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Western Cape government responds to farmers' plight

Yesterday - by Staff reporter



Citrusdal's farming community and agri economy have been hit hard by recent flooding. Source: Supplied

Western Cape Minister of Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism, Ivan Meyer, has handed over R14.98m to the Citrusdal Water Users Association for the mitigation of flood risk to farmlands.

Citrusdal Executive Mayor Ruben Richards and Executive Mayor of West Coast District Municipality, Boffie Strydom, who accompanied Meyer to the official handover at the weekend, expressed their gratitude to the government for responding to the plight of farmers who faced severe flood damage to agricultural land in the area.

The funds will mitigate future flood damage to the Upper Oliphants River catchment area.

Meyer said the 2023 and 2024 floods had significantly affected farmland's ecological infrastructure.

“The flood resulted in the agricultural sector requiring significant repairs, including removing debris and sediment build-up over approximately 60 kilometres along the main stem of the Olifants River and its apocoped tributary,” Meyer said.

“We must protect the water security of the region, particularly the agricultural industries and livelihoods that depend on it.”

Western Cape Government Head of Agriculture, Mogale Sebopetsa, said collaboration with citrus farmers, businesses, municipalities and water user associations was crucial to dealing with more frequent extreme weather patterns due to climate change.

“Our focus is also to care for the environment and the local communities affected by the recent floods. The funding is in line with the value of responsiveness of the Western Cape Government,” said Sebopetsa.

Citrusdal Water Users Association representative, Stefan Theron, said they had been through a rough time over the last couple of months, adding that it was significant to note the impact the floods and the damage to the roads had on people's lives and their access to food and cash.

“The R14.98 million donation will enable us to reinstate drainage along the river, remove sediment and debris islands that can block or divert river flow and reinstate access along the river where roads, cultivated fields, orchards, and infrastructure have washed away,” said Theron.

Meyer said that while a permanent solution was needed for road infrastructure at the entrance and exit to Citrusdal, it was also essential that the agricultural sector adapted to climate change to repair its infrastructure in a way that was resilient and able to withstand more unpredictable weather.

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