



18.0 - AGRICULTURE POLICY

18.1 - Agricultural Production

- The growth in population, especially in the last five decades, has outstripped the increase in real agricultural production. This aspect needs serious consideration for the future.
- If we allow the current surplus to decline into a shortfall, the cost to the average South African will be considerable. This situation will result in greater amounts having to be spent on imported agricultural produce.
- An ABSA survey of the agricultural sector highlights the fact that South Africa sells its agricultural produce internationally. These sales are in markets where the levels of agricultural subsidisation are substantially higher than in South Africa. This in turn has meant that domestic price increases in agriculture have to be limited in order to remain internationally competitive. South Africans have benefited at the expense of the farming community.
- The ACDP in principle is not in favour of the large-scale granting of subsidies agricultural or otherwise, but wisdom has to be employed in ensuring that the necessary growth be stimulated in the agricultural sector.
- The ACDP will endeavour to encourage the necessary growth in output by employing the necessary medium to long-term incentives.

18.2 - The Impact of Agriculture on Other Economic Sectors

Of further importance to the economy is the linkage effect of the agricultural sector with other sectors.

The secondary importance of the agricultural activity must not be disregarded.

According to the ABSA survey, agricultural purchases and sales expressed as a percentage of gross agricultural income is extremely insightful. It shows that industries benefit most from agricultural spending [47.9% of gross income]. The second single largest benefit flowing from the agricultural sector goes to labour, with wages making up no less than 20.2% of gross agricultural income spending, according to records provided by the Central Statistics Services. It is clear from the above that a large part of the industrial sector is dependent on agriculture.

About 25% of our total industrial production sources basic raw material inputs from the agricultural sector. More than 60% of total gross agricultural production is delivered to the manufacturing sector for further processing. As provider of employment, the contribution of the agricultural sector is very significant. An estimated 850 000 workers are permanently employed in agriculture. Still, the need for greater levels of mechanisation in order to achieve optimal production and the rising cost of labour are the main reasons for job opportunities declining in South Africa.

18.3 - Cost Increases in Agriculture

The ACDP is concerned with the price and cost increases in agriculture, as this translates directly into higher living costs for all South Africans.

In searching for the complex factors that helps one to derive a reason for this increase, the following is to be noted:

- The total outstanding agricultural debt rose from R2 004m to R19 396m over the past 20 years – an average increase of 12% per year.
- The distribution of the debt burden is also important. In 1994 the ratio of debt to assets was estimated at 0 for 27% of farmers - i.e. 27% of farmers had no debt. For 20% of farming enterprises the ratio was below 10%; for 23% of farmers it stood at between 10% and 30%; for some 15% it was between 30% and 50%, with a further 15% worse than 50%.

It therefore appears that farmers are now paying the price of having benefited from subsidies for so long. In retrospect, it is unfair that they are being penalised by having to take loans at commercial rates when the levels have been artificially maintained through loans by institutions like the Land Bank for so long.

Currently more than a third of all financing of agricultural activity is done through commercial banks charging commercial rates.

The ACDP feels that markets should not be contrived artificially through subsidy schemes and the like but we understand the plight of the farmers - some 15 % of them have debts in excess of 50 % of their asset base.

18.4 - Additional Problems Encountered in Agriculture

Agriculture faces other serious problems.

Natural Conditions

Unstable weather conditions remain a problem.

Threatened Safety

In addition, there are aspects such as safety on farms with large numbers of farmers living under threat as a result of the ineffectiveness of the government to act strictly and effectively.

The ACDP maintains that only an objective and impartial body such as a commission consisting of a single member of each political party represented in Parliament, to investigate the links between farm murders and political affiliations, will be able to address this escalating problem. We should not tolerate the murder of innocent farmers to force them off the land no matter how the cause is justified

18.5 - ACDP Position

- The ACDP will encourage stronger links between the agricultural, mining & minerals and trade industries.
- The ACDP also believes that subsistence farming should be researched and developed as a means of families being able to provide for themselves.
- As returns on agricultural activities are limited we will facilitate research into agri-industry and promote its development.

We further maintain that Market trends must be accurately read and communicated so as to ensure that production will closely meet demand.

19.0 - ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND POLLUTION

19.1 - Ecosystem in decline

"Our grandchildren may have access to conveniences that further reduce the drudgery of everyday life, but they will also inherit a planet with less than 20% of its original forests intact, with most of the readily available freshwater already spoken for, with most of the wetlands and reef systems destroyed or degraded, and much of the arable land under plough. They will inherit a stressed atmosphere and an unwanted legacy of toxic waste in the soil and water. Missing from the estate will be countless species, most wiped out before even being catalogued by scientists." This is not the scenario that God had in mind when he gave us dominion over the Earth as read in the book of Genesis.

19.2 - Protection of the Environment

The protection and care of our environment is not only the duty of the government, but every political party and of every person in South Africa. The ACDP believes that human beings were created so as to live in harmony with nature, and that if we destroy the earth and the natural resources, we do so at our peril.

19.3 - The ACDP Position on Environmental Issues

- We would encourage balanced increases in the budget for environmental matters.
- We consider that a focus on the phenomenon of Eco-tourism can achieve the needed balance between man and nature while being contributive to job creation.
- We are in agreement with efforts to ensure that our natural assets are efficiently protected, managed and successfully promoted.
- We emphasise the need to introduce proper assessment and to obtain proper information as to the potential cost of policies, plans and projects that impact on the environment before developments are undertaken.
- The people require that the government shoulders the overreaching responsibility to monitor, manage and protect the environment as well as the health of our people.
- In order for us to balance the process of environmental conservation and developmental needs of our nation, we have to embark on a national strategic programme to combat pollution damage.

With this need for control comes the realisation that South Africa is a developing country and as such and we need to protect our interests and restrict other nations from using our shores as their dumping ground. We also need to protect ourselves from those who would despoil our environment in a manner that is prohibited in their home countries. We therefore support the imposition of hefty anti-dumping duties such as those recently levied on Asian countries. We also support strict monitoring of factories that pose health and environmental risks.

- We need to focus on the effects of mining and industry on our environment and the general health and well being of South African communities in their vicinity. In most instances the communities that live in closest proximity to the mining activities are some of our poorer citizens. Large Industries are known to be producing large volumes of health threatening pollution with impunity.
- Members of these communities depend on the mines and industries for employment and cannot "bite the hand that feeds them" by voicing their concerns. The result is that the issues of health and well being are generally not given the required degree of importance. The communities are then effectively denied their right to healthy environment.
- Our constitution states that everyone should have the right to a healthy ecological system, however the question still remains to what extent the rights of our communities are protected. Can they effectively participate in the making of decisions that impact on their environmental rights?
- No framework exists whereby the rights and interests of a person or group can be protected. They have no say as to where and when mining and industry may be allowed. Thorough consultation with all interest groups should precede the right to grant or not grant a company a license for mining or industrial development and practices.
- Although legislation in South Africa places heavy emphasis on environmental protection, not enough is being done to clamp down on the contribution by mining and industry toward the ecological degradation of some parts of our country. Provinces and Municipalities are often intimidated by the threat of mines and industries to "Move out" if reasonable but expensive controls are applied. It is felt that Bribery is a factor in some of these cases.
- Respiratory diseases and other problems created by pollution are a major often hidden expense in our Health Care budget.
- The ACDP is concerned for the region of the Eastern Cape where it is feared that mining operations must be more strictly managed, the region stands to lose substantially in tourist revenue. Illegal operations stretch throughout the province and include the digging up of river beds for building sand; large sections of unused clay quarries or pits that are left abandoned and which contributes to soil erosion and threaten to kill the spectacular and unique flora.
- The ACDP supports the projected aim of attracting more than 7 million tourists by the year 2000, however we stress the need to boost management control strategies in all regions to protect our environment against exploitative entrepreneurs.
- The ACDP is concerned about the government's lack of adequate response to the need to eradicate asbestos pollution, which is threatening the health of several of our communities. According to research, it has been found that in the Northern Province, large levels of hazardous fibre is washed into the rivers by rainwater and the waters are then used for washing and cooking.
- Action must be speedily taken to prevent damage to the health of our people and environment. We must prevent the demise of our ecology and the damage to the health of South Africans.
- An extract from the Government Green paper on an Environmental Policy for South Africa reads: "Traditionally, offences committed in terms of environmental legislation have not been viewed as crimes, or moral wrongs. However, in order to secure sustainable use of environmental resources and protect the well being of citizens this perception must change. Therefore punishment of environmental crimes will reflect the gravity with which the degradation and abuse of the environment is considered."

19.4. - The Need for Environmental Training in South Africa

Due the current decline in the ecosystem, the ACDP is very aware of the position stated in the recent White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa (July 1997):

"Conservation and sustainable use of environmental resources and their protection depends on changed behaviour by all individuals, households, and private and public institutions. These changes must affect processes of resource extraction, spatial development, appropriate and clean production, waste minimisation and pollution control strategies in order to guarantee a higher quality of life for all."

In order to make the required improvements in environmental management in South Africa, a strong ethic and programme of environmental education and training will be required.