

# R136m needed for drought relief

## Western Cape government asks for additional funds

**Jason Felix**

**T**HE Western Cape government has requested a further R136 million for drought relief funding from the national government while plans are being mooted to use Expanded Public Works Programme projects for farm workers who risk losing their jobs.

Agriculture, Economic Opportunities and Tourism MEC Alan Winde said the agricultural sector was vital in sustaining rural economies, and that plans needed to be in place to give support in difficult times.

Winde was presenting his department's budget for the 2018/19 year in the provincial legislature.

"But even when the rains do eventually come, South Africa remains a water-scarce country and the Western Cape is only set to get drier. We have to prepare for a future in which climate change is a reality. This is why we have been conducting pioneering research into conservation agriculture at our Langgewens research farm," Winde said.

He said the techniques used were showing results.

"We also partnered with industry and academia to develop our Smart Agri plan in 2016. This plan serves as a road map for a future in which climate change is certain, laying out potential responses to potential shocks like drought," he said.

Winde said the outbreak of listeriosis had raised many questions about food safety.

"Currently, all ships docking at Cape Town harbour with imported food-stuffs undergo rigorous testing before cargo can be offloaded. One of our Khulisa projects has been the establishment of a residue-testing facility that will help detect an array of substances in very minute quantities.

"So far, we have taken delivery of

equipment and performed the necessary upgrades to the facility. We are currently in the recruitment process and once this is finalised, the facility will be commissioned. This will allow us to meet some of the strict testing measures put in place by many regions, including the EU, opening up new export markets," Winde said.

Most training beneficiaries were land reform beneficiaries, linked to the province's farmer support and development projects, he said.

"In 2017, 105 young people registered for the accredited learnership training offered by our department. Seventy-nine have successfully completed their qualification.

"Sixty-two students have registered for the programme this year. The primary target group for this qualification is agri-workers and their children, and unemployed rural youth. Of last year's successful 79 candidates, 26 went on to higher education programmes where they were offered the opportunity to pursue a tertiary qualification," he said.

Short skills courses were also offered to 2 631 beneficiaries across the province last year, with the majority being agri-workers and smallholder farmers from land reform projects.

"We offered seven agri-processing short courses ranging from beer brewing to making essential oils, to 69 beneficiaries," he said.

Beverley Schäfer, the DA's spokesperson on economic opportunities, said the sector had been resilient and had achieved the lowest number of unemployed.

ANC MPL Siyazi Tyamtyam said the provincial government needed stronger plans to implement land reform.

To comment on this story email [arglet@inl.co.za](mailto:arglet@inl.co.za)  
or send a SMS to **32 027** (SMS costs R1)  
Provide your physical address  
and phone number (not for publication).