

Agriculture dept opens up to help small-scale farmers

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development will from Wednesday, 8 April, accept applications from distressed small-scale farmers, who need financial relief from the impact of the coronavirus (Covid-19).



Ed HawkesworthDFID via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

This follows last week's announcement of the R1.2bn Covid-19 disaster fund intervention in the agricultural sector, as a response to assist small-scale farmers.

On Monday, 6 March, the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Thoko Didiza, announced the details of how the funding will work during a virtual media briefing.

Applications will close on 22 April and the forms can be accessed on the department's [website](#) and through national, provincial, district and local offices of both the national Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and Provincial Departments of Agriculture. Applications will be lodged electronically at applications@dalrrd.gov.za or submitted to the offices as outlined. No late applications will be accepted.

Of the R1.2bn that has been ring-fenced, R400m has been allocated for farmers within the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) programme and the remainder will be channelled towards all other farmers that are mainly within the

following commodity sectors:

- Poultry: Day-old chicks, point-of-lay chickens, feed, medication and sawdust.
- Other livestock: feed and medication.
- Vegetables: seedlings, fertiliser, pesticides, herbicides and soil correction.

Other commodity sectors will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, as the department continuously monitors the impact of Covid-19 on the sector at large.

Qualifying criteria for farmers

- South African citizens, who have been actively farming for a minimum of 12 months and currently in the production season or cycle.
- Be registered on the Farmer Register, commodity database or provincial database. Those who are not on the Farmer Register will be registered to benefit.
- Communal farmers.
- Smallholder farmers with an annual turnover between R50,000 and R1m.

The adjudication process will prioritise women (50%), youth (40%) and people with disabilities (6%).

Exclusions

Mechanisation, infrastructure and overhead costs will not be supported.

"This is not comprehensive support but an intervention package amid Covid-19.

"Farmers who are preparing for the 2020 summer production season will not be supported.

"The aim is to provide immediate to near-term support to smallholder farmers currently affected by Covid-19," said Didiza.

Farmers who are currently receiving support through other programmes of government and its entities will also not benefit, and there will also be no payment of farmer debts.

Through the Land Bank, Didiza said R100m has been made available to assist farmers in distress and the bank is available to allow farmers to engage with them to indicate the nature of support they require.

Didiza urged all employers within the sector to fully comply with all the applicable prescripts, as published by Government Notice No. 318 of 18 March 2020 and amended by Government Notices Nos. R398 of 25 March 2020 and R419 of 26 March 2020. She said farmers who will be supported must also apply good farming practices in order to ensure that the environment is protected for further production.

"Together as stakeholders within the sector, we have a mandate to ensure that there is access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for our country," Didiza said.