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| **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY****WRITTEN REPLY****QUESTION 2792 / NW3262E****MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES:****Ms D Carter (Cope) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:****QUESTION** |

Whether the Government has developed or was developing a policy and funding plan to allow the country’s rural population to have access to biodigesters in order to create biogas for domestic cooking and electricity purposes as is happening in India and/or to stimulate large-scale production of purified biogas for fuel as in China; if not, why not; if so, (a) what are the relevant details of the biogas initiatives in the country that are led by the Government and (b) how extensive is the roll-out of the specified initiatives in the country’s rural population?                                                                  NW3262E

 **REPLY**

1. *What are the relevant details of the biogas initiatives in the country that are led by the Government?*

The Department and the ARC completed a pilot phase of the Biodigester project in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District (Free State province) that started in June 2012 and just concluded in June 2015 as part of the mitigation and adaptation to climate variability and change in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District (Free State Province). This project was rolled-out in Thabo Mofutsanyane District with a number of beneficiaries, mainly community livestock farmers who received training and had the biodigesters equipment purchased for them.

The ultimate goal of the project was to enhance agricultural productivity by promoting the adoption of an integrated crop-livestock system that effectively mitigates, adapts to and reduces vulnerabilities to climate change. It is also aimed at introducing and encouraging agricultural practices in rural communities that have the potential of mitigating climate change and adapting to adverse effects of climate change and the use of biogas for domestic cooking and electricity purposes.

About 13 biogas digesters for generation of bio-gas for cooking and/lighting from livestock manure were installed and they are operational. The farmer training was conducted and provided an opportunity to promote renewable energies and inform farmers on the possibility of self-energy generation. Capacity building and job creation was achieved through training of the local youth on biogas digester installation. Relevant weather and climate information was distributed to farmers during the planning and implementation of their agricultural activities via sms. The findings of this pilot project will assist with the climate change adaptation and mitigation measures (in the form of strategies and/or polices) for the country.

1. *How extensive is the roll-out of the specified initiatives in the country’s rural population?*

This pilot project is currently been rolled out to three Provinces namely: Eastern Cape, North West and Limpopo targeting ten (10) small scale farmers per Province from the financial year 2015/16 to 2017/18. The project aims at raising awareness of climate change among different stakeholders in the agricultural community. It will promote the integrated crop-livestock production system. The beneficiaries in these provinces, mainly livestock farmers will be trained and have biodegesters purchased for them and installed.

Biogas could be used to generate a large portion of the peaking power required and thereby effect very large cost savings for the country. More funding and resources are however, needed to roll it out at a larger scale.