

'List of farms credible'

Institute of Race Relations 'have reason to believe' AfriForum's claim

CHELSEA PIETERSE

THE Institute of Race Relations (IRR) yesterday said they believe the list of farms to be expropriated without compensation, as released by AfriForum, is legitimate.

AfriForum published a list "of farms that are apparently identified by government to be expropriated without compensation in the weeks to come" on its website on Sunday.

However, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform has denied the existence of the list.

The IRR yesterday said that although the department had said the list does not exist, "the IRR, whose analysts have had sight of the list, has every reason to believe it is legitimate".

The statement said "the list and related comments by senior government and ruling party officials suggest ... the government has decided to commence farm seizures before public commentary and parliamentary processes have been concluded".

They warned that the "policy of expropriation without compensation will trigger accelerated currency devaluation, stall foreign and domestic in-

vestment flows, drive the economic growth rate downwards — and possibly into recession by 2019 — and increase unemployment and poverty rates".

The institute said that if taken "to its extremes", the consequences could be as severe as those in Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

Following the IRR's statement, AfriForum released another statement announcing AfriForum, Transvaal Agricultural Union (TAUSA) and Sakeliga's (formerly AfriBusiness) decision to develop a joint litigation strategy to protect property rights and to oppose "government's intended plans to expropriate property without compensa-

tion" following the release of the list.

"The document's disclosure was preceded by confirmation from Zizi Kodwa, head of the Presidency, as well as other members of the ANC's national executive committee (NEC) that the department had an expropriation list of 139 properties.

"Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform, also indicated that her department had already identified land for expropriation, but that she would not make the list public, as it would then serve as a warning to affected owners and provide them with the opportunity to prepare for legal action."

'NEC GAVE THE GREEN LIGHT TO PROCESS'

AN article by the *City Press* published on August 5 this year said the ANC has targeted 139 selected farms they plan to expropriate without compensation in the coming weeks.

"*City Press* has learnt that the NEC has given the green light to

its employees in government, specifically the department of Rural Development and Land Affairs, to forge ahead with the process at the Land Claims Court, in which the state will for the first time refuse to pay market value for identified land portions in various

AfriForum CEO Ernst Roets yesterday told *The Witness* that they were not sure how the list was drafted or why, but that it had been given to them by a source and "is real".

He added that their organisation had received "enormous support" upon releasing the list and felt that it was not irresponsible, but rather, acted to keep the public informed.

Department of Rural Development and Land Reform spokesperson Linda Page said yesterday that the list does not exist and that releasing it had caused "unnecessary panic".

"We do not know where that list comes from. If it was from the depart-

ment it would have done the rounds but no one had seen it before AfriForum released it," she said.

Page added that the department did not have any lists of farms for expropriation without compensation and that AfriForum's claims of the list being a secret so land owners will not have time to prepare for a legal battle were false.

She said farmers would be contacted and communicated with at length and that the process would not be hidden.

There would be an opportunity for offers to be made and for the land owner to either accept or decline these offers before the process would go to court and be finalised, she said.

She said no plans for land expropriation without compensation had been made as Parliament had not concluded its decision. About the IRR, she said: "I don't know why they have released a statement aligning themselves with AfriForum or how they are involved, but it has caused unnecessary panic."

The department had been receiving calls from farmers and media who had spoken to farmers on the list who had already given their land to beneficiaries years ago, she said.

• chelsea.pieterse@witness.co.za