, and political opportunities to overcome poverty; (ii) To achieve this, agricultural development should introduce a land reform and job-creation/livelihood strategy that ensures rural communities have jobs; (iii) Ensure quality access to basic services, health care, education, and food security; and (iii) plans for rural towns should be tailor-made according to the varying opportunities in each area. Intergovernmental relations should be addressed to improve rural governance.

The Department remains the driver of the Agri-Parks Programme that aims to uplift impoverished rural communities into the Agricultural value chain. The Department provides critical infrastructure such as fencing and irrigation to rural communities to assist them, with improving their production. These communities are linked into Farmer Production Support Units, which are constructed in rural areas to provide communities with agricultural support services. The Department continues to construct Farmer Production Support Units (FPSUs) that provide rural communities with a range of facilities such as mechanisation, pelleting machines for feed, silos to store grain, pack houses with refrigeration, access to state vets and training. Many of these services was in the past only reserved for commercial farmers in rural areas. This allows for rural communities to improve their production and enter the agricultural value chain with their small-scale produce and creates a sustainable path out of poverty. The current programmes through which the department executives its work includes:

* Socio-economic infrastructure projects to support Farmer Production Support Units (FPSUs), Animal and Veld Management Programme (AVMP) and River Valley Catalytic Programme (RVCP). This includes mechanization such as: fencing, animal handling facilities, stock water dams, boreholes, canals, dip tanks, pump houses, pack houses, irrigation pipes and schemes, silos and storage facilities and rural roads. The road infrastructure remains a high priority in national, provincial, municipal and farm roads to promote economic viability through safer, swift transport logistics of agricultural produce. As part of the implementation of the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) and Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan (AAMP), repair and rehabilitation of rural roads is critical to facilitate road logistics from farm to habour and to market. The Department is co-ordinating a Public-Private Partnership initiative which will include national, provincial and local governments as well as agricultural organisations;
* Development and Implementation of Skills development opportunities to rural youth through the National Rural Youth Services Corps (NARYSEC) which aims to build capacity of rural youth through various skills development interventions and working with public and private sector partners to facilitate the transitioning of recruited youth into economic activities; and
* Research of new innovative technologies, including Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and promote indigenous knowledge systems into rural communities to contributes towards improving the quality of lives of rural communities working in partnership and collaboration with institutions of higher learning, research agencies and technology agencies.