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**INPUT ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION: EMERGING FARMERS
AND FORESTRY AND WATER LICENSING TO PREVIOUSLY
DISADVANTAGED INDIVIDUALS**

Foreword:

Honourable Minister, members of the Portfolio Committee and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. It is our privilege to comment on 'poverty alleviation – emerging farmers and water licensing to previously disadvantaged individuals.'

Surplus People Project (SPP) is a non-governmental organisation that facilitates land and agrarian reform in the Northern and Western Cape. Our main aim is to ensure that black women and men gain access to and ownership of natural resources to improve the socio-economic conditions under which they live. Currently SPP is supporting 61 emerging farmers groups and farm workers.

Background:

The primacy of land and water to address the increasing problem of poverty in agrarian communities is an important issue. As long as unequal access, use and control of water resources – white commercial farmers use 70% of water in South Africa – are not addressed the agricultural economic ventures of black emerging farmers remain fruitless. Our experience is that an integrated approach and framework to land and agrarian reform and water reform is critical to promote sustainable livelihoods of emerging farmers.

Reference to previous submissions:

1. Nuwehoop – this issue was already highlighted at a previous Portfolio Committee meeting. Subsequently the farm dwellers are facing an eviction and the situation is deteriorating. Their livelihoods continue to be threatened as they are facing impounding of their goats. Limited access to water in this case highlights the vulnerability of farm dwellers and entrenches the control and power of the landowners. It should be noted that Nuwehoop is not an isolated case where landowners use access to water resources to constructively evict workers.

Commonage and access to water:

The municipality plays a key role in securing access to water and water infrastructure for agricultural productive purposes. Some of the issues include:

- The inability of local municipalities to conceptualise the need for water in relation to sustainable production often put emerging farmer groups in a crisis situation. An example is that emerging farmer groups obtain infrastructure or funding from other state organs, without licenses. In Pietersfield, in Citrusdal, the municipality committed itself to secure the water licence as part of the land transfer transaction. Currently water infrastructure is being

completed without users having a water license. They now have to put production on hold until such time that the license is granted.

- Cheaper sources of water in terms of quality and volumes is not investigated and implemented. Lambertsbaai potable water, which in times of water scarcity is prioritised for household water consumption. This keeps emerging farmers ransomed to the municipalities' priorities in terms of basic service delivery, which does not take supplementary food security activities, such as vegetable production, in consideration in times of water scarcity. This situation is further exacerbated in the context of Lambertsbaai because the water is expensive and groundwater is brackish which limits production options. Another compounding factor is the impact of the changing climate on water availability in the region. The overall sustainability, of which water is a key component, is not addressed and therefore alternatives for example desalination, recycling grey water etc is not considered. The Lambertsbaai experience speaks to the challenges in trying to fulfil the objective of water allocation through licensing in order to protect the quality of water resources.

- For the individual farmers it is much easier to make and implement decisions around water access, use and management. Emerging farmers groups are subjected to the internal dynamics, and power relations that hampers decision-making processes, as it takes longer to reach consensus on planning and implementation. Our experience shows that local municipalities do not recognise group dynamics and their participatory processes are bureaucratic and inflexible.

- Lease agreements provide a limited and short term mechanism for emerging farmers to gain access to productive resources, i.e. land, water. The demand for water is linked to the duration of the lease

agreements and seriously challenges the sustainability and consistency of production.

Capacity development:

- A positive development has been the allocation of funds through the Integrated Water Resources Management Programme (IWRM) by DWAF. Nine (9) emerging farmer groups that SPP supports have received about R 150 000 each funds for water related needs.

- Some of the constraints are for example that emerging farmers are capacitated to understand their water needs, the scales and rates of payment for water rights, use and management of water as well as their roles and responsibilities on the Water Associations. It is important that the Water Associations recognise and address the capacity constraints experienced by emerging farmers. SPP recommends that the Portfolio Committee continue to play an oversight role to transform Water Associations in a meaningful and transparent way.

Institutional:

LORWUA:

- 1) Public participation in the management of water resources through water reform institutions such as LORWUA, remains a critical issue. The Ebenhaeser canal water rights has already been allocated which makes it virtually impossible for emerging farmers representatives to negotiate for so called new rights. LORWA has purchased 11 ha of water, of which 5ha were allocated to an equity scheme in Lutzville - 6 ha remain for emerging farmers. It is SPP's contention that equity schemes do not benefit farm dwellers. In fact what it does is to further entangle farm dwellers in complex and unequal partnership arrangements. Therefore to prioritise water allocation to equity schemes, further weakens the position of resource poor emerging

farmers who struggle to obtain water rights. Past imbalances in terms of water rights will remain entrenched as long as allocation of water is not fair and equitable. The debate on water redistribution should be deepened with a debate on water expropriation for the benefit of emerging farmers. Not only is the water supply limited and deteriorating, but current water demands and commercial practices along the Olifants river is not sustainable and yet it continues to expand.

- 2) It is further assumed that the raising of the Clanwilliam dam will address the water needs of emerging farmers. This is however a long term project and there is no programme of action to address the immediate to short term needs given the current water demands. Local economic development linked to integration of water in the emerging agricultural sector.

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