



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

By NAU and NECFU

2019 Drought Action Plan

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The Namibia Agricultural Union (NAU) and the Namibia Emerging Commercial Farmers' Union (NECFU) compiled an emergency action plan to reduce the impact of drought, which is already a national crisis. The question can be rightly asked why the current drought is different from other droughts, as Namibia is a drought prone country? The difference is as follows:

- To this date no place of which we are aware of in the country has received good rain so far.
- During recent drought conditions (eg. 2016), some parts of the country received good rains, which allowed the buildup of fodder and hay. This was then donated to drought-stricken farmers. However, currently this is not the case as there is very little excess hay on the market.
- Since 2013, Namibia experienced 5 years out of the last 7 years of below normal rainfall. This depleted the growth reserves of our rangelands, as well as carry-over fodder on the veld.
- The outbreak of Foot-and-Mouth-Disease (FMD) in South Africa (RSA) resulted in a drop of $\pm 20\%$ in the producer price of weaner calves and sheep in January 2019, compared to December 2018.
- Farmers therefore need to reduce their herds as quickly as possible, but at significantly lower prices.
- The current rainfall forecast for the season going forward is not very positive.

Certain action steps are currently being implemented, which are as follows:

1. Emergency marketing of livestock

- a. A request for an urgent meeting was recently sent to the Minister of Agriculture, Water & Forestry (jointly between the NAU and NECFU), and this meeting will be to inform the Minister about the severity of the current drought, and to also

provide initial proposal to mitigate the impact of this drought to all Namibians. It is the ultimate goal to have all 3 Farmers' Unions (NNFU, NECFU and NAU) represented at the meeting, and thus provide one unified proposal to the Minister.

- b. It is of utmost importance that farmers are not restricted to remove their livestock in a timely manner from the land, in order to reduce the impact on rangelands. The MAWF and the Meat Board will be urgently requested to remove all policies restricting the export of livestock in order to minimize financial and livestock losses.
- c. It is requested that the Government of Namibia avails emergency funds to help with the implementation of a marketing incentive scheme to encourage farmers to sell their livestock, in order to reduce the impact on our natural rangelands.
- d. Due to the outbreak of FMD in RSA, no hay or silage can be imported to Namibia. We understand the duty the Directorate of Veterinary Services (DVS) to protect Namibia from contamination and we support that. However, farmers are appealing to Government to look into to the seriousness of the drought, because a serious need exist to import especially Lucerne hay from South Africa. Discussions have taken place with Dr. Shilongo (Acting Director: DVS), and there is a full understanding of the problem, and we need to find solutions that will have minimum risk effects. Finding a solution is not that simple, but nevertheless different solutions are currently being investigated.
- e. The implementation of the Biosafety Act, which stipulates that no maize containing Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO's) can be imported as from 6 Feb 2019, before an application is made to the Biosafety Council. Therefore, any farmer who needs to import maize containing GMOs from South Africa to feed their livestock, will have to undergo the same application procedure as with millers and feed manufacturers. It is requested that the National Council for Research, Science & Technology (NCRST) urgently exempt farmers from this Act and its procedures thereof.
- f. Price stability in the cattle market: The current slaughter cattle price at Meatco was not reduced, and C-grade slaughter cattle prices increased in January 2019, which is highly appreciated and will further improve the trust relationship between producers and Meatco (which is direly needed). In discussions with Meatco, it was requested that Meatco provides farmers with a 3-month price strategy, to help farmers make informed decisions on whether to fatten animals or not based on the prices availed to them.
- g. Sale of livestock which is not slaughter ready: Most of the livestock currently on the veld is not in a condition to slaughter. However, to encourage farmers to invest in additional feed to fatten the animals before marketing, it is suggested that abattoirs come to the aid of farmers by fixing the price for the next 3-4 months. This will stimulate and build trust along the value chain, and ensure the

sustainable of the industry in the future. Furthermore, another option would be for feedlots to buy livestock now and pay farmers only after 3 months, and/or possibly financing the feed, to curb the cash flow challenges.

- h. Shortage of animal feed in Namibia: Currently energy concentrates to fatten livestock is sourced from Zambia and South Africa. The availability of different commodities is currently being investigated, in order to provide farmers with affordable solutions.
- i. Utilise bush as drought fodder: Advise on the use of bush as fodder during drought is already available, and farmers are urged to explore such opportunities

2. Support measure by financing institutions

- a. Financial institutions are requested to implement assistance measures to help their clients survive the cash flow challenges resulting from drought.
 - Such measure could include the postponement of payments of loans for this year, and subsidized loans to survive the effect of the drought.



DR N NGHIFINDAKA
PRESIDENT: NECFU



RYNO VAN DER MERWE
PRESIDENT: NAU