



water affairs

Department:
Water and Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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21/1

MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: QUESTION 420 FOR WRITTEN REPLY

A draft reply to the above-mentioned question asked by Dr C P Mulder (FF Plus), is attached for your consideration, please.


DIRECTOR-GENERAL (Acting)

DATE: 1/9/09

DRAFT REPLY ~~APPROVED~~ AMENDED ✓


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

DATE: 2009. 09. 14

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 420

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 03 JULY 2009
(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 5)

420. Dr C P Mulder (FF Plus) to ask the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs:†

- (1) Whether her department has established the volume of water needed by organised agriculture so as to produce food for the national demand in a profitable way; if not, why not; if so, (a) what is the volume of water needed and (b) how was this figure arrived at;
- (2) whether her department has done a survey since 1 January 1999 to establish the actual water consumption figure of the agricultural sector; if not, why not; if so, (a) when was this survey done and (b) which institutions were involved in arriving at these figures;
- (3) whether she has entered into discussions with structures within organised agriculture regarding the wastage of water by agriculture; if so, when; if not, why not;
- (4) whether she is planning to hold discussions with agricultural organisations regarding water usage by agricultural institutions; if not, why not; if so, when?

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REPLY:

- (1) Yes. Through a series of country-wide situation assessments of all the water sectors, the amount of water abstracted for irrigation is estimated at 7 920 million cubic metres per year, which represented about 62% of all the water used in the country. Although the need for Irrigation Water is constantly growing very little additional water can be made available for agriculture, given other demands.

The country is already a net importer of food due to a number of economic and political reasons other than water. Given that South Africa is Water-Scarce, agriculture water will inevitably have to be reduced gradually in future because of the growing demand for water in the domestic and other sectors. The challenge to the agricultural sector will thus be to produce more food using less water. The Limited Water Resources available for food production are afforded high importance and must be used efficiently. The irrigation water is already subsidised for purposes of food production.

- (2)(a) Yes. Available agricultural consumption estimates were collated in 2002/03 for incorporation in the first version of National Water Resource Strategy which was published in September 2004.

- (2)(b) The information was gathered from organised agriculture, Department of Agriculture, Centre for Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) and Irrigation Boards/Water User Associations and was synthesized and presented during the drafting of NWRS.

- (3) Yes. My Department discusses its programme on water wastage control and efficient water use with structures within organised agriculture. However, the nature of discussions is through a formal platform provided for the structures within the organised agriculture. Structures such as National and Provincial Departments of Agriculture, South African Agriculture Union, National African Farmers Union (NAFU), forums for interested and affected irrigation farmers (eg Mhlathuze Irrigation Forum), Water User Associations, Irrigation Boards and Government Water Scheme, Research Institutions e.g. Agriculture Research Council, Water Research Commission and Institutions of Higher Learning are consulted to solicit their comments, inputs and form part of the working committees on any agricultural water programmes.

- (4) Yes, we recently held a meeting with Agri-SA and a task team was established for continuous engagement.