

WESTERN CAPE AGRICULTURE MEETS WITH ESCOM

24 January 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATEMENT BY COBUS DOWRY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE WESTERN CAPE ON MEETING WITH ESCOM ABOUT POWER SHEDDING:

I have today met with senior officials from ESCOM as well as representatives from the deciduous fruit, table grape and wine industries and organised agriculture in the Western Cape.

We have put the extraordinary circumstances and the disastrous effect of the power shedding to these and other Industries in the Agricultural sector, to ESCOM. We explained in detail, the impact that the power shedding, in its existing form, has to these industries at this point in time where farmers are in the midst of the harvesting and export of their products.

We perused the following objectives:

- a) Formalise the informal discussions that took place in the past.
- b) Lead Eskom to understand the importance and biological nature of agriculture in the Western Cape.
- c) Reach agreement on the structures that need to be put in place in order to manage the process.
- d) Get commitment that joint action will follow (potentially through a task team?) on:
 - * Lowering the import tariffs on generators.
 - * Create the environment for investment in green renewable energy generation capacity by making provision for accepting green energy into the electricity grid.
 - * Investigating the possibility of using the underutilised capacity of the Cahora Bassa project.

At the meeting which took place in a very positive spirit it was agreed that some of the points raised were medium and long term solutions that needs to be perused whilst we had to put certain plans into action to get immediate results to curb the problems farmers are facing and to avoid almost 22000 job opportunities being lost as a result of the present situation.

It was agreed that a joint task team will be established to find immediate amicable solutions in the short term and that ESCOM will look

at specific times for power shedding in the agricultural areas that are now busy with their peak season. It was proposed that three scheduled times should be looked at namely 04h00 to 06h00, 06h00 to 08h00 and 07h00 to 09h00.

The task team will consist out of three representatives from ESCOM and three from the Agricultural Sector, including a representative from my office.

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