**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 2611 / NW 2916E**

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

**Mr W M Madisha (Cope) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:**

**QUESTION:**

What (a) progress has been made in implementing the turn-around strategy of the agricultural colleges and (b) challenges have been encountered in the implementation thereof?  NW2916E

**REPLY:**

1. In 2009, my Department conducted a study to assess the level of compliance of the twelve Colleges against the approved Norms and Standards the Governance and Financing Framework for ATIs. The assessment study report revealed that no single College complied fully with the established Norms and Standards albeit in differing degrees. Flowing from the approved Norms and Standards and the Governance and Financing Framework for ATIs including the findings of the compliance study, a Revitalisation Plan for the Colleges of Agriculture was developed.

The Colleges Revitalization Plan (CRP) is guided by the following critical pillars:

* **Pillar 1**: Improvement of Infrastructure and equipment
* **Pillar 2:** Curriculum review with emphasis on value addition
* **Pillar 3:** Accreditation and registration of Colleges
* **Pillar 4:** Leadership development and change management
* **Pillar 5:** Strengthening of Information and Communication Technology including Colleges Governance

In support of the process of revitalizing the Colleges of Agriculture, my Department approached the National Treasury in 2009/10 to present the case of the then twelve Colleges and to solicit funding for their improvement. My Department commenced with its National Treasury approved and funded Colleges Revitalization Plan in 2011/12 financial year. Since then, my Department has been allocating a substantial amount of money to Colleges to augment their equitable budget.

In support of revitalising these agricultural colleges my Department has since managed to revitalise and build several infrastructure projects such as lecture rooms, libraries, laboratories, computer laboratories, farmer training facilities, Veterinary clinics, piggery, dairy houses, animal handling facilities, new student residences and nursery houses amongst others. My Department has further procured machinery and equipment to support the teaching and learning in these colleges. My Department remains committed to improving ICT infrastructure and procurement of related equipment to ensure that the teaching and learning in these colleges talks to the current generation and technology expectations. The Department has also made strides in capacitating and upgrading qualifications of College staff and lecturers.

Through a partnership with the Netherlands government my Department engaged in a process of reviewing the entire curriculum offered at these colleges to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of the sector. Most of the colleges are now implementing competency based learning curriculum to ensure that their graduates are ready for the sector when they leave the colleges.

In 2012 my Department engaged in a robust process of ensuring that all the Colleges are accredited with the relevant statutory bodies and I’m happy to report that by the end of 2013 all the Colleges were accredited by Council on Higher Education. My Department continues to engage with other statutory bodies such as Quality Council for Trades and Occupations to ensure that these colleges remain relevant to the skills and occupations needs of the sector.

1. **Challenges in implementing the Colleges Revitalisation Plan:**
* The budget allocation by National Treasury for implementation of the plan is deficient
* The Economic Competitive Support Package is coming to an end during the 2017/18 financial year which will negatively affect the revitalisation of these colleges
* Timelines in the implementation of infrastructure projects through the Department of Public Works continues to pose a serious challenge
* High staff turnover due to lower remuneration packages in these colleges remain a serious challenge
* Slow pace by some Provinces in implementing the approved Norms and Standards for the Agricultural Training Institutes.