



forestry, fisheries & the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 187 {CW246E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 8 OF 2025

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Ms H S Boshoff (Mpumalanga: DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

- (1) With reference to the environmental impact assessments being conducted before granting permission for the removal of indigenous trees in the Musina Makhado Special Economic Zone (MMSEZ) (details furnished), (a) how will the Government ensure that these newly planted trees survive and restore lost biodiversity, (b) where will the 5000 replacement trees be planted and (c) what measures are in place to ensure their long-term protection;
- (2) (a) what (i) budget and (ii) resources have been allocated for monitoring the success of the replanting programme and (b) how will his department ensure that the estimated 10 000 Baobabs that are included in the pending application are not unnecessarily destroyed;
- (3) Whether any plans exist to relocate endangered trees rather than remove them entirely; if not, why not; if so, (a) what plans and (b) what are the further relevant details;
- (4) Whether his department has considered any alternative conservation strategies as Baobabs are crucial for local ecosystems and tourism; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (5) Given the MMSEZ's location within the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve, what is his department's strategy to ensure that the zone will not cause irreversible damaged to protected ecosystems?

187. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- 1) a) The species are checked against several factors, for example, climatic changes and water availability, before being introduced to the receiving environment. The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) further analysed the external factors, such as vandalism, prior to the tree-planting activities. These activities align with the work that the DFFE does in line with its function of greening.

b) A total of 3 000 replacement trees were received, with 1 500 trees planted in Mauluma village, Tshikwarani village, and Musina Nancefield between July and September 2024. These trees were planted within households and public institutions. The remaining 1 500 trees were received during January 2025 and planted on 31 January 2025, within households and street avenues in the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, Mpumalanga province. The remaining 2 000 trees will be donated within the 2025/2026 Financial Year.

c) Trees are planted within households and public institutions to ensure that they can be monitored and cared for either by departmental officials or by the respective households and public institutions. As part of their duties, the departmental officials will monitor the trees to ensure their survival.
- 2) a) i) Monitoring is an integral part of the DFFE's functions, and the budget allocated for the greening activities within the DFFE covers for this work.
ii) Resources include human capacity (e.g. foresters), state vehicles, and other necessary equipment, which are utilised to conduct monitoring operations.

b) The DFFE is not aware of any pending application for 10 000 Baobab trees.
- 3) There are currently no plans to relocate endangered trees. In terms of the current arrangement, this factor was not considered during decision making, and therefore, no plans exist for relocation.
- 4) Baobab conservation and protected areas were set aside during the site inspection to ensure the conservation of the Baobab species. These areas were incorporated into the conservation map for the project footprint.

- 5) Section 3(3)(b) of the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No. 84 of 1998) (NFA) indicates that a minimum of each woodland type should be conserved, and that forests must be developed and managed to conserve the biodiversity, ecosystem services, and habitats. All licences received in terms of the NFA are assessed and evaluated in this regard to ensure that protected species and the surrounding environment are conserved. It is expected that the mitigation measures mentioned before, including the reduction of the development footprint, will assist in reducing the anticipated negative impacts on the protected ecosystems.

Regards



DR D T GEORGE, MP

MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 15/3/2025