



President Jacob Zuma. Photo: Sunday Times

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State to get tougher on foreign land ownership

New measures would include "precarious tenure" for foreigners whose land would revert to the state should they not meet "certain obligations"

HOPEWELL RADEBE

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PRESIDENT [Jacob Zuma](#) yesterday announced a "new trajectory for land reform in SA", which would include "precarious tenure" for foreigners whose land would revert to the state should they not meet "certain obligations".

Addressing the Congress of South African Trade Unions central committee in Midrand yesterday, Mr Zuma revealed some details of the much- anticipated green paper on land reform .

Government officials had hinted that legislation being prepared would include limits on foreign ownership.

The review of land legislation is also aimed at ensuring that land reform results in recipients using their land and that it does not destabilise SA's food security.

Mr Zuma said the land question remained a national priority. The African National Congress's Polokwane conference decided the state should redistribute 30% of agricultural land by 2014.

"This was in response to the fact that we had only succeeded in redistributing 4% of agricultural land since 1994, while more than 80% of agricultural land remained in the hands of about 50000 white farmers and agribusinesses," he said.

"We have basically relied on the market to determine what land we buy and at what price since 1994, thereby effectively reducing government, despite its potential bargaining clout, to a price taker."

He said a three-tier land tenure system would be central to the policy proposals in the green paper:

- State and public land will be leasehold;
- Other land will be available on freehold, with limitations or ceilings on the extent of land a person or organisation can own.
- Land held by non-South Africans will be on precarious tenure , which means it "could revert back to the state should they not meet certain obligations".

Mr Zuma also announced the establishment of a valuer- general's office, which would ensure that the government and citizens were protected from "exploitation by unscrupulous players in the land market".

The green paper would propose the establishment of a Land Management Commission with powers to investigate land transactions and review title deeds. It would determine and maintain a register of who owned land.

Dr John Purchase, CEO of the Agricultural Business Chamber, said he hoped the valuer-general would work closely with the private sector and not overregulate the land market, especially when business sought to create jobs.

The principle of a land audit was plausible and credible data would help strip emotion out of discussions of land ownership and land use, he said.

Mr Zuma also proposed a Land Rights Management Board be established to regulate agri-villages to be created in terms of the New Growth Path. The board would provide legal and mediation support to farm workers .

Mr Zuma said the government will set up pilot agri-villages — collective farms for farm workers — in at least two provinces this year. The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform said yesterday Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape would be first in line .

Mr Zuma said the Land Tenure Security Bill would be introduced to Parliament this year to promote and protect the relative rights of persons working and residing on farms against the rights of farm owners. It would repeal and replace the Extension of Security of Tenure Act and the Land Reform Act.

Mr Zuma said the drastic review of land reform policy could be attributed to the fact that both the settlement of outstanding restitution claims and the redistribution of land to Africans had proceeded slowly. It was also common cause that the willing buyer, willing seller principle — the only instrument which the government had relied on for land reform since 1994 — had not yielded the desired results, he said.

"By the time we reach the centenary of the 1913 Land Act we should have gone far in redressing the pain of the past. This is in the interests of all South Africans, black and white, and in the interests of the national reconciliation process," Mr Zuma said.

radebeh@bdfm.co.za

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