



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER
AND SANITATION**

HON. D M MAHLOBO, M.P.

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE AGRI-SA WATER
COLLOQUIUM**

SOMERSET WEST, WESTERN CAPE.

26 AUGUST 2019

THEMED:

Government's Water Use Strategy for Agriculture

Programme Director,

The Premier of the Western Cape, Mr Alan Winde

President of AGRI-SA, Mr Dan Kriek

AGRI-SA Deputy Presidents, Mr Pierre Vercuelli and Mr Phenias Gumede and Board Members

AGRI-SA Executive Director, Mr Omri van Zyl and AGRI-SA Executives

Acting Director-General of the DWS, Mr Mbulelo Tshangana

DWS and other government officials here present

Members of the media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

1. I wish to start by congratulating AGRI-SA and its Executive for facilitating the hosting of this Colloquium.
2. We all are aware of the critical role that agriculture plays in all socio-economic development of our country.
3. Historically, agriculture has been central to the livelihoods of all our peoples, black and white, and notwithstanding our individual or collective social standing.
4. I am of the opinion that none of us can bravely say that in our evolution, we have been able to get this far without the crucial input of agriculture, whether subsistence, small scale, or large scale.
5. Ladies and gentlemen, it does not matter how sophisticated we may be, all of us have to feed our bodies one way or the other. This implies a need for all of us to respect the resources that bring this activity into perspective and becomes a reality.

6. The role of the land that we need for agriculture to thrive cannot be underestimated. On that land we need livestock and crops.
7. What we know is even more crucial is the availability of the one resource that cannot be replenished: **water**.
8. South Africa continues to be a water-scarce country; we cannot help receiving less than world average rainfall.
9. In the same vein, the National Water Resources Strategy 2 (NWRS-2) identifies and acknowledges that agriculture is the largest single user of water in South Africa, in the region of 60%.
10. What is heartening though is that the Strategic Water Partnership Network (SWPN), a platform through which the department engages the private sector on strategic water issues, including issues of water scarcity, is alive and well.
11. The active participation of Agri-SA within the Sector Task Teams of the SWPN is appreciated, more especially as it is accompanied by their inputs on key issues in the water sector including water related policies.
12. In all of this, we do recognise that with the important role of agriculture in the country, Agri-SA is a key stakeholder that the Department needs to engage.
13. This Colloquium that we are attending today is a necessary development that comes at a time when the country has to face up to challenges of not just water availability but good quality water at that.
14. As we know, the country has been in the grip of a debilitating drought, and we have not turned the corner yet. Agriculture was not spared from the impact of this drought, and as the Department of Water and Sanitation we appreciate the co-operation we have received from the sector and the continued engagements especially at the darkest moments.
15. Ladies and gentlemen, it is important to remember that notwithstanding the progress we have recorded in terms access to water since the advent of

democracy, the National Development Plan (Vision 2030), and the Irrigation Strategy for SA (2015), indicate that about 1.5 million ha (10% of the cultivated area) is under irrigation.

16. Further, there is need for another 500 000 ha to be developed. We can see from these figures that there is requirement for more water for irrigation, and yet we are in an already water-stressed country.
17. We have overtime communicated the limitation in available water for the planned increase in irrigated area.
18. We are working with our partners, including Agri-SA in trying to improve water use efficiency.
19. In this Sixth Administration, through the Minister's Budget Vote speech, Minister Sisulu has clearly indicated that "water wastage in the agricultural sector is of concern".
20. I hope we can all agree that improved efficiency is the only viable option to effect any increase in irrigated land without allocating more water to the agriculture sector.
21. We can achieve this together only through the implementation of effective Water Conservation and Water Demand Management strategies.
22. It is important to note that the Department is in process of reviewing this strategy and Agri-Sa as a key stakeholder will be consulted.
23. We need to be cognisant of the fact that the National Water Act (NWA), requires appropriate water management and planning by water management institutions in terms of its Schedule 4.
24. To assist in this process, the department has produced guidelines for the development of Water Management Plans (WMPs), which must form the nucleus

of water management in the irrigation schemes to give effect to water use efficiency.

25. I do note that the Department together with the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and the Water Research Council (WRC) have agreed to develop a regulatory support programme named Irri-drop System for water use efficiency.

26. This programme will further assist with monitoring and regulation of irrigation in the agricultural sector.

27. Agri-SA will be invited to participate in the development of this tool and the Department would need the support of Agri-SA in the subsequent implementation of this system.

28. As a country, we also needed to do a reality check on our situation, as things stand.

29. We found that based on current demand projections and without effective interventions (where nothing is done), the water deficit confronting the country could be between 2.7 and 3.8 billion cubic meters by 2030.

30. This represents a gap of approximately 17% of available water sources. We believe that this would be untenable.

31. In response the Department has developed the National Water and Sanitation Master Plan (NW&SMP), which Plan provide key focus areas of intervention by the water sector to avoid the identified potential deficit.

32. A two-pronged approach towards addressing this potential deficit includes reducing the demand and increasing supply through various initiatives.

33. In terms of Increased Supply, we would need to look at these two possibilities:

a) Alternative Sources - Alternative sources of water although already part of the water resources mix, will be further promoted and developed to fill the gap

in available water. These include desalination, water re-use, Acid Mine Drainage reclamation, rainwater harvesting, etcetera.

b) Increase Storage Capacity – A number of new dams are on the horizon and some existing ones also need to be heightened to increase capacity.

c)

34. With regard to Reduced Demand, the Plan suggests as follows:

- a) By 2030, we have to substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity.
- b) We need to substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.
- c) The irrigation sector must adopt and apply good water management practices such as scheduling irrigation, soil moisture content monitoring and upgrade irrigation system and water metering, etc.
- d) What is true as well is that irrigating marginal soils with low yields has no future in South Africa.

35. Colleagues from agriculture, we have to agree that this is one sector where the lack of transformation is very glaring.

36. We do know too that access to water supply is a key driver of this lack of transformation.

37. With that in mind, the Department developed a new water policy in 2013 in order to fast track the transformation imperatives, with one of the policy statements being that the policy must reaffirm the 1997 White Paper's policy position on the establishment of Catchment Management Agencies (CMAs) to manage water resources in South Africa.

38. In order to ensure that this policy imperative is realised, a legislative amendment is required.

39. In the interim (until an amendment is promulgated) all 205 Irrigation Boards must be transformed to Water User Associations in order to be governed under the current National Water Act, 1998 (Act 36 of 1998). The Act allows for strong oversight and directive by the Minister to WUAs.

40. What is important is that all this work must be in line with what the policy directs, i.e. that “A CMA, in consultation with the Minister, will determine the water institutional structures required to manage water within their jurisdiction”.
41. It also states that “The Minister will specify a date by which WUAs and IBs will cease to exist, with the appropriate functions related to state-owned schemes being delegated to a CMA or Regional Water Utility”.
42. The DWS continues to try to address the skewed allocation of water in terms of race and gender.
43. We also have to address the historical situation which seeks to preserve most of our water resources in the hands of the previously advantaged.
44. The department is actively reversing such situation, of course within the confines of the law.
45. It is important to reiterate that the Department as agreed with the water sector has put an end to water trading.
46. Water remains a national asset and must be used in the public interest. The Department is calling on Agri-SA to support the Water Allocation Reform agenda by supporting government programmes aimed at unblocking access to both land and water.
47. It is important that in all of our actions and activities, we remain compliant with the law, both the Regulator and the sector.
48. Due to enormous number of water users in the agricultural sector, it is important to initiate and encourage self-monitoring within the agriculture sector. Self-regulation done properly reduces the unintended consequences of non-compliance.
49. The DWS as the Regulator will continue to be out in force in order to ensure that all the regulatory frameworks are complied with.

50. The process of reviewing the current legislation is underway and the proposed National Water and Sanitation Act will give effect to the policy positions.

51. Without unpacking these policy positions, it is important to highlight that out of the 12 policy positions, four of them have a direct impact on the agriculture sector, and these are:

- “use-it or lose-it” principle with regard to water use;
- Water trading between authorized water users;
- Prioritizing social and economic equity in the re-allocation of water;
- Multiple water use approach in planning infrastructure.

52. Agriculture is a key component of the economic development of South Africa, and therefore all role-players within the sector, in particular Agri-SA, will shape and inform the important developments around its activities, including roles and responsibilities.

53. The Department is calling on all of us, even those experts and commentators who become more visible and vocal when things go wrong, to use this time to make meaningful contributions into the legislation and the strategy.

54. In conclusion, I wish to thank Agri-SA for hosting this event. I wish all the participants a fruitful interaction and that the outcomes of this Colloquium will be shared broadly and act as lessons for the country going forward.

I thank you.