

Green Paper consultation on Land Reform to be completed in March

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Pretoria-The robust engagement on the Green Paper on Land Reform will be completed before the end of March.

Deputy Rural Development Minister Lechesa Tsenoli made the announcement after meeting with the National Reference Group (NAREG) to get progress reports on the work being undertaken regarding the Green Paper on Land Reform.

"The meeting set timelines for the work being undertaken to be finalised, and it was agreed that the work be completed by middle March 2012," he said, adding that NAREG will meet in next Month to asses work done again.

NAREG is an inclusive structure that represents varied interest groups ranging from beneficiaries, organised agriculture, civil society to academics and experts on land and agrarian issues.

When the Green Paper was published in 2011, it comprised of six work streams, which are aligned to the thematic areas which are 3-Tier land tenure system; Office of the Valuer-General; Land Rights Management Board; Land Management Commission; Communal Tenure; and Legislative amendments.

The countrywide engagement on the Green Paper, which seeks to break from the past without significantly disrupting agricultural production and food security, was initially due to be concluded at the end of November last year, but the consultation period was extended to give stakeholders time to submit their comments.

The Green Paper is underpinned by the following three key principles: de-racialisation of the rural economy for shared and sustained growth; democratic and equitable land allocation and use across gender, race and class; and strict production discipline for guaranteed national food security.

According to Tsenoli, the Department took the decision that the Green Paper development process will be a very interactive process, thus, NAREG serves as a reference point and forum to discuss as well as formulate proposals for the Green Paper.

He said stakeholders have opted to refer to the process as engagement, rather than consultation.

"During today's meeting, the various stakeholders had the opportunity to engage on the above themes, and it is pleasing to note the depth and extent of engagement.

"NAREG noted that a lot of work has been done, and that this work was undertaken collectively by

the various role-players, which has ensured that all have an input into the way forward," he said.

He said the gathering also noted that some work streams have not progressed as well as was anticipated, and agreed that urgent measures be put in place to assist these work streams.

Rural Development Minister Gugile Nkwinti said the willing buyer and a willing seller strategy does not work.

"This willing buyer-willing seller strategy it does not work because once the state enters the market, the market value price it is always increased," he said.

However, he said the National Reference Group was established to ensure that the country deals with the land reform matter as a collective, but more importantly in a systematic and responsible manner.

"We remain dedicated to ensuring that all processes related to the work being undertaken on the Green Paper are done within the context of the National Reference Group, which in turn reports to the National Consultative Plenary, which is a much broader plenary, constituted of all land reform beneficiaries, farmers, organised agriculture, traditional leadership and other stakeholders," he said.

Nkwinti said the National Consultative Plenary will meet towards the end of March, to receive a report from the National Reference Group, and agree on the way forward.

"Work on the Green Paper is proceeding at a rapid pace, and we thank all those who took time to submit their comments to us, as well as for participating in the various consultation workshops held across the country," he said.

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