



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

**AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

SITHOLE-MOLOI URGES NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TO INTERVENE AS STORMS WREAK HAVOC ON CROPS, LIVESTOCK AND INFRASTRUCTURE IN KWAZULU-NATAL

The MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs Bongwiwe Sithole-Moloi, said there is an urgent intervention needed to assist thousands of farmers who are heavily affected by the hail and storms which wreaked havoc on crops, livestock and infrastructure.

Sithole-Moloi said this during a site visit to assess the extent of damage on agricultural produce. She said according to the assessment by the Department, the storm engulfed not only Pietermaritzburg and surroundings but throughout the Province of KwaZulu-Natal there are areas that are affected. "Northern KwaZulu-Natal is one of the areas that is heavily affected by the storms. I know one area near Paulpietersburg which has no road access due to this weather anomaly. I saw crops of different farmers damaged and livestock lying dead and have since, delegated my team to quantify the extent of damage throughout the Province"

The MEC said there are more than, 3500 Ha of crops, about 697 livestock and 110 infrastructure affected in the province. The total amount of this damage in these farms is estimated at R50 Million.

The MEC later on in the day, met with farming organizations at a meeting held at Cedara, where she said though the entire province has been affected, KwaZulu-Natal midlands has had the worst impact with most crop, livestock and farm infrastructure damage causing them to be impassable, not operational and with employees that are without income.

"This has affected our planting and harvest targets as the province and the country. We are dealing with yet another incident that makes poverty and unemployment numbers increase as most farms are forced stop operating due damage to crops, livestock and infrastructure."

We are also urging the people of the province to start home gardens as a contingency plan for beating an imminent food shortage as a number of farms are impassable and not operating.

This means, soon, there is going to be a shortage of food delivered to market. This will result in food price increases at shops," said Sithole-Moloi.

Sithole-Moloi said while KwaZulu-Natal has not been declared a disaster zone, the storm damage is estimated at R50 million for crops and livestock and about R2 billion to get several damaged sugar mills infrastructure back in operation.

"At the moment, we are continuing to visit farms and assess the damage. We are using the emergency funds available to support affected farmers. We will also be appealing to our National Minister, Ms. Thoko Didiza, for extra funds.

We are continuing to intervene where there is still a chance to revive crops but where we cannot, we have to accept a loss and start from scratch," Sithole-Moloi concluded.

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