

White Commercial Farmers Won't Be Discarded: Minister

Written by Rudi Prinsloo
Sunday, 21 June 2009 06:42 -



Government has no intention of driving white commercial farmers off the land, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Tina Joemat-Pettersson said on Thursday.

"We recognise that without organised agriculture we cannot have a turnaround strategy for agriculture in this country," she told a media briefing at Parliament.

"We've been given a mandate to move from a net importer to a net exporter of food," she said.

"That will determine how many commercial farms we would require.

"We cannot become an exporter of food if we turn all our farms into subsistence farmers.

"We need commercial agriculture for our turnaround strategy. This is the group that's going to turn our country back into a net exporter.

"So we need to work with commercial agriculture. We have no option. And the goodwill exists. Why would we turn away goodwill?

"We're all patriotic citizens. The President says there's a place for all. So we'll be going against our own policies if we do not work together," Joemat-Pettersson said.

"So we are not going to drive white commercial farmers off the land."

Her department would work with the land affairs department to ensure enough land for commercial agriculture for the turnaround.

Government was also trying to bring the agricultural unions -- AgriSA, the National African Farmers Union, and the Transvaal Agricultural Union -- "closer together" to work with the ministry.

"I think there's been too much distance between them, not only distance between the state and commercial agriculture.

"So the state is only one stakeholder. I think we've overlooked the relationship between the commercial agriculture unions, organised agriculture, and the emerging agriculture unions, and those two groups have to come closer together," she said.

Source : Sapa /jk/gj
Date : 18 Jun 2009 12:09