

# SUNDAY TRIBUNE (KZN BUSINESS REPORT) – 26 MAY 2019

Publication: KZN Business Report (Sunday Tribune)  
Date: Sunday, May 26, 2019  
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## ■ FARMING

# Agriculture woes are weighing heavily

*Policy uncertainty and land expropriation without compensation big thorn in investment*

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KWAZULU-NATAL'S agriculture industry has been through troubling times over the past few years, with drought and land expropriation without compensation (EWC) inhibiting the sector's growth, according to KwaZulu-Natal Agriculture Union (Kwanalu) chief executive Sandy La Marque.

"This has been further impacted by drought, which has had severe consequences for many farmers in the province, said La Marque.

Policy uncertainty around EWC was adversely affecting investment, growth of commodities and development opportunities.

"In particular, policy conversations around EWC have led to the lack of progress due to the unresolved labour tenant and labour restitution claims, which in turn has had a negative impact on opportunities not being realised."

La Marque said organised agriculture was continuing to lobby at government level, using all available opportunities to continue to ensure the voice of all farmers was heard and fairly represented.

"Farmers have not just sat by and watched and waited, as many have continued to be proactive and innovative in identifying rural development opportunities and looking at ways they



POLICY uncertainty around EWC is severely impacting investment, growth of commodities and development opportunities. | Tracey Adams

can grow the agricultural footprint by partnering with new entrants into the sector, assisting in sponsoring agricultural education opportunities and driving mentorship programmes."

Going forward, Kwanalu would continue to focus on the continued growth of organised agriculture.

In its *Provincial Growth and Development Plan 2035* published this year, the province's government said it intended to develop and promote the agricultural potential of KZN by increasing

employment within the agricultural sector (including forestry and livestock) to 162 150 by 2020 from a baseline of 141 000 in 2015.

It also intends to increase the number of commercial farmers from a 2015 baseline of more than 17 000 to over 19 000 in 2020.

Emerging commercial farmers are to be increased from more than 1 750 to over 1 850 in 2020. Land under irrigation would be increased from 170 597ha to 173 097ha.

The KZN government said it intended to increase the real value of output of the agricultural sector to R23.7 billion in 2020 from R21.3bn in 2015. The strategy aims to put the sector's value of output at R32.8bn in 2035.

Themba Mthembu, Agriculture and Rural Development MEC, said the department had embarked on a programme to find out through the land restitution programme how many farms were unproductive, so that they could work on maximising their output.