

Farmers expected to give away 50% of their farms

By Jan-Jan Joubert^{23 Jun 2014}

Rural Development and Land Reform Minister Gugile Nkwinti has published policy proposals requiring commercial farmers to hand over half their farms to farmworkers.



Land Reform Minister Gugile Nkwinti wants commercial farmers to give away 50% of their land without compensation.
Image: GCIS

Nkwinti said in an interview this week that stakeholders in commercial agriculture, including farmers, trade unions, farmworkers and the agricultural business sector, have until April next year to react to his proposals, which aim to:

- Deracialise South Africa's rural economy;
- Democratise the allocation and use of land;
- Ensure food security as well as food sovereignty for the country.

To this end, Nkwinti proposes that:

- The commercial farmers, as historical owners, retain 50% of the farm;
- The labourers on the land assume ownership of the remaining 50%, proportional to their contribution to the development of the land based on the number of years they had worked on the land;
- The government pays for the 50% to be shared by the labourers, but the money will not go to the farmer. It will go to investment and development fund to be jointly owned by the parties constituting the new ownership regime. The investment and development fund will be used for reinvestment in the farm, skills improvement and to pay out those who want to opt out of the arrangement;
- Current tenancy protection remains and it will be balanced by a regime of duties and responsibilities that worker-dwellers must comply with if they want to stay on the farm;
- Of the 50% to be shared by labourers, all labourers with a history of between 10 and 25 consecutive years of disciplined service will share 10%, those with 25 to 50 years' consecutive service will share 25%, those with more than 50 years' consecutive service will share 50% and 15% will be available for household subsistence farming;
- Land rights management committees, consisting of local people, will be established to solve local disputes.

Nkwinti said he had come up with the proposal because the previous system had many deficiencies, land reform was imperative and too few proactive proposals were coming from stakeholders in agriculture.



Commercial farmers have rejected the proposals saying that they expect compensation for their lands. Image: [Nedbank](#)

Proposals are something to work from

"I formulated these proposals to give them something to work with," said Nkwinti. "Stakeholders have until April next year to react. But we really need to move forward."

The minister said he was excited about retaining the portfolio he has held since 2009. He has set himself the targets of growing the department's youth programme and handling land claims preceding 1913 by descendants of the San and the Khoi as his main goals for the new term.

Regarding his land reform plan, which has provoked some very angry reactions from organised agriculture, he said it was effort to establish co-responsibility and co-ownership, which requires sacrifices from workers and farmers.

"To the workers, it is a wakeup call because it means greater responsibility and discipline. It is also reflective of the ANC policy decision, through the Freedom Charter, to turn away from radical African nationalism and to embrace the concept that South Africa belongs to all who live in it - black and white - and that the land shall be shared among those who work it.

"To the farmers, it provides an opportunity to farm in cooperation with their workers," he added.

Not influenced by pressure from the EFF



Theo de Jager of AgriSA has called government's land reform plans a disaster for farmers. Image: AgriSA

Nkwinti said he did not feel pressured by Economic Freedom Fighters MPs' insistence in parliament this week that land then regarded as stolen ought to be returned to the descendants of the original owners.

"Given how long ago the ANC moved away from such thinking, the only radical thing about them is their radical conservatism," he said.

AgriSA deputy president Theo de Jager said organised agriculture would turn its back on Nkwinti's proposals.

"We are aware of the importance of land reform. We support it and we work with government. The minister's plan could lead to massive job losses as farmers ensure there are fewer workers on the soon-to-be-divided farms.

"AgriSA favours market-related compensation to the farmer. One needs to remember that farming is a long-term investment. Farmers borrow money with land as collateral. At this stage, agricultural land is worth R155-billion nationally and agricultural debt stands at R89-billion. To effectively lose 50% of their collateral will be a disaster to farmers."

Free State Agriculture president Dan Kriek said any proposal needed to be constitutional and financially viable. He believes Nkwinti's proposal fails on both counts.

DA land reform spokesman Thomas Walters described the proposed policy as a cynical ploy to redeem the ANC's reputation as a government serious about land reform.

Source: Sunday Times via I-Net Bridge

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