



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND LAND REFORM

**RESPONSE TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS BY HON. BERNADUS
SWARTBOOI**

FEBRUARY 23, 2023
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (PARLIAMENT)
WINDHOEK

Honourable Speaker;

Honourable Members;

I rise to respond to the questions raised by Hon. Bernadus Swaartbooi, Leader of the Landless People's Movement (LPM) and thank him for the questions. I am going to answer the questions in the order they were presented.

The FIRST QUESTION IS:

“WHAT WAS THE MEASUREMENTS AND APPROACHES USED TO PURCHASE LAND FOR IRRIGATION, WHICH LAND IS UNSUITABLE FOR THE VERY PURPOSE IT WAS ACQUIRED FOR”?

Honourable Speaker,

As a transformational objective, the Government, through the Ministry Agriculture Water and Land Reform spearheaded the development of Neckartal Dam for rain water harvesting and for irrigation purposes. Land for both the construction of the dam and the irrigation phase has to be acquired. Phase I of the Project, that is, the construction of the dam has since been completed and handed over to the Government.

The next phase, the development of the Irrigation Project, entails the acquisition of land for the related water distribution infrastructure and irrigation area itself. Several farms in the proximity of the dam are earmarked to be acquired for all the related purposes of actualizing a large-scale irrigation project, such as servitude, the balancing dam, water distribution infrastructure and the irrigation area.

The engagement process with concerned land owners commenced back in 2014. Several sale agreements were reached between the Ministry and some owners of identified farms. Progress is made in this regard, and it is on the basis of the agreements reached that a total of more than 11,000 hectares have been recently acquired and to the extent financial resources were available. Consultation on the remainder of the land hectares is still ongoing.

Indeed, land acquisition is confined to and constrained by the market price of properties and guided the willing seller-willing buyer approach as provided for in the Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act of 1995 (Act No. 6 of 1995). The respective farm owners offered their farms to the Government. The farms were assessed to determine the market value/price of each property. The owners were then issued with counter offers for their respective properties which they accepted. Thereafter, Sale Agreements and other transfer documents were completed by both parties and the transactions were registered through appointed Conveyancers and transferred in the name of the Government.

Honourable Speaker,

Thus far, the Ministry acquired the following farms:

Farm Name & No	Registered Owner	Use of Land	Purchase price (inclusive transfer costs)
1.Farm Dagbreek No.420 Measuring 11033.2669 Hectares	Aurora Boerdery (Pty)Ltd	Irrigation Land- Phase 2	N\$ 10,530,824.71

		Livestock/Game Farming (resettlement)	
2. Portion 1 of the Farm Tschaunaup No. 75 Measuring 144.1603 Hectares	Roman Catholic Church	Construction of Neckartal Dam and the Holding Dam	N\$127,736.81.
3. Remainder of Portion 2 of the Farm Schlangkopf No.124 Measuring 7818.4532 Hectares And Portion 4 (a Portion of Portion 1) of the Farm Eppenau No. 123 Measuring 81.4948 Hectares	Nieswandt Properties (Pty) Ltd	Irrigation Land– Phase 2 Livestock/Game Farming (resettlement)	N\$ 7,942,527.90

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Honourable Speaker,

As regards the soil suitability, I would like to inform that the ministry conducted a feasibility study in April 2010 to determine the suitability of irrigation soils around Neckartal Dam. The study identified more than 5,000ha of irrigable land both sides of the South and North of the B4 road between Keetmanshoop and Lüderitz, east of Seeheim. The soils were classified according to a five-class system, of which only Classes 1 and 2 were considered as eligible candidates and deemed suitable for irrigation purposes. Class 3 soils were also regarded suitable but can only become suitable after a rectification of the soil's limitations which may be costly.

The soils in the area generally have a high fine sand content with a reasonable silt content, but the clay content is mostly very low. The application of gypsum may be required to prevent dispersion and suitable surface drainage will be required to prevent erosion.

The following areas of Class 1 and 2 soil were identified:

- Farm Schlangkopf : 1 830ha
- Farm Schaaplaats : 370ha
- Farm Dagbreek: 1,050ha, with another 1,000ha of Class 3 soil that may be acceptable

The total area of irrigable land is therefore estimated to be approximately 4,250ha or 85 percent of the required 5,000ha. Additional suitable areas will still have to be confirmed to ensure a 5000ha irrigation area.

The Second question QUESTION 2 is:–

“HOW WERE THE DECISIONS ARRIVED AT TO CONCLUDE THAT WASTELAND CAN BE ACQUIRED WHILE THE LACK OF RESOURCES HAS BEEN TAUTED AS AMONG THE MAIN REASONS WHY THE NECKARTAL DAM IRRIGATION SCHEME COULD NOT GET OFF FROM THE GROUND”?

Honourable Speaker,

It is incorrect to categorize the land acquired as wasteland as water distribution infrastructure and other logistics do not have to be constructed on irrigable land. As I stated earlier, our decision to acquire the said farms was guided by the technical soil suitability assessment findings. Investment in, and operation of the green schemes, entail a host of other ancillary infrastructure across the value chain for which land is needed. Hence other value chain activities such as feedlots, cold rooms and intensive animal farming could be carried out on other portions of land which a layman’s eye could regard as wasteland. As I am concluding on this question, it is important to know that the soils/ lands not suitable for irrigation today does not mean it cannot be used for other purposes in the future or to be improved to make it suitable for irrigation purpose and other land uses. Advances in land reclamation in countries not so much blessed with the best soil qualities below what is assessed at Nerkartal Dam has enabled such countries to unleash agricultural potential and realise increasing yields. We should not lower our ambition in this regard.

I am pleased to inform this August House that a budget of about N\$10 million is proposed for the Financial Year 2023/2024 to

commence with the design of the Neckartal Irrigation Scheme, thus getting a step closer to enabling the irrigation activities

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Members,

The third question is:–

“HAS THE MINISTRY NOT MADE PLANS TO USE THE VAST STATE LAND AVAILABLE ON THE SIDE OF THE NAUTE DAM, WEST OF THE NECKARTAL DAM SO THAT NOT ALL LAND WILL BE PURCHASED BEFORE THE IRRIGATION COMMENCE”?

In this regard Honour Speaker, I wish to inform the Honourable Member that the ministry has already acquired farm Dagbreek which lies West of Naute dam. This land would fall in the development phase, because there is no necessary infrastructure at this stage. While it is not clear which land the Honourable member is referring to, suffice to state that the ministry will continue to investigate the potential of the land in the proximity of the Naute Dam for future expansion as resources become available. However, I must caution that the Naute Dam lies upstream from the Neckartal balancing dam, rendering the efficiency of pumping water upstream a costly proposition and notwithstanding the soil quality in that area.

Honourable Speaker,

The last question is

“WHEN AND HOW WILL THE IRRIGATION PROCESS START AND HOW WILL THE PEOPLE OF //KHARAS BE ACCOMMODATED IN THIS IRRIGATION SCHEME”?

The process of developing the Neckartal Irrigation Project has commenced already for which 11,000 hectares of land is recently acquired. As stated in the budget proposal that the Honourable Minister of Finance and Public Enterprises laid before the House, some resources are available for the design stage of the scheme.

As part of the question, the Honourable Member asked how the envisaged scheme will benefit the residents of the //Kharas region. I would like to inform that, the Green scheme policy is clear on the modality and participation of Namibians in the Green Scheme program, including the people from //Kharas Region. The development of Neckartal Irrigation Project falls under *Farming Model 5.4 of the Green Scheme Policy: State development in the commercial Area (On Land with Title Deeds)*. In this regard, out of 5 000ha, a designate portion of land will be earmarked for the development of Medium and Small Scale Farms component which will be allocated to medium and small holder farmers. Interested agro-entrepreneurs from the//Kharas Region and other regions of the country could participate at the time of competitive allocation. While the mode of operation may be different and enhanced, it is, prudent to realize that the Neckartal Irrigation Scheme will be a national asset, like other state-owned schemes as Ndonga Linena, Orip, Etunda, Naute and the Hardap Scheme, hence the pattern is the one which mirrors an inclusive One Namibian, One Nation. At full operation, the Neckartal Irrigation Scheme is expected to create great latitude of value locally through, among others, jobs, incomes, food security and product diversification.

Thank you