



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OPINION PIECE

Water and food Security

20 October 2014

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) has declared the month of October as Food Security Month to raise awareness about food security and production.

*Thus, this year's World Food Day is commemorated under the theme: **"Feeding the world, caring for the earth."***

Government's programme to ensure water for growth and development that embraces food security, has been one of the main ventures of the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS).

This is an important framework that maps DWS's action in ensuring that our country secures enough water to support its growth trajectory both social and economic. Of course DWS needs to ensure that whatever is implemented adheres to sustainable environmental practices.

On Thursday 16 October 2014, government joined millions of people and organisations including Non-Profit Organisations (NPO) in acknowledging and commemorating the event. During the event, the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Mr. Senzeni Zokwana, the Deputy Minister, Mr. Bheki Cele, along with provincial and local leadership unveiled a food mountain. Contributions to the food mountain were made by ordinary South Africans and corporates at the request of the Ministry.

Also on the same day, as part of the month's activities, DAFF, the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) commemorated World Food Day in Malale Village, Musina Local Municipality in Limpopo.

World Food Day is celebrated annually around the world on 16 October, in honour of the founding date of the FAO of the United Nations in 1945.

This day seeks to heighten public awareness to issues of global food insecurity and strengthen solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

Citizens are still kindly requested to make their contributions at their local municipalities.

*The launch of World Food Month on 3 October marked the beginning of the planting season under the theme: **"Through Food Security, Job Creation and Economic Growth - We move South Africa Forward."***

During the Food Security Month South Africans will be mobilised to take action against food insecurity and to help one another with donations of food and planting of food gardens.



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It is important for the country to take a moment to reflect on the road DWS has travelled and appreciate what it has achieved over the past twenty years. When the first democratic government took over in 1994, it was confronted with massive infrastructure backlogs, fragmented institutional arrangements, outdated policies and repressive legislation. It took a lot of time and financial investment to correct these anomalies, and there are still remnants of our divided past that still haunt us today and will still take us some time to undo.

Government takes pride in our successes to date which include the development of outstanding policy and legislation. Inevitably, the initial years of our programmes focused on servicing un-served areas of the country and addressing the needs of the poor, especially those residing in the former homelands, which led to massive infrastructure programmes to address the backlogs that resulted from decades of separate development and neglect.

The fact that the country still faces backlogs in some localities often distracts us from taking pride in our successes since 1994. South Africa is recognised internationally for achieving what seemed impossible in terms of reducing historic backlogs today; millions of our people have access to clean water and safe sanitation facilities. South African policies and legislation are also acclaimed world-wide for being progressive, pro-poor and adhering to universal human rights.

To achieve this, the country had to go through very difficult changes in an attempt to find the suitable policies and institutional mechanisms while ensuring a fair balance between its responsibility to provide services and the need to subject ourselves to constant review and repositioning.

Over the years, local government has been gradually introduced as the centre of community level service delivery, including water services, and therefore our focus shifted to local government support to ensure that municipalities were able to assume this responsibility effectively.

However, it is important to always remind all South Africans, that our country is classified amongst the thirty driest countries by world standard hence the importance of ensuring that the little water that we have is protected from pollution and conserved to achieve efficient use.

This requires careful management of this valuable resource so that we are able to extend basic water services to every citizen whilst meeting the needs of economic growth without threatening the environmental integrity of our water resources.

Government is constantly balancing the escalating and competing demands on the country's limited water resources, ever mindful of the fact that water for social development, economic growth and environmental sustainability are equally important for the success and prosperity of this country.

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