

Government to regulate commercial use of hemp products

Government will this year open up and regulate the commercial use of hemp products, providing opportunities for small-scale farmers, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced on Thursday.



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Delivering the State of the Nation Address (SONA) before a joint sitting of the two houses of Parliament, President Ramaphosa said government will formulate policy on the use of cannabis products for medicinal purposes, to “build this industry in line with global trends”.

"The regulatory steps will soon be announced by the relevant ministers," President Ramaphosa said.

He reiterated that agriculture is one of the industries with the greatest potential for growth.

This year, government implemented key recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Panel on Land Reform and Agriculture to accelerate land redistribution, expand agricultural production and transform the industry.

The Presidential Advisory Panel on Land Reform was established to review, research and suggest models for government to implement a fair and equitable land reform process.

A consultative process that involved thousands of ordinary South Africans was undertaken across the country to allow

citizens the opportunity to express their opinions on the land issue in public hearings or via written submissions.

The report provides perspectives on land policy in the context of persisting land inequality, unsatisfactory land and agrarian reform and uneven urban land development.

Over 40 000 hectares of land released

President Ramaphosa said that government stands ready, following the completion of the Parliamentary process to amend section 25 of the Constitution to table an Expropriation Bill that outlines the circumstances under which expropriation of land without compensation would be permissible.

"To date, we have released 44,000 hectares of state land for the settlement of land restitution claims, and will this year release round 700,000 hectares of state land for agricultural production.

"We are prioritising youth, women, people with disabilities and those who have been farming on communal land and are ready to expand their operations for training and allocation of land," the President said.

He added that a new beneficiary selection policy includes compulsory training for potential beneficiaries before land can be allocated to them.

The President also noted that due to the drought in many parts of the country, farmers have lost crops and livestock, and many workers have lost their livelihoods.

Working with the Agricultural Research Council and other scientific and agricultural bodies, President Ramaphosa said government has developed drought mitigation strategies that focus on developing drought-resistant seeds, planting and storing fodder, removing of invasive plants and management strategies to prevent soil degradation.

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