

Press Release: Southern Cape gets drought aid.

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Illustrations: Photo by Wouter Kriel

W-Eden Aid1: (From left): Andre Roux, Director: Sustainable Resource Management, Department of Agriculture, Western Cape; Minister Gerrit van Rensburg; Carl Opperman, CEO, Agri Western Cape announce the R26,9 million in aid at a farmers' meeting in George.

Body: The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development in the Western Cape, Gerrit van Rensburg, today announced an aid package of R26.9 Million for the drought stricken Eden District Municipality in the southern Cape. The area was declared a disaster area on 13 November 2009. "We are all together in this drought, and we will face and manage it together", Van Rensburg said.

The money, sourced from National Treasury, will be allocated to farmers who are in need of animal feed for cattle, sheep and goats. The money will be made available in the form of vouchers that will entitle farmers to buy feed at registered cooperatives. Farmers will be assisted in relation to the size of their herds.

Farmers will be entitled to R600,00 per large stock unit per month, up to a maximum of 50 large stock units. Farmers with herds larger than 50 units need to make a 30% own contribution. This in effect gives a farmer with 50 cows R21 000 per month to buy and transport feed, Andre Roux, Director: Sustainable Resource Management of the Department of Agriculture: Western Cape, explained.

Smaller farmers need to make smaller contributions. For stock units of between 30 and 50, a 20% contribution is required, and for farmers with less than 30 units, only a 10% contribution is needed, Roux said.

Van Rensburg estimated that, depending on the number of farmers that apply for the aid, it should be enough to see them through for four to five months. "Weather forecasts predict rains with the change of the seasons towards the end of April", Van Rensburg said.

Van Rensburg added that he is working with the Department of Social Development to find ways to aid vegetable producers, so that job losses can be prevented. Van Rensburg urged small and new farmers to make use of this offer. He said that small farmers should approach the Department if they need assistance with the administrative procedures.

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