

# Nkwinti proposes four-tier system to divide agricultural land

**Donwald Pressly**

A DRAFT green paper on land reform can ultimately trigger the government to move in the direction of subdividing tribal land that falls under the authority of traditional chiefs, but for now the focus will be on a four-tier system of land division.

Rural Development and Land Reform Minister Gugile Nkwinti said the green paper would focus debate on "the land question", for which the government previously set a target of 30 percent black ownership of agricultural land by 2014.

He said it was unclear from the data available how South Africa was faring as the last figure was about 7 percent, excluding the 13 percent former

homeland tribal territory, but this had shrunk as many new farmers had sold their land.

He said: "We must as a nation be open to robust debate so as to emerge with a way forward for land reform that will ensure a better life for all."

However, he acknowledged that South Africa did not have the kitty of about R40 billion to achieve the 30 percent target.

For the moment, communally owned land would be one of the four pillars, but the government was looking at the constitutional questions pertaining to tribal land with a view to moving towards a system where individual farmers could hold title.

In an indication that his ministry was open to the idea of

reconsidering the structure of traditional land ownership, he specifically said it was wrong for a chief to deny land access to widows when their husbands had died, for example.

He said of communal land that "nobody owns it and nobody takes responsibility for it".

The other three pillars were state and public land – about 1 500 parcels of land across the country – which would be made available for agricultural production through leasehold systems; privately owned land through freehold with limited extent; and land owned by foreigners with freehold, but with "precarious title". The ministry emphasised that strict obligations and conditions would apply to foreign ownership.

Deputy Agriculture Minister Pieter Mulder said he opposed placing limits on how much land big farmers were allowed to own. "The whole of the agricultural economy will be warped without the land reform problems of government being solved."

He echoed Nkwinti's concern that 15 percent of commercial farmers produced 80 percent of the food, but said it was imperative that this should not go the way of Zimbabwe. Each of the 40 000 farmers there, already down by 20 000 in the last 20 years, was producing food for 1 100 people.

Although he did not say it, most of the production takes place on larger commercial farms, the bulk of which are

owned by white farmers. Limiting the size of private land would create "a recipe for food shortages", he warned.

Nkwinti said he did not believe it was contradictory for the state to be encouraging the movement to small-scale farming in the context of a global trend towards greater mechanisation and larger commercial farming entities.

Responding to a remark made by Economic Development Minister Ebrahim Patel in Parliament on Tuesday, that the number of farmworkers had dropped from about 1 million 20 years ago to 600 000 today, he said that this was undoubtedly a trend in the "first economy". But in the second – underdeveloped and poor –



**Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform Gugile Nkwinti presents the draft green paper on land reform, which seeks to correct the imbalances of the past.**

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economy, he believed that a move away from communal farming to small-holding operations would be the way to go.

DA spokeswoman Lindiwe Mazibuko said she was concerned about a proposed land management commission that would report to Nkwinti "with

powers to subpoena, prosecute and invalidate land ownership".

"It is untenable that an extra-judicial body that is not independent from political office is granted powers to terminate land ownership rights. This also violates the constitutional principle of property rights."