



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

AGRICULTURE DEPUTY MINISTER'S VISIT TO VELDFIRE VICTIMS IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Camperdown livestock farmer, Msizi Madide, was amongst the worst affected farmers when veldfires engulfed his farm last month in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands.

Speaking at his Hiltop Farm, Madide said that although his team is still quantifying the magnitude of the damage, thus far, it amounts to R1.6 million. "Our farm has suffered a huge amount of losses. Our livestock, which includes cattle, sheep and goats were not spared. Water tanks, pipes and other infrastructure were also destroyed in the blaze," he said.

About 300 livestock farmers were affected, with Zululand, uThukela, Harry Gwala and King Cetshwayo being the hardest hit Districts. The majority of the farmers affected by the veldfires are subsistence (65 percent) and 16 percent are small-holder. Commercial farmers are 17 percent, while two are those considered vulnerable.

On Friday, 02 August 2024, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Honourable Nokuzola Capha and KwaZulu-Natal Agriculture and Rural Development MEC Honourable Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa, paid an oversight visit to the hardest hit areas in Camperdown to assess the extent of the damage in the aftermath of the runaway fires.

Deputy Minister Capha has made a clarion call to the farming communities across the country to work together in multidisciplinary teams to come up with strategies that will ensure an immediate response to the veldfires and other challenges. Last month veldfires fanned by strong winds, wreaked havoc destroying crops, grazing veld, livestock and infrastructure resulting in the loss of about R93 million as extent of the damage. Deputy Minister Capha was speaking at Hiltop Farm in Camperdown, KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. Scores of farmers left devastated by the recent veldfires in KwaZulu-Natal are still counting their losses. The fires left a trail of destruction, resulting in the loss of six lives of firefighting crew who succumbed to death while battling the raging blaze. Commercial and emerging farmers spoke about their challenges during the oversight visit by the Deputy Minister Honourable Capha and Honourable Madlopha-Mthethwa.

Another local farmer around Camperdown, Pat Werner, urged government to come up with measures to bring an end to trespassing on their farms, saying it is worrying that farmers do not have the capacity to keep adequate guards on their farms 24/7. "We are hoping that the Government can step in and do something about it, maybe put more security and watch these fires."

The visit formed part of the Government's fact-finding mission to monitor progress as far as the Government assistance is concerned.

Addressing farmers hard hit by the recent veldfires Deputy Minister Capha said, "I am urging the farmers to embark on a programme that's going to be sustainable and find ways in which disasters can be controlled immediately. It requires multidisciplinary teams that are going to be with the farmers that would be trained in firefighting and to have firefighting trucks so that when the fires start, they respond at a coordinated level." Deputy Minister Capha's counterpart in KwaZulu-Natal Honourable Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa echoed her sentiments saying in efforts to mitigate the impact of the veldfires, the Department has put aside 1 300 bales to help farmers as a short-term intervention."We visited affected farmers immediately after reports of the fires to offer our assistance. We also visited the families that lost their loved ones who were firefighters that battled the blaze.

We also collated data with the Disaster Management Team to further ascertain the exact intervention necessary. The Provincial Government has also requested that the area be declared a disaster area and are waiting the declaration with National COGTA."

Responding to the Minister's call for collaborative efforts, Madide embraced it saying it is high time they collaborated. "We have to work together as a farming community to ensure that we use all measures in place to fight the fires, ensuring that firebreaks are in place and that we have drilled boreholes and fire hydrants to put out fires."









