Green paper on land reform criticised

Colleen Dardagan

WHILE officials are upbeat on the consultation process linked to the green paper on land reform, some civil society organisations have slammed it, saying it flies in the face of the constitution.

Mdu Shabane, director-general of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, said he was happy with the consultation process which had been extended by a month to the end of December.

"We are still waiting for some submissions. The process was very interactive. We didn't just rely on people submitting papers in writing. It was a very good exercise and we are quite happy. In fact many who were quite sceptical about the paper are now seeing the proposals in a very different way."

But Afriforum, which submitted its comments last week, believes the paper will undermine economic prosperity and render constitutional rights null and void.

Kallie Kriel, in charge of Afriforum's economic affairs, said the body had rejected the entire document.

"There are specific issues in the paper which are totally unacceptable and cause grave concerns, such as the severe limitations it places on private ownership, as well as government determining the value of land," he said.

Mike Cowling, of the Association for Rural Advancement, said the association also had dismissed the paper.

"Our main criticism was that it didn't deal with the real issues facing land reform. The biggest problem is security of tenure and the paper did not deal with that at all. It is really superficial and meaningless," he said.

Kwanalu vice-chairman Robin Barnsley said if the government had done its job properly in the first place and followed what was laid down in the original white paper, this green paper would not have been necessary.

"This is a small attempt to try and fix the mess," he said.

But Mike Mlengana, head of the year-old African Farmers' Association, said: "I hate it when people see politics when there is no politics. That's just embarrassing, that's the past. The green paper is just the start of a process."