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AgriSA raises alarm over Mineral Resources Amendment Bill threats

AgriSA expresses serious concern over the Draft Mineral Resources Development Amendment Bill (2025), published in May 2025 for public comment by the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources.

While the Bill purports to streamline regulation and promote inclusive economic development, its current form poses significant risks to South Africa's agricultural sector, food security, and rural sustainability.

The Bill introduces provisions that would allow artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) operations to access private agricultural land without any guidance as to how meaningful consultation should take place or on compensation requirements. This undermines constitutionally protected property rights and threatens the viability of farming operations, particularly in high-potential agricultural zones.

The absence of cumulative environmental impact assessments and enforceable rehabilitation guarantees further exposes landowners to long-term degradation without remedy.

AgriSA is deeply concerned that the Bill was not subjected to a Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA), as required by Cabinet policy. Had such an assessment been conducted, the risks to food production, water quality and rural livelihoods would have been evident.

Beyond the Bill, the broader relationship between mining and agriculture remains fraught. Fragmented permitting regimes, opaque consultation processes, and weak enforcement mechanisms continue to erode trust and compromise land-use planning. Mining activities often disrupt irrigation infrastructure, contaminate water sources, and leave behind unrehabilitated land, thereby jeopardising both current and future agricultural productivity.

AgriSA calls on government to:

- Withdraw the current Bill and subject it to a full SEIA;
- Introduce binding landowner consent for mining on zoned agricultural land;
- Align mining legislation with the Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Act (PDALA);
- Establish a single-window permitting system with integrated land-use screening; and
- Enforce cumulative environmental and water impact assessments for all mining activities.

South Africa's future depends on a balanced approach to resource development that respects the rights of farmers, protects the environment, and ensures long-term food security. AgriSA remains committed to ensuring the interests of farmers and calls on all stakeholders to impose on government the importance of a properly regulated, transparent and sustainable mining industry that can properly co-exist with agriculture.

Enquiries

Janse Rabie
076 451 9601

