



water affairs

Department:
Water and Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINISTRY OF WATER AFFAIRS
AND FORESTRY
2009 -11- 24
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MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: QUESTION 2151 FOR WRITTEN REPLY

A draft reply to the above-mentioned question asked by Mrs A T Lovemore (DA), is attached for your consideration, please.


DIRECTOR-GENERAL (Acting)

DATE: 19.11.09


DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/~~AMENDED~~


MS B P SONJICA, MP
MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

DATE: 2009. 11. 24

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 2151

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 06 NOVEMBER 2009
(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 27)

2151 Mrs A T Lovemore (DA) to ask the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs:

Whether she will assist farmers with the high cost of removing alien vegetation from their land as a water-saving measure; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details? NW2151E

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REPLY:

The Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (Act 43 of 1983) and the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (Act 700 of 2004) place the responsibility for the control of invasive alien plants on the land-user (including land-owner). The land-owner is therefore accountable for the land being clear of invasive alien plants.

Notwithstanding the legal provisions, it is recognized that there are many circumstances where it is necessary to support land-owners in bringing invasive alien plants under control, such is the extent of invasions, the difficulty that many be encountered identifying invasive alien plants, and the costs involved.

Certain of these plants have very negative impacts on people other than the land-owners on whose land the plants have invaded, including water quantity, water quality, wild fires, soil erosion, siltation, flooding, the productive use of land, biological diversity and many other considerations. In such circumstances, an argument can be made for a level of "payment for ecosystem services" – i.e. where those receiving more water as a result of the invasive alien plants being cleared pay towards the costs of control of the invasive species.

The Working for Water Programme is driven, amongst others, by the principle that it would be unfair to put the responsibility for assistance solely on those benefiting from the ecosystem services. It is through this programme that My Department provides assistance to land-owners to take control of invasive plants on their land. This is done in a systematic manner, including the identification of priority species and priority land, and working in a co-ordinated manner to ensure that there can be sustained control of the species on all land within prioritized areas.

It is recognized that the invasion of alien plants is an on-going threat, and that follow-up clearing is essential if the species are to be brought under control. The land-owner agreements provide for an appropriate level of support for follow-up clearing, to a point where it is reasonable and fair to expect the land-owner to maintain the land in a cleared state.

It has however become apparent that the programme needs to review its approach regarding working on private land. This is because the programme has helped some land-owners who have not managed invasives on their land, who in turn have sued the programme for alleged or actual damages. There will be a shift to providing incentives to land-owners for them to manage labour-intensive work on their land, and be accountable for the associated risks. It is also felt that this approach will strengthen the sense of ownership of the problem more than where Working for Water takes responsibility for the clearing, and build relationships with the contract workers.

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