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Agri SA warns of negative impact of load-shedding on agriculture

11TH FEBRUARY 2019 BY: TASNEEM BULBULIA - CREAMER MEDIA REPORTER

Agri SA has noted its concerns about the potential negative impact of load-shedding on the agricultural sector and the broader value chain.

In a statement on Monday, the agricultural industry association, highlighted that electricity is an important input cost for many farmers, especially farmers that depend on irrigation.

It indicated that the agricultural sector had spent about R146-billion on intermediate goods and services in 2017/18, of which electricity amounted to R7-billion, or 5%.

“Load-shedding will have an impact on irrigation-reliant and energy-intensive industries like the horticulture, dairy, poultry, grains and agroprocessing industry,” Agri SA Centre of Excellence: Economics and Trade chairperson **Nicol Jansen** warned.

“The negative impact affects producers, as well as the end consumer, as these subsectors play a vital role towards ensuring South Africa’s food security. Over 25% of the country’s food is produced by irrigation-reliant and energy-intensive industries.”

Agri SA had a meeting with Eskom on January 22, to discuss possible avenues to mitigate the negative impact of load-shedding on agriculture.

Within the context of food security, Agri SA requested Eskom to, at least, exclude agriculture from Stage 1 load shedding.

However, Eskom indicated that this would not be possible as agriculture is not serviced by a dedicated network and that other stakeholders are similarly affected by load-shedding.

Load-shedding can affect irrigation activities directly in terms of load-shedding experienced by farmers who cannot use their electric pumps during their access window to water; and/or indirectly by the load-shedding of key irrigation scheme pump stations.

In the latter case, a farmer may have access to electricity, but the irrigation scheme pump stations may be affected by load-shedding or vice versa.

To resolve this specific coordination problem, Agri SA's provincial members will engage with the Eskom representatives in their respective provinces, to identify key irrigation scheme pump stations and how the load-shedding of these key pump stations can be minimised.

Agri SA plans to continue to monitor the load-shedding situation and actively engage with Eskom to minimise the potential negative impact on agriculture. 🇷🇷

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