

from the **EDITOR**



Land: Increasing pressure on agriculture

The end of 2018 had nothing but bad news for agricultural land owners, in an unwelcome repeat of the previous year's end. It was in December 2017 that newly elected ANC leader, Cyril Ramaphosa, supported the first resolution on land expropriation without compensation.

At the end of 2018, Thulas Nxesi, minister of public works, published the revised *Amendment Bill on Land Expropriation* in the *Government Gazette*. The revised bill did not elicit positive comments from agricultural leaders. Experts hold the view that it does not set the stage for orderly, fair or practical land reform.

Many see the definition of expropriation set out in the revised bill as too vague and restrictive, saying it is creating uncertainty that is not in line with international trends, and that it runs the risk of giving government the power to impose restrictions on ownership without compensating current owners.

Cause for concern

The agricultural sector is justifiably concerned. The current state of affairs exists despite the ANC's parliamentary pledge at the end of 2017 that it would not yield to the EFF's demand for land nationalisation, and that it would steer clear of the mistakes made by other countries in terms of land reform and land expropriation.

The revised bill, which was published on 21 December 2018, granted stakeholders a 60-day period for comment; a period which is all but over.

One can only hope that comment from role-players in the agricultural sector, and enough firm pressure exerted by other parties who stand to be affected, will convince government to amend the bill so that it promotes orderly and fair land reform without further damaging South Africa's dwindling economy.

The bill should, after all, support the promises made by the president in December 2017 that he would only support expropriation without compensation if it did not adversely affect agriculture, if food security was not threatened, and if economic security in the private and public sectors remained unaffected.

Doing it the right way

The furore surrounding agricultural land, especially the expropriation without compensation of that land, and the actions of South Africa's radical elements, will reach critical levels in the run-up to the elections in May. It is highly likely that the structures of organised agriculture and the patience of farmers will be put to the test.

The agricultural sector must brace for extreme conditions, such as those experienced during the well-executed illegal land occupation in the North West at the beginning of January. Fortunately, the situation was quickly resolved because proper procedure was followed by organised agriculture and there was good support from government.

Agricultural leaders and organisations – at every level – must be prepared to react appropriately to each situation. The correct procedures must always be followed if the sector is to stand firm against the pressure, and survive.

Hugo Lochner
Editor