**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 242**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER [No 03-2017 FIFTH PARLIAMENT]
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**242. Ms N R Mashabela (EFF) to ask the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform:**

In light of recent revelations about his alleged corrupt involvement in pressuring his departmental officials to hand over the Bekendvlei Farm in Limpopo which was bought for R97 million, to certain persons (names and details furnished), (a) does he intend to resign in order to allow for investigation into this matter to go ahead without his interference and (b) has he done an audit of all farms handed over through the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy and Recapitalisation and Development Programme to verify that there was no corruption in the manner in which the specified farms were handed over? **NW256E**

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

1. No, I do not intend to resign. I have referred the matter to the Office of the Public Protector for investigation as the complainant. I have also requested that a lifestyle audit be conducted on me, from 1994 when I became a public representative as Speaker of the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature (1994 – 1999); as MEC: Housing, Local Government and Traditional Affairs (1999 – 2004); as MEC: Agriculture (2004 to 2009); and, as Minister for Rural Development and Land Reform (2009 to date).
2. Yes. In the 2011/12 financial year, I requested the President to issue a Proclamation (R23 of 2012) to authorise the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) to investigate allegations of theft, fraud, corruption and maladministration in relation to the Land Reform Programme of the Department. These investigations are currently ongoing. As a result of these investigations, several farms have been seized by the Asset Forfeiture Unit; and,29 (1 Eastern Cape, 2 Free State and 26 KwaZulu Natal) of these were handed back to the Department during November 2016. Some of these matters are currently before the Courts.

As a result of the magnitude of the allegations of maladministration, financial mismanagement and/or fraud and corruption in certain PLAS and Recap farms, the then head of the SIU, Advocate Soni, requested the Department to conduct scoping exercises with a view to narrowing down forensic and related investigations for effective results. I,then, initiated several internal scoping and external forensic investigations, including Bekendvlei, into alleged irregularities in relation to the PLAS and Recap Farms. The Department is currently implementing the recommendations of the completed reports, in this regard.