

## **Debate on ensuring complete ownership to land reform beneficiaries and ownership to those living on trust land within communal areas.**

**By Mbulelo Bara**

Honourable Chairperson,  
Honourable Deputy Minister,  
Honourable Members, and  
Fellow South Africans good day.

The Democratic Alliance supports a land reform process that achieves redress in rural communities, which promotes economic inclusion to lift rural people out of poverty and supports growth and prosperity in the agricultural sector.

Many South Africans live on land that they do not own and about 17 million poor people are looking up to government to give them land and empower them.

Central to the issue of land ownership is food security which would be alleviated significantly if the land question would be resolved. One of the issues that inhibits development, is the lack of clarity about the status of land rights in communal areas. These are characterized by severe poverty, overcrowding and isolation from economic growth and opportunity.

Section 25 (6) of the constitution states that, “a person or community whose tenure of land is legally insecure as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices is entitled, to the extent provided by an Act of Parliament, either to tenure which is legally secure or to comparable redress.” This forms the basis for which the DA intends to go to the South African Human Rights Commission to lay a complaint over failure to accede to the law and Constitution.

The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure decided to evict farm occupants who were making a living on their own. Instead of following the correct route, we have noted with dismay how Nonkebhotani Agricultural Primary Cooperative from Hopefield Farm in the Eastern Cape were evicted from the state – owned farmland they had occupied for almost two decades. They lost their livestock, grain, equipment and ultimately their livelihoods. This all happened in the height of covid – 19. The ANC government does not care for the people. Poverty and hunger induce the rural poor to deplete land and forest resources. If landlessness is not corrected, the rural poor are likely to remain poor for most of their lives, to pass on their poverty to their children and grandchildren, and to die of easily preventable diseases.

The single biggest step forward for sustainable land reform would be to provide title and ownership to the 16 million people living on trust land. It is unacceptable that the poorest people in our country still do not enjoy equal rights to property ownership. Instead of plunging our

country into chaos through expropriation without compensation, empowering people in communal areas will ensure justice, dignity and economic development.

AgriBEEE is also supposed to support farmers to purchase stakes in the agricultural value chain. This may succeed to some but to many South Africans it is not succeeding at all.

Blended Finance between Land and Government also failed to deliver the positive results. Hortgro walked away from this agreement. Hortgro brought on board a commercial bank because the Land bank was failing to support land reform and the frustration that they were going through in assessing and approving deals.

The poor status of Land Bank with its lack of capital and the risk appetite to support black farmers has led to many farmers not being able to receive land reform support.

In our current economic order, where no one is keen to create unskilled jobs, access to land for livelihoods and work, and simply as part of the social safety net is vitally important. Poor people need land but poor people do not feature in our government's land reform plans. Instead of providing equitable access to the many, millions of rands are spent on glamorous and impractical vanity projects for the few. Land reform must be part of meaningful local economic development plans that can help the poor and diminish inequality.

If we want to embark on massive land redistribution responsibly, to create jobs and reduce poverty, we need a functioning government and that is what we as a country do not have at the moment. We must shift the focus of land reform from meeting targets to meeting needs.

The land reform programme must look beyond rural land and truly address the land needs of South Africans who have historically been excluded from land and property ownership, including the need for access to urban land and housing opportunities. We need comprehensive data on land reform projects that will allow for the identification of common failures that must be addressed and the duplication of models that have been successful.

Stakeholders in the private sector and civil society can make an invaluable contribution to the success of land reform, and government departments must actively pursue partnerships and collaboration to achieve shared goals.

Twenty eight years after the transition to democracy and commencement of land reform, there is a great deal of lived experience to reflect upon and rich literature to draw on. Access to land through redistribution programmes is not just a right, but the state must take reasonable measures within its available resources, to foster conditions enabling equitable access to land.

I thank you.