

Land audit still not completed

The government has spent R33bn since 1994 buying land for land reform, Rural Development and Land Reform Minister Gugile Nkwinti says. In 1994, the government set a target of handing 30% of agricultural land to black recipients by 2014. A recent report by the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy said more than 20% (18 million hectares out of 82 million hectares) of the farmland has been transferred or financially compensated for to date.



Alandmanson via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

The land-reform programme has generally been tardy, which has created uncertainty in the agricultural sector. The government has said a comprehensive land audit is required to assess the performance of its land reform programme.

Nkwinti said on Monday that land restitution was the most expensive programme in the broader land reform project. The minister was responding to a written question in Parliament from the EFF.

The biggest challenges to the land reform programme

In reply to a question posed by the National Freedom Party (NFP), Nkwinti said that the biggest challenge for the land reform programme remained the answer to the question "who owns SA?"

"We have just concluded phase two [of the] land audit in terms of land ownership by race, gender and nationality, but still face further challenges as a result of the absence of information in respect of institutions, such as trusts, private and public

organisations and companies, as well as sectional title holdings," said Nkwinti.

"A further challenge relates to water rights being allocated to individuals, not to the land. When an individual sells the land, he/she leaves with the water rights.

"Furthermore, subdivisions and changes of land use are happening at a rapid pace. An audit needs to be conducted in respect of both these issues because they impact negatively on land reform farms.

"Although regulated by laws, compliance with and enforcement of such legislation needs to be strengthened."

Nkwinti's department was also working on transforming the Land Claims Commission into a Chapter Nine institution.

The Regulation of Agricultural Land Holdings Bill

To tackle some of the challenges in the land reform programme, said Nkwinti, the department had, among other things, introduced the Regulation of Agricultural Land Holdings Bill in Parliament. The bill was released recently for public comment, amid raging debate on land reform and expropriation without compensation.

The proposed law makes provision for the establishment of a land commission to be appointed by the rural development and land-reform minister. The commission will establish a register of public and private agricultural land ownership.

Controversially, the bill states: "No foreign person shall, from the date of the commencement of this act, acquire ownership of agricultural land."

The land commission provided for in the bill, will enforce disclosure of ownership of land and landed property, the minister said.

The department also sought to strengthen relative rights of people working the land by securing the land rights and residential tenure of the farm dwellers or workers, empowering people working the land to acquire majority equity holdings in farming enterprises and to bring about economic transformation of the agricultural sector.

"[This] will further address land hunger, extreme land concentration, associated poverty and inequity by fostering asset and enterprise equity that introduce fundamental changes to land relations and factors of production," Nkwinti said.

Source: Business Day