

AgriEC asks for response to judgment

Simthandile Ford

AGRI Eastern Cape has asked the Department of Roads and Public Works for reaction to a landmark Grahamstown High Court judgment declaring that farmers could fix rural roads and bill the department.

AgriEC president Doug Stern said he wanted to know how the department would respond to the court ruling as it had claimed to not have funds.

“The other problem with the department is that it does not communicate with us. We know that there has been a 12% increase in its budget, [but] we will never know where that money will go,” he said.

The court recently ruled that the department should within 90 days provide full details of roads to be resealed and rehabilitated, and to commence with such work within six months.

The court further ruled that farmers who fix their roads could bill the state.

Department spokesman Mphumzi Zuzile said the judgment was still being studied.

“We can’t comment on this matter until we have received a legal opinion on how to implement the order,” he said.

The DA’s Vicky Knoetze has posed questions to MEC Thandiswa Marawu asking how the department would budget for claims from farmers.

That the department had to be forced by the courts to deliver services, Knoetze said, was a sign of failure.

“The department will need to sit down and draw up a plan on how to approach this judgment,” she said.

Zuzile dismissed the DA’s questions as “cheap politics” and said the MEC had not received any questions submitted by the DA through the legislature.

“They know the processes followed in asking the MEC questions,” he said.

Zuzile said earlier they needed R102-billion to fix the province’s road network but

only had a budget of R1.96-billion.

Marawu is due to deliver her policy speech on Thursday next week.