

Press release: Minister van Rensburg speaks his mind on extension services in the Western Cape.

Date: 19 April 2010

Body: Gerrit van Rensburg, Western Cape Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, urged extension workers of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture to focus on land reform projects that stand a chance to succeed. He addressed the Department's extension officers at an Extension Symposium in Caledon, Western Cape.

He reiterated his commitment to ensure that 60% of land reform projects in the Western Cape will be successful within the next five years. Van Rensburg told officers to work together as a team and not to have a silo mentality. "You are employees of the Department in the first instance, and your positions within a Programme comes second", Van Rensburg said.

Van Rensburg said that if 60% of projects are to be successful, 40% of projects will by implication fail. "Do not be swayed by clients' whims on what to farm with. I expect of you to identify and recommend crops and production methods that have a reasonable chance of success. I do not want to see pigs and chickens on irrigation land, and I do not want to see organic production where it is not suited".

He said that in order for land reform to succeed in South Africa, newly established farmers need to be able to improve their lives through the access to land. "Even if we transfer all agricultural land in South Africa to new farmers, and they are unsuccessful, we will not create the needed stability that land reform seeks in the first instance", Van Rensburg said.

Van Rensburg said that agricultural opportunities abound, and with the application of innovative thinking, attaining the goal of 60% success within the next five years is possible.

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