

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE ON DROUGHT

THE South African government's approach to addressing the drought and land degradation problem, facilitates integrated intergovernmental responses, it includes the Land-care Programme, Working for Water, Working on Fire and Working for Wetlands.

These responses contribute to job creation, food security, skills development conservation, land rehabilitation and restoration as well as rural development.

The advent of the current drought necessitates the use of technologies that advance resilience.

In 2015, South Africa approved general release drought-tolerant, genetically modified maize to address the issue of drought mitigation and food security.

It is also enhancing innovative designs and technologies required in the restoration of affected areas to arrest soil degradation and sustain land productivity.

As part of this integrated approach, South Africa has committed to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Global target-setting support programme.

Through these interventions, it will join in the global implementation of national voluntary targets as part of achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

The key principle of land degradation neutrality affirms the role of local people in designing and implementing measures to halt and reverse land degradation.

The climate change adaptation strategy identifies priority interventions and harmonises key water, agriculture, biodiversity, health, human settlement and disaster risk reduction sectoral adaptation plans into a comprehensive national adaptation plan.

AS the threat of drought across South Africa is still with us, it is important to remember the need to conserve water and protect the environment from erosion and damage.

The United Nations General Assembly declared the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought (WDCD) in 1994 to raise public awareness on desertification, land degradation and drought, as well as the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

This day has been observed since 17 March 1995 to promote public awareness about the international effort to combat desertification and the effects of drought in countries, such as South Africa, that are prone to serious drought and/or increased desertification.

South Africa, as a party to the UNCCD, has annually coordinated the celebration of the WDCD since ratifying the Convention, through the Department of Environmental Affairs.

The day has been observed to promote public awareness relating to international cooperation to combat desertification and the effects of drought.

It is a unique occasion to remind everybody that desertification can be effectively tackled, that solutions are possible, and the WDCD can also be used as a tool to strengthen community participation and co-operation at all levels.

This year, the WDCD is being celebrated under the theme 'Our land. Our Home. Our Future.' The theme focuses on the link between migration and land degradation and celebrates the power of land in giving people opportunities to build resilient communities able to withstand the impacts of desertification land degradation & drought, exacerbated by climate change.

The theme reminds everyone about the importance of productive land for securing food and generating local employment, thereby contributing to sustainable land management.

It also calls for actions on the ground to address poverty and hunger, tackling inequality, empowering women and stimulating economic growth.

The 2017 WDCD will contribute

Drought bites deeper in SA



PICTURE: ITUMELENG ENGLISH

towards the achievement of land degradation neutral world, which requires a paradigm shift in land stewardship: from 'degrade-abandon-migrate' to 'protect-sustain-restore'.

This means cooperation among various sectors that embrace complementary management options in order to minimise current land

degradation; avoid future land degradation and further rehabilitate degraded lands as well as restoring degraded natural and semi-natural ecosystems that provide vital benefits to people.

In rural areas, where people depend on scarce productive land resources, land degradation is a driver of forced migration.

Africa is particularly susceptible because more than 90% of the economy depends on a climate-sensitive natural resource base, such as rain-fed, subsistence agriculture.

Sustainable land management offers young people opportunities for income generation from agriculture, food processing and tourism.

Departmental collaboration combats desertification

LAST year, the Minister of Environmental Affairs Edna Molewa led an inter-ministerial committee to the small Eastern Cape town of Sterkspruit to increase public awareness on the DEA's work on combating desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD).

The purpose of the visit was to highlight how government is working together to combat land degradation, desertification and drought. Minister Molewa said, "Our visit here is but one of the multiple interventions we are rolling out to ensure that this country's food and water security is not threatened by the changing weather."

Minister of Public Works Minister, Thulas Nxesi and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Senzeni Zokwana joined Minister Molewa.

The Ministers visited a pilot land rehabilitation project of R21 million, funded by the DEA's Environmental Protection and Infrastructure Pro-

gramme (EPIP) between 2011 and 2016 over two phases.

It was implemented through the labour intensive Expanded Public Works Programme and employed 158 local people (93 were women, 72 youth, and 4 were people living with disability).

"There is annual demand for more investments and the creation of more jobs, therefore our collaboration with the Departments of Water and Sanitation, Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry and Rural Development and Land Reform, working in our provinces, will ensure that we succeed.

"Ten such projects, with an investment of R108 million, have started throughout South Africa with the Working for Land Programme.

"It is important that communities work together with government to ensure that desertification and drought are combatted. We are here to work with you," concluded the Minister.

OUR LAND. OUR HOME.



OUR FUTURE.

MORE CLIMATE CHANGE MEANS LESS WATER



The earth's temperature is increasing. Unless we play our part, this will have serious consequences on our water systems which is not good for a continent already in short supply of fresh water. To see how you can save the future, visit: www.environment.gov.za or call 086 111 2468



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