

Mabuza calls for patience in land reform process

Deputy President David Mabuza has called on rural communities and emerging farmers to exercise restraint and not occupy land that has been advertised for land reform purposes.



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The Deputy President said this when he responded to oral questions in the National Assembly on Thursday.

"As government, we reiterate our call to the citizens of our country to exercise restraint, and to allow government to implement the necessary policies and constitutional reforms aimed at redressing the imbalances of the past, as reflected in skewed and inequitable patterns of land access and ownership.

"It is critical that we put in place enabling policies to regulate access to land for human settlements and for agriculture, especially for emerging farmers and communities, wherein we prioritise women and youth, who form the majority of our population, as well as people with disabilities, who have been marginalised for the longest time.

"Where blatant violations, incitement of violence, lawlessness and land grabs occur, the law must take its course," Mabuza said.

EFF Chief Whip Floyd Shivambu had asked the Deputy President if he, in his capacity as the chairperson of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Land Reform, had been informed that some of the land that is being advertised for State disposal

to emerging farmers is already occupied and used by communities and some emerging farmers.

Mabuza said the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development has apprised the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Land Reform about the status of the land that has been advertised for State disposal to emerging farmers, which indicates that some of this land is already occupied, some is used by farmers and local communities, and in certain instances, is illegally occupied.

"To this end, the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, on the 10th of November, gave an update to the media, wherein she announced the advertisement of 529,000 hectares of land available for release. This is part of the 700,000 hectares announced by President Ramaphosa in his State of the Nation Address in February 2020.

"In the same media briefing, the Minister further stated that government is currently engaged in the process of a land rights enquiry to ascertain the status of this land occupation, particularly on the land that has been advertised for State disposal to emerging farmers."

He said the process will enable the State to have a record of which farm or land is occupied by whom, how such occupation came about in the first place, and what activities are being undertaken on that piece of State-owned land.

The enquiry will also include addressing the rights of farm dwellers, and other affected persons, as well as ensure that proper procedures for formalisation and regularisation for those already occupying the land are undertaken, where necessary.

The Deputy President said the Inter-Ministerial Committee has also taken proactive measures to address emergent challenges of conflict, which emanate from the land reform process, by identifying and addressing the root causes of these conflicts that tend to include land invasion, land eviction, contestations on grazing and farming rights, the rights of labour tenants, farmworkers, occupiers, farmers and farm dwellers.

"To this end, a rural safety strategy has been developed and is being implemented, which is inclusive of the work done by the Minister of Police and the South African Police Service, to address crimes committed in rural communities where such land-related conflicts manifest themselves," Mabuza said.

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