



EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE
Democratic Alliance Member of the Provincial Legislature
The Hon. Retief Odendaal MPL



Provincial Legislature
Private Bag x0051
Bhisho, 5605

Cell: 082 462 0668

01 OCTOBER 2019

THE HONOURABLE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

Dear Honourable President Ramaphosa

RE: PLEA FOR HELP TO THE DROUGHT STRICKEN EASTERN CAPE

I address this letter to you out of sheer desperation, but also out of hope and anticipation.

As you no doubt know, the Eastern Cape is currently in the midst of one of the most disastrous and debilitating droughts in history. Many farmers have started referring to this drought as a once-in-a-hundred-year drought as none of our living generations can recall such an extended period of under average rainfall in our province.

Sir, I want to put it bluntly to you, many of our farmers are on their knees. This drought has financially ruined many farmers as they simply have no choice but to buy feed for their livestock. Some farmers have done this for years already, but simply cannot afford to do this any longer.

As a farmer yourself, I am sure you must understand the pain, frustration and helplessness of a man or a woman that must see his or her animals starve to death. In the Sarah Baartman district, adult Kudu have now started dying a result of this devastating drought.

The extended drought has already led to significant job losses in the agricultural sector and as a result the economies of many of our rural towns are starting to feel the ensuing effects. It is also not just commercial farmers farming on large scale that are affected. Emerging farmers have also been crippled by the severity of the drought and in many cases had no choice but to sell most of their livestock in order to prevent total ruin.

Against this backdrop, I am ashamed to have to inform you that the provincial government of the Eastern Cape has not yet made a drought declaration. This means that notwithstanding the dire situation that most of the farmers on the Western side of the province are finding themselves in, it is business as usual for the Eastern Cape Department for Rural Development and Agrarian Reform.

Calls to declare the Eastern Cape a disaster area by organised agricultural structures have also fallen on deaf ears.

FREEDOM. FAIRNESS. OPPORTUNITY. DIVERSITY.



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During the previous financial year, the Eastern Cape Department for Rural Development and Agrarian Reform allocated some R800,000.00 (Eight Hundred Thousand Rand) to buy feed in order to support commercial farmers. Whilst we are thankful for every cent of support that government provides our farmers, I am sure that you will realise that this amount is so insignificant that it almost made no impact at all.

Sir, farmers in the Eastern Cape, especially commercial farmers, have had almost no assistance from either the national or provincial government during this extensive drought. I am therefore pleading with you for your personal intervention in this matter so as to ensure that our province is not just declared a disaster area, but also to allocate some much-needed drought aid to our province.

We pray to God for rain every day and we believe that it will come. Unfortunately, even when the rains do come, in many areas it will take the veld years to recover. A long and hard road lies ahead for agriculture in the Eastern Cape over the next couple of years.

Whilst South African farmers are very resilient by nature, there are unfortunately very few that will be able to overcome this drought on their own.

I thus trust that you will receive this correspondence favourably and that we will hear from you soon.

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours in anticipation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Retief Odendaal', written over a dotted line.

RETIEF ODENDAAL MPL
DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE MEMBER OF THE EC PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE