

# Prolonged power outage in Western Cape

By Jyothi Laldas | 9 February 2024 | 1:54 pm

*Eskom said on Sunday (4 February) that it had experienced a major network fault as gale-force winds and downpours caused extensive damaged to the Laingsburg/Touwsrivier 132kV power lines, affecting several Western Cape towns in the Central Karoo, Garden Route and Overberg regions.*



On Wednesday, Western Cape Premier Alan Winde and Local Government, Environmental Affairs, and Development Planning Minister Anton Bredell gave an update on the coordinated efforts to restore electricity.

They were joined by Colin Deiner, head of the Provincial Disaster Management Centre (PDMC) and Eskom's general manager for the Cape coast cluster, Mbulelo Yedwa.

Yedwa indicated that the utility is aiming to fully restore power to all affected communities in the Karoo by 15 February. The towns of Fraserburg, Ladismith,

Laingsburg, Leeu Gamka, Matjiesfontein, Merweville, Prince Albert, Roggeveld and Swartberg are still without power.

Daniel Johnson, spokesperson for the Western Cape's Department of Agriculture, said the prolonged electricity disruption in the Central and Little Karoo would have far-reaching impacts beyond just the agriculture sector, as telecoms, health services, education and the economy were all affected.

"Some of the most pressing challenges currently impacting farming and rural households, communities and businesses are the availability of water for consumption, sewage and irrigation, as well as the availability of healthy food. Food security, environmental health and economic losses are major risks facing the sector."

Johnson said if the power outage was not resolved soon, the impact on the agriculture sector would be severe, affecting day-to-day farming operations, packhouses, refrigeration storage facilities, and agri-processing plants.

"This will have an adverse effect on the quality and freshness of produce which is meant not only for local consumption but will also affect the quality of export produce. The extreme heat conditions in the Karoo and Little Karoo might result in crop losses and could potentially lead to job losses affecting agri workers.

"The focus of the agriculture department is to ensure that the risks facing the sector are reduced and mitigated. The department's rural development team is working with other departments to assess and verify any humanitarian relief needs within the affected population."

Commenting on the outage, Jannie Strydom, chief executive of Agri Western Cape, said Eskom's recovery operation in the Central Karoo was well underway and Agri Western Cape had been in contact with farmers who were affected by power outages.

"The situation at this stage is quite dire, but all relevant role-players are working to resolve the situation as soon as possible. Disaster management and the various departments and municipalities are supporting critical areas with generators and humanitarian needs."

