agriculture
Department:
Agriculture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X250, Pretoria, 0001; 20 Steve Biko Street, Pretoria, 0001
Tel: 012 319 6000; E-mail: queries@nda.gov.za; Web: www.nda.gov.za

MEDIA STATEMENT **2 SEPTEMBER 2026**

EL NIÑO ADVISORY

El Niño is a natural climate pattern that results in a shift in global atmospheric circulation. In South Africa, the typical impacts of El Niño are lower-than-normal rainfall during summer coupled with high temperatures.

Typical winter conditions have prevailed in summer rainfall areas. However, the winter rainfall areas have experienced a shortage of rainfall, which will be challenging moving into the summer months that will require risk reduction focus. During the 2025/26 summer season, above-normal rainfall was received which improved levels of dams and soil moisture in most summer rainfall areas.

The Seasonal Climate Watch issued by the South African Weather Service, dated 31 August 2026, mentions that the El Niño is occurring and will continue through the 2026/27 summer season. The Climate Watch further indicates that the summer season is showing many areas of below-normal rainfall associated with the expected El Niño during summer.

In the agricultural sector, El Niño conditions might result in below-normal rainfall and high temperatures that may lead to dry conditions and heat stress. This often contributes to crop failure and livestock mortalities, especially where risk reduction measures are not implemented. Water restrictions also come into effect when rainfall is low and usually affects irrigation farmers. The other issues of concern are pests and diseases associated with these conditions.

In general, when the winter season ends and the spring season begins, rain is experienced throughout the summer rainfall areas. However, this is not the case, especially when below-normal rainfall and high temperatures are forecast – particularly in an El Niño season.

Crop farmers are encouraged to implement climate smart agriculture that will ensure that soil moisture is conserved. They should utilise implements that are in line with Conservation

Agriculture principles that will further preserve the moisture and minimise soil erosion. Farmers should implement risk reduction measures such as not expanding land under production unnecessarily and prioritising suitable cultivars that will withstand dry and hot conditions. Farmers are further advised to prioritise cultivars listed in the National Varietal List in compliance with the Plant Improvement Act, 2018 (Act No. 11 of 2018) and remain within the planting window.

It is important to use water sparingly as it is a scarce resource, for instance, implementing water harvesting techniques and utilising best irrigation methods such as drip systems. Farmers are always encouraged to irrigate at times that conserve water such as in the morning or evening. They are also urged to comply with water restrictions in their areas.

Livestock farmers are encouraged to keep livestock in balance with the carrying capacity of the veld and available grazing. This can be done by ensuring that there is no overstocking which leads to overgrazing, which exacerbates the impact of dry conditions and causes mortalities. Best veld management strategies should be implemented such as rotational grazing and provision of additional feed and watering points.

Anticipated hot conditions during the summer season are usually associated with related pests and diseases, therefore, farmers are urged to continually scout and put control measures in place where necessary. This comprises regular vet visitations including vaccinations. Farmers should be on the lookout for weather and climate updates from the South African Weather Service.

The department will continue to monitor conditions and provide updates through early warning information such as the monthly advisories and daily extreme weather warnings. Farmers are encouraged to implement strategies provided in the early warning information issued. The Department of Agriculture at both provincial and national level will partner with all relevant stakeholders to continue raising awareness in the sector, and capacitating farmers on understanding, interpreting and utilising early warning information for disaster risk mitigation and response.

For an extensive advisory, visit the DoA website https://www.nda.gov.za/

-End-

For media enquiries, please contact:

Ms Noluthando Mtolo

Acting Director: Media and External Communication

NoluthandoM@nda.gov.za (063 359 6314)

Issued by: The Department of Agriculture