

## 'Lack of planning for wildfires is clearly evident'

The Northern Cape agriculture sector needs to sharpen up its plans for the mitigation, identification and management of wildfires in the province, according to Jahn Hohne, CEO of Ekapa Mining in Kimberley.

As a major landowner in the district, Ekapa had taken an active role in the battle to contain the recent wildfires, during which thousands of hectares of land had been destroyed in a widespread area between Kimberley and Hopetown.

At the time of going to print, a total of 465 000ha had been destroyed by wildfires in the Northern Cape so far this year.

During a webinar hosted by *Landbouweekblad*, Hohne said a lack of preparedness for, and coordination during, wildfires had come to the fore during those that occurred in the province in September.

He said these issues had been underpinned by the fact that hundreds of vehicles had descended on the scene,

"chasing the flames without sufficient planning and synchronisation".

"Because support from state entities, such as local fire brigades, and the South African Defence Force is no longer an option, landowners and farmers must put plans in place in accordance with the National Veld and Forest Act to [enable them to be] better equipped to act against veld fires in future," he added.

In addition, Hohne said the formation of fire protection associations (FPAs) was

both vitally important and a requirement of the law.

He cautioned the agriculture industry to ensure, as a matter of urgency, that FPA protocols were in line with the legal requirements in order to manage fires effectively, and that they were supported by the structures provided for in the Act.

According to him, this was vital not only for effective fire management, but also for the preservation of human life and the prevention of accidents. – *Annelie Coleman*