

National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy starts to take shape

On the 5th of June 2019, comments were due to be submitted to the Department of Environmental Affairs on the draft National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS). The draft strategy sets out the high-level interventions which South Africa intends to implement to mitigate the effects of climate change on various sectors. On the one hand, the document is aimed at meeting the formal requirements as a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), on the other hand, it sets out the steps needed to meet the challenges of the very real effects of climate change.

Without delving into too much detail, the document does list the agricultural sector as one which is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. It is well known that climate change in South Africa will place strain on the agricultural sector. Whilst the projected effects on overall rainfall quantities may differ between provinces, an overall increase in temperatures will result in increased evapotranspiration and can result in the traditional boundaries for certain plant pathogens and parasites to shift. In addition, severe weather conditions such as intense storms, floods and droughts are set to increase in frequency.

Whilst the document captures the vulnerability of the primary agricultural sector quite well, it fails to reflect the knock-on effects that this may have on companies up and down the value chain. An increase in climate variability will likewise place greater strain on the insurance industry and increase the risk for both insurance houses and financiers alike. Shifts in climate patterns may lead to shifts in production patterns. For example, traditional grazing areas may become suitable for crop or horticultural production and vice versa. This may in turn necessitate investments by agribusinesses into logistical and storage infrastructure in areas where they do not currently exist whilst others become economically unviable if the local production fails to yield a critical mass. The draft strategy fails to recognise this interdependency but fortunately the published document is merely the first draft and can still be amended to reflect these realities.

Moreover, the document must be understood within the correct context as it is merely intended to be a high-level plan. It does however place an obligation on vulnerable sectors to develop more detailed sector adaptation plans where the upstream and downstream linkages will need to be emphasised. Be that as it may, the document still contains some cross-cutting proposals that will aid the sector. For example, it makes reference to the development of early warning systems and climate indicators that can be used to predict the effects of climate change. There is also a strong emphasis on strengthening disaster management on a national, provincial and local scale. The document also emphasises the need to mainstream climate change considerations into all

Disclaimer: Everything has been done to ensure the accuracy of this information, however, AGBIZ takes no responsibility for any loss or damage incurred due to the usage of this information.



functions performed by local and provincial government, including spatial planning, infrastructure development etc. Finally, South Africa's status as a developing nation can unlock international funding to improve our climate change resilience. The finalisation of a national strategy will be the first box that must be ticked from a UNFCCC perspective to access these funds.

An initial reading of the document does reveal a few omissions, however there will still be several opportunities for the public to make proposals into the document. The mere existence of the document should be seen as a positive step as South Africa slowly wakes up to the realities of a changing climate.