

**BUDGET DEBATE ON THE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION, ENVIRONMENT AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

VOTE 13

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This is one department that has been allocated a very big chunk of the budget. This department is charged primarily with ensuring food security for citizens in the province.

The scarce financial resources allocated to the department should be put to good use; we should see farmers being trained and assisted to grow into self sufficient producers of food.

It is unfortunate that national policy is against subsidising farmers and the result is that those who try to lift themselves are left high and dry when drought strikes. South Africa plays as if we are in the first world by adhering to globalisation. It is funny that some developed countries continue to subsidise their farmers and bail them out when famine strikes.

In their presentation the department decried that land is being degraded.

We in the UCDP can ascribe this squarely at the door of the ruling

party. Prior to the democratisation of the country some of them, some are in this house went out of their way and told people to occupy any piece of land at will telling people that **lilizwe labo**, it is their land.

Good farming land was invaded and those who tried to eke out a living from the land had their crops and livestock vandalised until they stopped.

Modern people have turned to become lazy and look up to government even for simple things such as repairing fences to protect their livestock. But equally debilitating is that the department is as hapless as it is helpless in assisting farmers whose fields are invaded by wild animals such as baboons.

Land is further degraded by foreign plants that are not controlled. One wonders what the conservation section of the department is doing when soil erosion has turned to be such a menace to communities. Roads and footpaths between households have turned into ravines to the extent that in some cases people find it difficult to reach their homes but no effort is made to repair the roads manually.

We decry the scarcity of extension officers. Those farmers still trying

to make ends meet on the land have no advice on how to go about.

Farmers are not being capacitated.

There are many agricultural buildings that are turning into ruins because they are not being utilised optimally. A look at some at Makoshong in the Moses Kotane Municipality and the dilapidated ones at Ga-Mmatau in the same municipality are clear evidence that agriculture in the North West is slowly but surely consigned to death.

The over zealous political upstarts that took control of the province in 1994 in their absurd rush to obliterate anything that was done by Kgosi Mangope's government closed down the Taung College of Agriculture and other institutions to the detriment of the people in the province. This is a clear demonstration of cutting one's nose to spite one's face. They need the facilities now.

We note the half hearted and muted pronouncements to have these institutions reopened and we say it is a hard lesson that politicians have to learn to take care of what they have. Reopening the college and all other institutions for that matter that were closed down consciously by the ANC government is not going to be as easy as it was when they were closed down. This is a fact we have to live with.

Rural Development is such a noble idea but will be some time before it takes root because of financial and bureaucratic logjams. We look forward to it. We hope it will not be turned at looking at developing rural towns to the neglect of villages out there.

If properly managed, rural development can retard if not stop urban migration. People will remain in their rural settings where they will have all amenities like those in urban settings. Let the graders start rolling into the hinterland and create jobs in both building and road construction.