

# Drought relief on hand for farmers

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SEVERAL farmers associations are carrying out assessments to compile a list of farmers who have been severely affected by the drought gripping South Africa before aid is rolled out.

The affected farmers will be assisted through a drought disaster fund which is being managed by Agri SA.

Deputy executive director Christo van der Rheede said more than R3m had been raised since the fund was originally initiated by Senwes working with Agri SA.

Senwes also contributed R1m to the fund.

He said organisations and individuals were still contributing towards the drought fund.

“Some farming enterprises have been donating fodder and transport.

“We have farming associations who are handling everything and assessing the needs of the farmers. We have asked them to do a proper assessment of both commercial and subsistence farmers so that they can contact our provincial offices. It sounds like a bureaucratic process, but we have to do it this way to ensure those in need benefit,” he said.

He also said Agri SA was responsible for distributing funds, including “fodder to farmers in need”.

Producers in need are asked to contact their nearest farmer union or Agri SA office to apply for assistance.

The drought has killed more than 70 000 cattle in the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal and some farmers have been complaining about a shortage of animal feed.

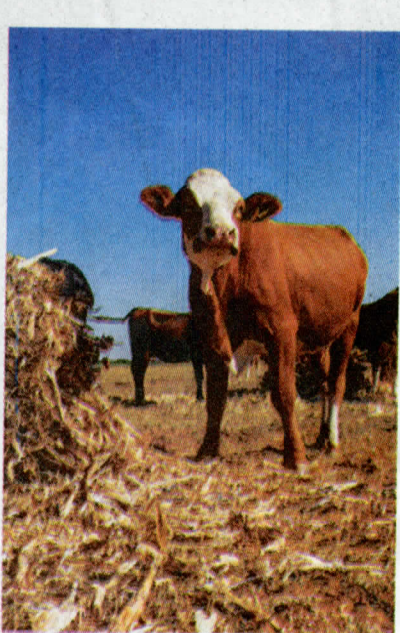
Neels de Villiers, Red Meat Producers Organisation chairperson in the Free State, said the drought had left thousands of cattle starving.

“Some farmers have been giving away their cattle or selling them at auctions at very low prices because they cannot feed them any more and they are tired of watching them die.

“The main problem is the shortage of feed,” De Villiers said.

Van der Rheede said some farmers owed banks millions of rands due to the drought.

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**RELIEF:** A drought disaster fund will assist distressed farmers. PICTURE: GETTY IMAGES