



**ABOVE:** From left: Head of the Western Cape agriculture department, Joyene Isaacs and Western Cape Agriculture and Rural Development MEC Gerrit van Rensburg.  
DENENE ERASMUS

**GOVERNMENT**

## Over 50% of Eastern Cape department's budget to pay staff

More than half of the Eastern Cape Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform's budget allocation will be spent on the salaries of employees this year. This was confirmed by MEC Zoleka Capa in her policy and budget speech in the Eastern Cape Legislature last month.

"For the 2013/2014 financial year, this department has been allocated R1,7 billion, where R957 million goes to the compensation of employees." The remainder of the budget will be divided between its deliverable objectives including farm infrastructure support, rural

development facilitation, irrigation production systems, agri-business promotion and farmer development. The department received a marginal increase from R1,6 billion last year.

Among those to be negatively impacted by the low increase is the Eastern Cape Rural Development Agency (ECRDA).

Acting CEO of the ECRDA, Dr Lubabalo Mrwebi, said the agency's budget was less than half of what was needed and as a result, the stimulation of rural development would be difficult. "The budget is R188 million as opposed to the required

R450 million. The under-funding continues to stifle rural development."

The ECRDA was established by the EC government to focus on specific projects and also to implement other projects with funds obtained from the jobs fund. "The ECRDA has been established to co-ordinate and implement high impact programmes and projects on behalf of the department," said Capa.

"The agency will further implement forestry and agro-processing projects from the funds leveraged from the jobs fund."  
— Grant Hollins

**GOVERNMENT**

## Western Cape allocates R610 million for agriculture

The Western Cape provincial government has allocated R610 million to agriculture and rural development for the 2013/2014 financial year, an increase of 8,8% compared to the previous budget allocation. This is from a total estimated provincial income of R43,9 billion.

Presenting his budget vote address in Cape Town recently, Gerrit van Rensburg, the Western Cape MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, said that his department would use the money to create hope in a sector where many were suffering daily frustrations.

In reference to recent violent farm worker protests in the province, Van Rensburg said SA had become a country where people had lost faith in their ability to turn dreams into reality.

"We have thus become a country where we voice our dissatisfaction and sense of disempowerment with violent protests," he said.

High input costs and low producer prices, the uncertainty created by export bans on South African products like ostrich meat, red meat and the looming threat of a ban on citrus exports to the EU were some of the factors

contributing to the sense of frustration felt by farmers, said Van Rensburg.

"Weak market demand is pushing the price producers get for their produce down. Thus we have higher input costs together with lower product prices. This means less profit on the farm," Van Rensburg said.

"Farm workers have also been under enormous pressure. Food inflation has increased faster than wages and as a result, many workers became trapped in debt spirals as they increasingly made shortfalls up with very expensive credit from loan sharks."

### ALLOCATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT HAS INCREASED BY 35%.

Van Rensburg said as a responsible government it must create the conditions for ordinary South Africans to regain trust in their dreams again.

Van Rensburg referred to allocations given to specific programmes, saying the farmer support and development programme will receive the lion's share of the budget with an allocation of R227,9 million that will be used to

support new farmers. "We will continue our commodity approach with empowerment projects. We have created expert panels for each commodity, consisting of government and private sector experts. This ensures the very best support for our empowerment beneficiaries. A total of 60 new projects, worth R135 million, will be initiated and funded through our conditional grant allocation in this financial year," he said.

The allocation for rural development has increased by 35% to R222 million compared to last year. Included was the provincial farm worker development programme which received an allocation of R17,4 million.

A further R47,6 million has been allocated for sustainable resource management which included water management programmes.

"We want to increase agricultural production in the Western Cape by 10% over the next 10 years, and this is directly linked to our ability to use water more effectively. Water management is therefore a strategic priority of this department," said Van Rensburg.

Other allocations include R64,7 million for veterinary services, R95 million for research and technology development, R17,8 million for agricultural economic services and R48,4 million for education and training.  
— Denene Erasmus