

Nearly R2 billion spent on failed land reform

By Annelie Coleman | 5 February 2024 | 2:59 pm

Despite the South African government acquiring 432 038ha of land in the Free State under various land reform redistribution programmes since 1994, at a cost of R1 881 billion to the tax payer, this land was not being used for commercial food production. This was according to Dr Roy Jankielsohn, the DA's caucus leader in the Free State.



“In addition, municipalities in the province own 203 plots of vacant land that amount to 245 379ha, which means a total of 677 417ha of potentially productive land is lying dormant.”

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The Free State was but a case study of what was happening in the rest of the country, he said. It could be safely assumed that this trend of failure was continuing in all of the other provinces, except in the Western Cape.

Jankielsohn told *Farmer's Weekly* that it seemed as if government was oblivious to the threat it posed to food security in the country. Expropriation remained a smokescreen for the state's failure over 30 years to transform the commercial agricultural landscape, he said.

"Besides share equity schemes, the allocation of title deeds to beneficiaries of land reform to create generational wealth and give beneficiaries access to surety for production loans through title deeds is vitally important," he said.

Meanwhile, Wandile Sihlobo, chief economist at Agbiz, said in an article written for *Business Day* that the gains South Africa had seen in agricultural production over the past 20 years had not been equitably distributed across the agriculture sector.

Progress in the sector had been mainly driven by commercial agriculture, sometimes, as Sihlobo put it, "at the expense of a distinct but heterogeneous cohort of farmers".

In his book, *A Country of Two Agricultures*, Sihlobo argues that divisions remained in the agriculture sector.

According to Jankielsohn, the *High Panel Report* under the guidance of former president Kgalema Motlanthe had identified corruption, the channelling of resources to elites, and a lack of support to land reform beneficiaries as the main reasons for the failure of various land reform programmes.

The report said land reform needed to be measured by the contribution of beneficiaries to food security.