



Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement Western Cape Provincial Parliament IPalamente yePhondo leNtshona Koloni

Ref Number: 11/4/1/2/11

Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, dated 30 November 2021, on the 2020/21 Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, and its Entity Casidra, for the year ended 31 March 2021.

The Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, having deliberated on the Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture and its Entity, Casidra, for the year ended 31 March 2021, referred to it, reports as follows:

1. Introduction

Section 113(3)(b) of the Constitution requires that “Members of the Executive Council of a province must provide the legislature with full and regular reports concerning matters under their control.” Section 65 of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999) requires the Minister of each department and public entity to table an annual report in the legislature within six months of the end of each financial year.

As part of its oversight function, the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (the Committee) deliberated on the Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture (the Department) and its Entity, Casidra, on 9 November 2021.

Annual reports are the key instruments for departments to report on performance measured against their performance targets and budgets as outlined in their Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans.

The Annual Report Programme for the 2020/21 financial year was advertised in various newspapers, inviting stakeholders and members of the public to participate in the discussions.

The Committee deliberated on Part A: General Information, Part B: Performance Information and Part D: Human Resource Management of the respective Annual Reports.

2. Department of Agriculture

2.1 Overview

The year under review was a challenging one in relation to the COVID-19 global pandemic but also produced new opportunities. The One Home One Garden Project was one such opportunity that brought humanitarian relief to many. There was a huge responsibility placed on the Department as its services, in terms of agricultural distribution, transport as well as the sale of agricultural products, production and harvesting, were declared as essential during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were significant events and achievements during the year under review. One of the major achievements was the Elsenburg Water Project that rendered a saving of R1 million on the Department's monthly municipal bill. Climate change, conservation agriculture and alternative crop strategies as well as the commissioning of chemical residue testing and support to small holder farmers were also key focus areas. Market access was prioritised resulting in the Western Cape now being responsible for 53% of South Africa's agricultural exports.

The Department achieved 86% of its performance targets.

2.2 Key Findings and Concerns

- 2.2.1 The provincial agriculture conditional grants allocated to the Department from the National Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform included the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) funding and the Illema/Letsema funding. The purpose of the CASP allocation was to facilitate agricultural development by targeting beneficiaries of land reform, restitution and redistribution and other black producers who had acquired land through private means. The purpose of the Illema/Letsema allocation was to assist vulnerable South African farming communities to achieve an increase in agricultural production and invest in infrastructure that unlocked agricultural production within strategically identified grain, livestock, horticulture and aquaculture production areas.

Delays in the transfer of these grants from the National Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform to the Department was reported as a challenge. The Committee was concerned about these delays and the impact of this on the Department's capacity to provide the necessary support to the farmers.

- 2.2.2 Actual achievements versus performance indicator targets in Sub-Programme 4.4, Veterinary laboratories, were of concern to the Committee. These performance indicators related to sample testing which was not achieved during the year under review. The Department explained that the reason for the deviation was the restriction of movement during lockdown which made it difficult to make appointments, the capped salary prescribed by government as well as challenges experienced with outsourcing as a result of the prescription that laboratories to which the testing of these samples are outsourced must be accredited.

The Committee was concerned that this appeared to be a capacity problem within the Department and noted that this will be addressed in the 2021/22 financial year. The Committee further noted the Department's response that the targets were based on the previous year's performance but that the demand was far less during the year under review.

3. Casidra

3.1 Overview

Casidra is the implementing agent for the Department and achieved an unqualified audit for the year under review. One of the key highlights was the successful roll out of the One Home One Garden Project and the Community Garden Project in collaboration with the Department. The drought continued to take its toll on the two farms that were managed by Casidra, namely, Amalienstein and Waaikraal.

Casidra managed to continue supporting small holder farmers with the aim of progressing them into becoming commercial farmers and worked steadily on rolling out the disaster management grants to drought stricken farmers. The alien clearing programme in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning continued unabated with the aim of increasing water quality for farming practices.

Other achievements included the completion of the flagship Holsloot Weir Project in Rawsonville. In close collaboration with the Department, Casidra continued to offer book keeping support and financial literacy training to approximately 45 small holder farmers.

Casidra explored the possibility of new partnerships with other government departments and entities to increase its revenue base and modify its funding model and discovered that these government departments were hesitant to utilise the services of Casidra until the court case with the Auditor-General had been resolved. As this has now been resolved, the Entity plans to re-establish connections with these departments.

There was a significant change in the composition of the Casidra Board where five new Board Members were appointed of which four were female.

3.2 Key finding and concern

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to negatively impact communities and households. Casidra's response, working in close collaboration with the Department, was largely in the area of food security through household food gardens. Casidra responded to the responsibility placed on the agricultural sector to ensure that food production continued. By doing so, the One Home One Garden Campaign was a focus area, resulting in 5 482 household food security projects being implemented against a planned number of 810. Monitoring and evaluation in terms of these projects were managed by the Department.

Although this achievement is commendable, the Committee was concerned about the sustainability of the household food security projects, the challenges experienced in terms of theft and vandalism as well as the issue of sustainability and the training of the participants.

4. Resolutions

4.1 The Committee **REQUESTED** that the Department provides it with a:

4.1.1 Report on the transfer of conditional grants from the National Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform for the last five years, indicating the respective dates on which the transfers were made and the effect of delays in receiving the conditional grants, particularly in terms of the support to farmers who were beneficiaries of this type of funding; and

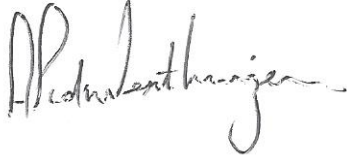
4.1.2 Regional breakdown of the location of food gardens and community food gardens in the Western Cape with specific reference to the types of challenges experienced per region, the manner of reporting on the status of these food gardens as well as the acceptable threshold percentage to ensure sustainability.

5. Conclusion

The Committee recognised the challenges experienced during the year and congratulated the Department and Casidra on sterling working under difficult circumstances. The Committee

was satisfied that the predetermined objectives for the 2020/21 financial year was adequately achieved and that it was accurately reported.

The Committee expressed its appreciation for the comprehensive responses from the Department of Agriculture and Casidra to the scrutiny of the Annual Reports and thanked the Minister, Head of Department, Chairperson of the Casidra Board, its Chief Executive Officer and officials for their contributions and efforts in this regard.



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DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

DATE: 30 November 2021