

'Regional disaster' warning as S.Africa suffers drought

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A girl collects water from a puddle in Nongoma, north west of Durban on November 9, 2015

Five of South Africa's nine provinces have been declared drought disaster areas for agriculture following one of the driest rainy seasons in decades, the government said Friday, warning of a potential "regional disaster."

Agriculture Minister Senzeni Zokwana said the drought had affected all provinces in South Africa and that exports would be restricted as a result, hitting neighbouring countries.

"We have seen cattle dying, we have seen plants withering, we don't want to see people dying," Zokwana told reporters in Pretoria.

"Our production has contracted by 17 percent on a quarter-on-quarter basis mostly due to [drought conditions](#) in 2015."

Although the country has enough stocks of the staple maize grain to last until next year, it failed to produce enough to export to Botswana, Swaziland and other neighbours.

"The average maize yield (is) the lowest since 2008," said Zokwana, adding that prices would inevitably rise.

"This drought and low maize (production) will have an impact on the SADC (southern African) neighbours. This may become a regional disaster if it persists."

The worst-hit provinces include Northwest, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Mpumalanga, the home of Kruger National Park game reserve.

The [drought](#) has also placed a strain on water supplies across the country, affecting around 2.7 million households or 18 percent of the population, according to Water Minister Nomvula Mokonyane.



The carcass of a dead cow lies in the dry bed of Black Umfolozi River, in Nongoma district

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