

**BUDGET VOTE 23  
AGRICULTURE**

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The current budget allocation from the Department of Agriculture is less than 1 percent of the total national budget. The allocation of R2,79 billion for 2009/10 is less than the previous financial year's allocation of R2,95 billion.

The UCDP is concerned that since Agriculture is the back-bone of most countries economy, including South Africa, how will the department reach its objectives of service delivery using this limited budget, including:

- Ensuring access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food.
- Eliminating skewed participation and inequity in agriculture.
- Maximising growth, employment and income in agriculture.
- Improving the sustainable management of natural agricultural resources and ecological systems.
- Ensuring effective and sufficient governance as well as ensuring knowledge and information management.

Rural development has emerged as one of government's top priorities for the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period. In his State of the Nation Address, the President made it clear that Government intervention in The Second Economy would include support for small and micro-enterprises and rural development initiatives, while the

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Minister of Finance highlighted the fact that the budget for increasing agricultural output, raising rural incomes and supporting small scale farmers are key objectives of government's rural development strategy.

The rapid rising of food prices experienced of the past year has threatened food security in the country and necessitated initiatives to protect the vulnerable from high food prices. We doubt if this budget will reach this objective.

In conclusion the United Christian Democratic Party would like the department to pay serious attention to the following:

- Access whether the budget allocated to provide post-settlement support to land reform beneficiaries and emerging farmers is used effectively and efficiently.
- Opening/increasing stock-theft units in rural areas.
- Monitor the revitalisation of irrigation schemes, which were the centres of job creation for rural people in the past.
- ELRAD projects: Address the delay of ELRAD application procedure (which sometimes takes six to twelve months).
- Address the tension between the farmers and farm workers, as well as reducing the farm killings.

I thank you