**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 2105 / NW 2334E**

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

**Honourable MM Dlamini asked the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:**

**QUESTION:**

1. Does his Department has a policy to provide material and financial assistance to strengthen smallholder farmer capacity and practice in maintaining and building biodiversity; If not, why not?

**REPLY:**

1. Yes, Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) has a range of policies to provide material and financial assistance to strengthen smallholder farmer capacity and practice in maintaining and building biodiversity.
2. DAFF draws its legislative mandate from Section 24 and 27(1) (b) of the Constitution of South Africa. It is primarily responsible for Acts related to the agriculture, forestry and fisheries value chains from land use, inputs, production and value adding to retailing, much of which impacts on Biodiversity Management in various ways.
3. Mainstreaming biodiversity into agriculture policies, plans and practices is therefore a priority and often takes place in ways that directly involves private sector partners, sector bodies, NGOs and provincial departments. DAFF has a large, Cross-sectoral Land Care Programme that through partnerships and cooperation seeks to conserve and sustainably use natural resourc­es while creating jobs and addressing poverty alleviation. The interdependencies between the agricultural and biodiversity sectors provide important opportunities for mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into agricultural planning, capacity building and empowerment through the implementation of the LandCare Programme and agricultural legislations, including amongst others, the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (Act 43 of 1983) and the Draft Policy and Bill on Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land (PD-ALB).
4. The Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (CARA) 43 of 1983 provides for control over the utilization of the natural agricultural resources of the Republic in order to promote the conservation of the soil, the water sources and the vegetation and the combating of weeds and invader plants; and for matters connected therewith.
5. The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries through its LandCare Programme contributes to Presidential Outcome 4, 7 and 10, aligned to the CARA, Operation Phakisa and also to Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIP11) which deals with erection of fences and intensification of production for smallholder producers. Furthermore, smallholder producers receive capacity building through training, education and support mechanisms.
6. The main goal of LandCare is to optimize productivity and sustainability of natural resources so as to result in greater productivity, food security, job creation and a better quality life for all.
7. In 2017/18 financial year, the Programme will implement projects that are in-line with the five major focus areas:
* Water care
* Soil care
* Veld care
* Junior care
* Conservation agriculture
1. The grant enables DAFF to reach strategic outputs of 16000 hectares of rehabilitated land for almost all levels of farmers. The activities amongst others will include:
* Protection and rehabilitation of degraded agricultural land
* Practicing of Conservation Agriculture on arable land
* Erection of fences for improved veld management
* Eradication and control of alien and invasive species

The planned target for 2017/18 is **16000** hectares rehabilitated in 9 provinces using the LandCare grant. The approval of projects, to achieve the planned target, is done by following the Provincial and National Assessment Panel process.

1. The financial assistance to strengthen smallholder producers practices in maintaining biodiversity since 1998/99 to 2017/18 through the LandCare budget has amounted to R 845 962 000.