



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, MS REJOICE MABUDAFHASI, ON THE OCCASION OF THE BREEDE OVERBERG CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AGENCY EMERGING FARMERS/RESOURCE POOR FARMERS WATER TRANSFORMATION DIALOGUE AT MERWIDA COUNTRY MANOR, RAWSONVILLE IN WORCESTER

30 MAY 2013

Programme Director;

Cape Winelands District Municipality MMC: Cllr. Gideon Cornelius;

Councillors;

Acting Western Cape Regional Head: Ms. Debbie Hene

Chairperson of the Breede, Overberg Catchment Management Agency board;

Chief Executive Officer of the Breede, Overberg Catchment Management Agency board: Mr Phakamani Buthelezi;

Executive Members of the Board;

Chairperson of Farmers Union;

Chairperson of Water Users Association;

Senior managers;

Farmers;

Members of the media;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning, goeie more.

Today, the 30th May 2013 marks an important milestone in this water management area. This demonstrates the commitment of the Governing Board of the Breede, Overberg Catchment Management Agency (BOCMA) to the transformation agenda of the water sector. They have done this to ensure that our Resource Poor Farmers/Emerging Farmers are adequately supported and find a home. I am pleased that the Breede-Overberg Catchment Management Agency is executing the directive we gave them, of accelerating service delivery on the ground, transformation of the water sector and community participation.

Programme director, let me briefly elaborate on BOCMA and its relevance to the water sector.

The Breede-Overberg Catchment Management Agency (BOCMA) is a water management institution that was established in terms of Section 78 of the National Water Act 36 of 1998 and is operational in the Breede Water Management Area (WMA) in the Western Cape, South Africa. Catchment Management Agencies are established, to promote community participation in the management of water resources. The BOCMA has a stakeholder based Governing Board which includes an Emerging Farmers representative.

This further illustrates our commitment towards working with everyone especially our resource poor and emerging farmers.

Whilst the efforts of the BOCMA are appreciated, we must ensure that we do not lose sight of the bigger goal of ensuring that we combine together all our resources and provide hands on support to resource poor farmers, a positive correlation between access to water, rural development, poverty eradication and food security. The paucity of water on the other hand, that key ingredient for food production, is one of the major causes of famine, especially in rural areas of South Africa where people depend heavily on primary food production for their livelihoods.

BOCMA covers an area which is well known of its agricultural produce such as the table grapes, stone fruits, etc. We need to ensure that the BOCMA fulfils its role of supporting agriculture which is a major contributor to the Gross Domestic Product.. There is a need to join our efforts in supporting our resource poor farmers to come into the mainstream of the economy and be our role models for the rest of the country.

I am informed that the BOCMA has committed itself to capacitate the general public on water resources management in order to ensure that the public participates actively and makes informed decisions, considering these decisions will impact on them directly. Water resources management can ultimately only be successful if and when the public is fully on board. It is important that great emphasis be placed on creating awareness on water resources' issues and especially to assist in the development particularly of water-wise youth and women.

BOCMA developed a Catchment Management Strategy (CMS) of which public participation is an integral part. A capacity building programme was designed to prepare a group of champions, which included resource poor farmers who could and maybe should be involved with the work of the BOCMA at a grassroots level. I would like my office to be kept abreast of developments as they unfold in this stead.

The aim of the capacity building programme was to ensure that all stakeholders understand the National Water Act, the role of BOCMA, institutional arrangements, to allow stakeholders to experience the diversity of the catchment environment, and the various water uses so that they could engage meaningfully with the issues, status quo,

vision and management options and sub-strategies of the CMS, to excite stakeholders about getting involved with water management at a local level through monitoring, environmental stewardship, educating others and lobbying for improvement at community level.

A long-term goal within this process is to develop the technical competence of emerging farmers' capacity to fulfill water resources management functions and to ensure the sustainability of emerging farmers. The eventual impact will be a more sustainable approach to the management, allocation and development of the water resources in the catchment. The BOCMA's planned capacity building campaign aims to be inclusive, interactive and dynamic, based on contextual problem solving.

*The South African Constitution stipulates that everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing and to have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that prevent pollution and ecological degradation, promote conservation and secure ecologically sustainable development and **use of natural resources** while promoting justifiable economic and social development.*

Most resource poor farmers, poor rural and poor urban households do not have sufficient capital to fund irrigation development and other households' food security initiatives. They are considered by financial markets as high risk clients for capital infrastructure funding.

The National Water Act, 1998 recognises that water is a natural resource that belongs to all people of our country. The Department of Water Affairs' financial support in the form of a subsidy or a grant, is a Government funding mechanism designed to assist resource poor farmers, poor rural and poor urban households to gain access to irrigated agriculture and to enhance sustainable irrigation development for resource poor farmers hence improving the livelihoods strategies of the poor.

Encouraging economic growth and improving social livelihoods are at the centre of the Breede Water Management Agency's (WMA) development future. The role of water in supporting development is especially critical in the Breede WMA because the economy and population are inextricably linked to agriculture and the water resources available are limited. Effort must therefore be made to coordinate activities linked to assistance for resource poor farmers by working together closely with relevant departments for example the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform and the Department of Agriculture.

In order to provide support for our resource poor farmers we all need to hold hands together. I am pleased to note that the BOCMA has been trying its best in mobilising

support but BOCMA alone cannot win. In this water management area there are 26 irrigation boards and 21 water user associations.

If we combine our efforts with those of the Provincial Department of Agriculture, Department of Rural Development, Department of Water Affairs including BOCMA we can enhance the support. It will be wrong of us to come here and talk without implementing anything. I therefore invite all those who are here today and those who are committed to improving the workings of our resource poor farmers to continuously find solutions and implement the programmes that make a difference. In short let this event not be an idle talk shop but a festival of ideas aimed at enhancing the role played by our emerging farmers. I would also like to see a credible plan of action, measureable, to drive all efforts.

It is important to put it to this august gathering that as a Department we will continue to take our leadership of the sector seriously and demonstrate this seriousness by ensuring that water remains central to the socio-economic development of our society. Water must also be a catalyst towards the empowerment of all strata of our society and ensure that no-one is discriminated against in terms of access thereto.

During the Budget Vote presentation of the Department of Water Affairs we reiterated the fact that food and water security are inextricably linked. As a result this government has taken a nexus approach whereby the interdependency between water and food security is central in all interventions and plans.

The primary purpose for our existence as a government department is the security of supply of water for the country. This purpose we intend not just to achieve but to maintain. This purpose is not to be achieved just for ourselves, but for generations to come.

I believe that the efforts of the BOCMA, with all the requisite plans, measurements and support available and sought over time, will and must go a long way in assisting the community, industry and agriculture to be able to respond positively to the ideals of “a better life for all, a better region, continent and a better world”

I thank you.

