

Agriculture continues to create jobs despite tough three years

Western Cape Premier Helen Zille says drought recovery has started with provincial agriculture and agri-processing sectors adding a combined 35,000 jobs between the third and fourth quarters of 2018. Despite the three years of drought, the two sectors still managed to create 10,000 jobs since 2015.



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“Back in 2009 we passed the sector’s first climate change response plan, compiled with the industry. Since then some truly innovative responses to climate change have evolved. I have addressed this house before on some of the technological innovations such as the satellite-driven Fruitlook, which has enabled farmers to cut water use by up to 30%.

“We’ve also introduced a method of “conservation agriculture” for wheat farmers, which has delivered an economic benefit of R341m, with wheat production higher across the board despite the drought,” Zille said.

Drought relief

Delivering her State of the Province Address (SOPA) in Cape Town on Friday, 15 February, Zille said over R200m has been spent on direct drought relief for farmers since 2017, through a combination of provincial and national funding.

“This support has been particularly meaningful to emerging farmers, many of whom have remained in business due to

emergency fodder supplies and many other support measures,” Zille said.

The provincial government has since 2014 supported 357 land reform projects with over R500m in funding. It also leveraged R80m annually in private sector support for emerging farmers, including market access contracts and mentorship programmes.

Delivering his second State of the Nation Address (SONA) on Thursday last week, President Cyril Ramaphosa said developing the agricultural sector is key to enhancing food security and for attracting investment.

“We are fortunate to have an agricultural sector that is well-developed, resilient and diversified. We intend to use it as a solid foundation to help develop agriculture in our country for the benefit of all,” he said.

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