

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: South Africa Provides COVID19 Funding for Distressed Small and Communal Farmers

Country: South Africa - Republic of

Post: Pretoria

Report Category: Agricultural Situation, Agriculture in the News

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Report Highlights:

The South African Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, and Rural Development (DALRRD) set aside R1.2 billion (US\$ 64 million) to support distressed small-holder farmers. Part of the funding will go towards vouchers for inputs in priority sectors. Local organizations believe more support will be needed as vital supply chains are broken and the tourism industry is shuttered.

The South African Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, and Rural Development (DALRRD) set aside R1.2 billion (US\$ 64 million) to support distressed small-holder farmers. There are approximately 200,000 emerging small-holder farmers and over 2 million subsistence farmers in South Africa. Initially, the fund would focus on small poultry, livestock and vegetable producers. The program will prioritize women, youth, and disabled farmers and the funds will be delivered in the form of vouchers, though the details of the voucher program have yet to be identified. R400 million (US\$ 21 million) will be set aside for the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy Programme (PLAS), which allows for the state to buy farm land for redistribution. This funding had already been allocated in the 2019/2020 budget. The Minister also announced that DALRRD would monitor food supply in the country through an “agricultural value chain tracker” to ensure that any disruptions are addressed early and quickly.

The South African government issued a “request to express interest” for agricultural input suppliers willing to participate in a voucher scheme aimed at helping small-holder and communal farmers. The vouchers will be capped at R50,000 (US\$2,700) per farmer. The scheme prioritizes the below:

- Poultry: Day-old chicks, point of lay chickens, feed, medication and sawdust
- Vegetables: Seedlings, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and soil correction
- Fruits: Fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides
- Other livestock: Feed and medication
- Winter field crops: Fertilizers, seeds, herbicides and pesticides

DALRRD received 55,000 applications during the first application period (April 8-22, 2020) and plans to open another window once they’ve evaluated the first set of applications. The second window will be expanded to include smallholder sugar cane farmers, wool producers, and other small-holder farmers in the former homelands and in townships. In townships in particular, the funds can be used for inputs for household gardens to help with food security in densely populated areas. Currently, there is no support for commercial farmers, which make up about 80% of total agricultural production.

More than 15,000 small-scale farmers have been approved for the Covid-19 Agricultural Disaster Fund. There were over 55,000 applicants, but many were disqualified because they could not show that they were engaged in farming. Some of the farmers were asked for site visits before qualifying. Of the 15,000 approved, 5,494 are women, 9,542 are men, 2,493 youth and 224 people living with disability. DALRRD will provide a maximum of R50,000 (US\$ 2,750) per farmer in vouchers for farming inputs. The input vouchers will begin to be distributed to each province on May 18.

Local small farmer organizations see the funding as far from sufficient, as many farmers lack the basics to even apply for the funding (internet connectivity, printing for application form, etc.). The program requires that farmers be registered on the “Producer/Farmer Register,” which is designed to create census data and statistics that can be used to identify small-holder farmer needs. Organizations note that the disruption in the supply chains from the shuttered tourism sector will have long term impacts on small and communal farmers that can’t be resolved through short term funding of inputs.

Attachments:

No Attachments.