

AGRI SA

WATERKONFERENSIE

WATERBENUTTING EN VOEDSELSEKERHEID: BELEID EN PRAKTYK

11 AUGUSTUS 2010

UITKOMS/VERWAGTINGE

Agri SA het by sy kongres in Oktober 2009 'n beleidsdokument verbandhoudend met 'n *'geïntegreerde benadering tot omgewingsaangeleenthede vir volhoubare landbouproduksie'* aanvaar. Voortspruitend hieruit het Agri SA gefokus op die agteruitgang van die waterhulpbronne as gevolg van besoedeling wat potensieel 'n ernstige bedreiging vir voedselsekuriteit en voedselveiligheid inhou.

Die druk op die waterhulpbronne as gevolg van primêre-, landbou-, mynbou- en industriële gebruik het sodanig verhoog dat die beskikbaarheid en kwaliteit hiervan onder ernstige verdenking is en potensieel gevare vir die omgewing en die gesondheid van mens en dier inhou, asook die uitvoerstatus van landbouprodukte in gedrang kan bring. Die probleme rondom waterkwaliteit word vererger deur swak of geen dienslewering op plaaslike regeringsvlak en gebrekkige sanitasiegeriewe is vir 'n groot deel van die bevolking ontoereikend, dit bestaan glad nie, of is nie funksioneel nie en rou-riool beland gevolglik op 'n groot skaal in riviere en strome. Oorhoofse gesag en beheer van die betrokke staatsdepartemente om toe te sien dat plaaslike owerhede aan hul mandaat uitvoering gee, ontbreek.

Die voorlopige bevindinge van die Waternavorsingskommissie (WNK) se ondersoek '*A Quantitative Investigation into the Link between Irrigation Water Quality and Food Safety*', dui op vlakke van biologiese besoedeling van Suid-Afrika se waterhulpbronne wat die Wêreldgesondheidsorganisasie (WHO) se minimum vereistes vir voedselveiligheid oorskry.

Dit is ook 'n kommerwekkende verskynsel dat mynbou-aktiwiteite voorrang bo die landboubenutting van grond geniet en dikwels nie aan die vereistes wat omgewingswetgewing stel, voldoen nie. Die gevolg is dat die landboupotensiaal van grond permanent benadeel word met waterbesoedeling as aanvullende resultaat. Die omgewingskoste wat hieruit spruit word ten laste gelê van ander partye as dié wat in die mynbou-aktiwiteite 'n belang het.

Hierbenewens is Suid-Afrika – veral weens sy steenkoolgedrewe elektrisiteitsopwekking – een van die lande wat die meeste kweekhuiskasse per capita vrystel wat uiteraard die potensieel gevare verbonde aan klimaatsverandering bevorder.

Kommer bestaan by omgewingsbewustes dat die regering oorhoofs in gebreke bly om omgewingsverwante kwessies holisties aan te spreek asook oor die oënskynlike gebrek aan die koördinerende van regeringsbeleid op interdepartementele vlak. Die energiekrisis het ook leemtes uitgewys op die vlak van effektiewe dienslewering, beplanning, kapasiteit, kundigheid en finansiering. Die bedreiging van die omgewing is egter veel groter in omvang, maar ongelukkig meer 'onsigbaar' vir die onmiddellike. Die gevolglike potensiële katastrofiese gevolge wat dit vir die omgewing oor die medium- en langtermyn inhou, indien die kwessies soos besoedeling nie betyds en effektief aangespreek word nie, is moeilik kwantifiseerbaar maar grondig moontlik.

Die Konferensie beveel aan dat:

- Die langtermyn beskikbaarheid en aanvaarbare kwaliteit van water verseker moet word;
- Die Nasionale Beplanningskommissie versoek moet word om waterkwaliteit en die effektiewe benutting daarvan as 'n strategiese prioriteit van die regering te aanvaar.
- Die Nasionale Beplanningskommissie daarop sal fokus om koördinasie tussen staatsdepartemente ten opsigte van die beleidsopptrede gerig op waterbeskikbaarheid en -kwaliteit te bewerkstellig.
- Die ontwikkelingspotensiaal (gereserveerde besproeiingsgrond) wat beskikbaar is om opkomende besproeiingsboere te vestig optimaal benut moet word.
- Nuut gevestigde besproeiingsboere ondersteun moet word deur toepaslike bystandskemas wat insluit pasgemaakte finansiering en mentorskappe.
- Regsekerheid verkry word oor die toepassing van die Nasionale Waterwet, verbandhoudend met wateroordragte en swart ekonomiese bemagtiging.
- Die stelsel van navorsingskoördinerende met die oog op maksimum doelmatigheid nagegaan moet word.
- Daar met kommer kennis geneem word van die ernstige probleme met waterkwaliteit en dat praktiese oplossings soos regrukaksies van rioolwerke by plaaslike owerhede deur privaatinisiatief (kundigheid en finansiering) ondersteun word.
- Die impak van waterbesoedeling op die landbou by wyse van gevallestudies en verdere navorsing aangetoon en oplossings daarvoor daadwerklik met beleidmakers ooreengekom word.
- Die resultate van studies wat reeds gedoen is onder beleidmakers se aandag gebring word.
- Die Departement van Landbou, Bosbou en Visserye versoek word om die voorgename besproeiingsbeleid te finaliseer.

- Die taakgroep soos vermeld deur die Minister van Waterwese, om haar te adviseer oor waterbesoedeling, watermeting, waterbesparing, wateraanvraagbestuur en watergebruikstariewe dringend gefinaliseer word.
- Die hersiening van die *'Integrated Resource Plan'* (IRP) van die Departement van Energie wat alternatiewe energiebronne en spesifiek die vervanging van steenkool as grondstof vir elektrisiteitsopwekking op die langtermyn moet oorweeg, spoedig voltooi moet word.
- Landbou se vermoë om hernieubare energie-opwekking te ontsluit, maksimaal benut moet word.
- Koste van besoedeling, gebasseer op wetenskaplike analises, volledig vir die rekening van die besoedelaars geinternaliseer sal word
- Agri SA 'n volledige analise sal maak van die redes waarop Catchment Management Agencies (CMA's) nie as 'n privaatsektorinisiatief van die grond af kom nie.
- Die gebrekkige nasionale begroting vir waterinfrastruktuur dringend met die Minister van Waterwese en die Nasionale Tesourie opgeneem word
- Die hersiening van die National Water Resource Strategy (NWRS) sal geskied met volledige deelname van alle belanghebbendes.
- Regsoptrede teen die onwettige gebruik van water verskerp word.

AGRI SA

WATER CONFERENCE

WATER USE AND FOOD SECURITY: POLICY AND PRACTICE

11 AUGUST 2010

OUTCOMES/ EXPECTATIONS

At its congress in October 2009, Agri SA accepted a policy document entitled “*An integrated approach to environmental affairs for sustainable agricultural production*”. In light thereof, Agri SA focused on the deterioration of water resources as a result of pollution, which could potentially pose a serious threat to food security and food safety.

The pressure on water resources as a result of primary, agricultural, mining and industrial activities, has increased to such an extent that the availability and quality thereof are suspect and could hold a potential risk for the environment and the health of humans and animals, and could also undermine the export status of agricultural products. The problems around water quality are exacerbated by a lack of or poor service delivery at local government level, while sanitation facilities are inadequate for a large portion of the population, do not exist or are not functional, with raw sewerage ending up in rivers and streams. Moreover, there is also a lack of overarching authority and control by the relevant state departments to ensure that local authorities deliver on their mandate.

The preliminary findings of the Water Research Commission’s (WRC) study entitled *A Quantitative Investigation into the Link between Irrigation Water Quality and Food Safety* indicate levels of biological pollution of South Africa’s water resources which exceed the World Health Organization’s (WHO) minimum criteria for food safety.

Also of concern is the fact that mining activities enjoy priority over agricultural utilisation of land and often fail to meet the requirements set by environmental legislation. The result is that the agricultural potential of land is permanently undermined, with water pollution as a further consequence. Environmental costs resulting from this are charged to parties other than those who have ‘n interest in the mining activities.

In addition, South Africa – especially due to its coal-driven electricity generation – is one of the countries that release most greenhouse-gases per capita, which in turn gives rise to potential risks relating to climate change.

Environmentally conscious people are aware that government had generally failed to address environment-related issues holistically. They are also aware of the apparent lack of co-ordination of government policy at interdepartmental level. The energy crisis has revealed shortcomings in relation to effective service delivery, planning, expertise

and funding. Although the threat to the environment is much greater in magnitude, it is unfortunately more “invisible” for the present. The potential catastrophic consequences for the environment in the medium and long term should issues such as pollution not be effectively and timeously addressed, are difficult to quantify but most definitely possible.

The Conference recommended that:

- Long-term availability and acceptable quality of water should be ensured;
- The National Planning Commission be requested to accept water quality and the effective utilisation thereof as a strategic priority of government;
- The National Planning Commission should focus on facilitating co-ordination between state departments in terms of the respective influences on water availability and quality.
- The development potential (reserved irrigation land) for establishing emerging irrigation farmers be utilised optimally.
- Newly established irrigation farmers be assisted through appropriate aid schemes, including purpose-made funding schemes and mentorships.
- Legal certainty be sought regarding the application of the National Water Act in relation to water transfer and black economic empowerment.
- The system of research co-ordination be evaluated with a view to maximum effectiveness.
- The serious problem relating to water quality should be noted, and that practical solutions, such as a turnaround plan for sewage works, should be adopted by local authorities also using private initiative (expertise and finance).
- The impact of water pollution on agriculture should be demonstrated by way of case studies and further research, and that effective solutions be agreed upon with policy-makers.
- The results of studies already conducted be brought to the attention of policy-makers.
- The Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries be requested to finalise the intended irrigation policy.
- The task group, as mentioned by the Minister of Water Affairs, which must advise her on how to address water pollution, metering, water conservation, water demand management and water use tariffs, should be finalised urgently.
- The review of the *Integrated Resource Plan* (IRP) of the Department of Energy, which must consider alternative energy sources and specifically the replacement of coal as raw material for electricity generation in the long term, should be completed as soon as possible.
- The ability of agriculture to unlock renewable energy be optimally utilised.

- The cost of pollution, based on scientific analysis, should be fully internalised for the account of the polluters.
- Agri SA would conduct a detailed analysis of the reasons why Catchment Management Agencies (CMAs) as a private sector initiative cannot get off the ground.
- The limited national budget for water infrastructure be raised urgently with the Minister of Water Affairs and National Treasury.
- The National Water Resource Strategy (NWRS) would be reviewed with full participation by all stakeholders.
- Legal actions against unlawful water use be intensified.