

Agriculture sector grows employment by 65,000

The agricultural sector grew employment by 65,000 between 2009 and December last year, says Economic Development Minister Ebrahim Patel.

"Employment in agriculture reversed a trend of job losses stretching back to the 1970s. In an effort to improve the rural economy, household income and access to nutrition, a total of 1,740,555 hectares of land were acquired, redistributed or restored to farmers between 2009 and 2013," Patel said on Tuesday (4 March).

The minister added that about R20bn was spent on land restitution and distribution adding that there are now 700,000 smallholder producers - including those under the recapitalisation and development programme. He said they were supported through various initiatives, including access to finance and mentoring.

He was speaking at a post State of the Nation Address Economic Sectors and Employment and Infrastructure Development cluster media briefing in Cape Town.



Millions of hectares of land have been restored to rural farmers. Image: [Code Innovation](#)

Fetsa Tlala (End Hunger) programme

The Fetsa Tlala programme, which supports emerging farmers, was launched in October last year in Kuruman by President Jacob Zuma and Patel said planting was taking place on 230,000 hectares of land in six provinces, with half of the land set aside for smallholders.

"A total of 10,271 resource-poor, historically disadvantaged producers were supported with access water for agricultural purposes and over 18,000 hectares were irrigated during this period. he said that between 2009 and 2013, a total of 2,400,000 hectares of land has been added to the area of land under rehabilitation and restoration," he said.



Government spent more than R20bn on land restitution programmes says Ebrahim Patel. Image: GCIS

According to the minister, almost 3,5m hectares of land was cleared as part of follow-up programme.

"A further 33,341 smallholder producers were assisted with access to markets and 1,284 producer co-operatives and marketing depots were established in order to increase the competitiveness of small farmers and allow them to take advantage of market opportunities," he said.

He said an additional 22 co-operatives have been linked to the Department of Social Development's Food for All programmes as part of buying produce for social programmes from those smallholders who are being supported by government.

The Department of Agriculture drafted an Agricultural Policy Action Plan (APAP), with a focus on six value chains based on their potential contribution to food security, job creation, growth potential and potential contribution to the trade balance, including by replacing imports.

Primary animal healthcare

"Furthermore, we have committed to extending the primary animal healthcare programme to smallholders in all provinces. In the past year, 23 mobile animal clinics were procured and delivered to remote rural areas," Patel said.

The scientific committee of the World Animal Health Organization (OIE) has confirmed the restoration of the foot and mouth disease (FMD) free-status, which enables South Africa to negotiate with the trade partners to lift the export ban on red meat. Patel said the confirmation of the restored FMD free-status is a positive step for trade and markets access for the industry.

With regard to work in rural areas, Patel said a total of 3,384 small rural enterprises were established in different sectors between 2010 and 2013. "We were able to link 170,196 poor and vulnerable South Africans, including recipients of social grants, to economic opportunities," he said.

In rural areas, a total of 3,422,110 work opportunities were created through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), including the Community Work Programme, since 2010.

Most of these jobs were created under the infrastructure sector of the EPWP. An additional 798,586 full-time equivalent jobs were created in different sectors from 2010 to date.

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