

Drought: govt intervention may be too little, too late - Limpopo farmers

By [News24 Correspondent](#)

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Limpopo livestock farmers have welcomed government's decision to intervene and provide them with feed for their animals as the drought deepens, but say it may be too little too late. The province was declared a disaster area this week and R3m has been set aside to provide emergency livestock feed as part of the provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's intervention programme.



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"We welcome the intervention by the government, but we are concerned about the amount of money that has been set aside because there are many affected farmers and the damage has been done already," said Limpopo president of the African Farmers' Association of South Africa, Tshianeo Mathidi. "Farmers continue to lose their livestock as we speak and by the time they receive the fodder or animal feed to feed the surviving cattle, it will be too late."

Who buys skinny cattle?

He said it was unfortunate that although the weather services had issued the El Nino warning in time, the government had failed to establish subsidised insurance for farmers in time. Instead, most farmers were advised to sell their livestock to minimise losses and inputs, but this warning also came very late, he said.

"Those who farm on communal land were badly affected and who can buy skinny cattle? Buyers buy well fed cattle because they want a profit too," said Mathidi.

Farmer Nelson Musetha from Thengwe, outside Thohoyandou, said Nguni cattle needed good management for optional production, but that it was difficult for farmers under the current hard conditions. "The input cost is high and there is no breeding at the moment. Even though Ngunis can resist drought, they still need animal feed because there is no grazing at all," he said.

'Farmers should follow the weather'

Provincial government spokesperson Phuti Seloba said the entire province was facing the worst drought conditions

recorded in years.

Meanwhile, spokesperson for the national Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Makenosi Maroo, said farmers should reduce planting in line with water restrictions in their areas and also consider the below-normal rainfall forecast. "Farmers should follow the weather and climate forecasts regularly so as to make informed decisions. Water and other resources need to be continually conserved in accordance with the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act," said Maroo.

She said livestock should not exceed the veld's carrying capacity and should be provided with additional feed, including licks to give sufficient nutrition. She said farmers were advised to further reduce livestock to protect the limited pastures by selling off their animals.

Source: News24

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