

State 'owns 14% of land in SA'

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THE government owns about 14% of all land holdings in SA, according to the provisional results of a land audit conducted by the office of the chief surveyor-general, Mmuso Riba, in the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform.

The estimate of land under state control comes three years after Rural Development and Land Reform Minister Gugile Nkwinti initiated a land audit following questions by agricultural bodies, many pertaining to the state's land reform priorities.

The audit, released last week, found state land ownership was about 17,062-million hectares out of about 125-million hectares.

The report said of all state-owned land, national departments including former home-

lands were in control of 6,870,301ha (40.3%), followed by government entities such as state-owned enterprises at 3,812,228ha (22.3%), with provincial governments holding 3,179,908ha (18.6%).

Municipalities, including metros, held 2,105,933-million hectares, which represented 12.3% of all state land.

The office of the chief surveyor-general has not yet classified about 1,093,511ha (6.4%) of state land, saying appropriate categories were being identified.

The largest owner of state land was KwaZulu-Natal with about 28%, followed by Limpopo (15%) and North West (14%). Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape held 11% each. The state held the least land in Gauteng, constituting only 2%.

Agricultural Business Chamber CEO John Purchase said some sort of independent verification process was needed to validate the data. "The database needs to be transparent so that South Africans can see what the state-owned land is being used for," he said.

Mr Nkwinti's spokesman, Mtobeli Mxotwa, said in terms of the private land ownership, demographic representation has not yet been done. "The department will be working with Statistics SA and other departments such as home affairs to ensure that (we) get accurate information about land ownership in the private sector."

The report did not mention names of organisations that were using state-owned land amounting to about 531,484ha. radebeh@bdfm.co.za