MINISTER’S SPEAKING NOTES

AGRI MEGA WEEK

“FOR INTERNATIONAL FOOD SECURITY”

AGRI MEGA PARK, BREDARSDORP, OVERBERG DISTRICT, WESTERN CAPE

17 SEPTEMBER 2015
It is a great privilege to be invited to this Agri Mega Week event. The event is relevant and fitting because the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) is fully committed to the growth and development of all producer categories: subsistence, smallholder and commercial. Furthermore, DAFF continues to prioritise food security as one of the key focus areas together with job creation and agriculture’s contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Food security is a constitutional right, which all citizens are entitled to. As stated in Chapter 2, Section 27.1(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, every citizen has the right to have access to sufficient food and water. In terms of the Constitution the State is compelled to take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources to attain the realisation of the rights spelled in the Bill of Rights.

In an effort to address food security Cabinet approved the National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security in 2013. As a mechanism to facilitate a system that ensures that everyone has food on his or her table. We introduced Fetsa Tlala Food Production initiative aimed at increasing food accessibility, affordability and availability by putting 1 million hectares of underutilized land under production by the 2018/19 production season with focus on increase of Maize production.

We want lasting partnerships to work together in fulfilling our priority to increase the number of individuals who are food secure. At this point, I call upon our commercial farmer partners with small-scale farmers and communities to work together with
Government, feed our nation, create jobs. We must find a synergy between commercial farmers and communities.

The 2014 General Household Survey (GHS) that was released in May 2015, states that the percentage of individuals who experienced hunger decreased from 29.3% in 2002 to 13.4% in 2013 and further declined to 13.1% in 2014.

Above 7 million people currently experience hunger, meaning adults and children went hungry often because there was not enough food in their households. The partnership I am calling for, where you mentor young South Africans, is achievable. My call today is for farmers to work with us as Government. We need to debate to see how, Government can assist commercial and small-scale farmers. We must Look at, how government can compensate established farmers in mentoring new entrants. We need to ensure that as we work with small-scale farmers we don't Alienate the established commercial farmers.

Collaboration and joint ventures are necessary towards the attainment of government efforts in eradicating poverty. Partnerships are critical in achieving the objectives set out in the National Development Plan (NDP) which highlights the importance of rural areas which are spatially, socially and economically well integrated across municipal, district, provincial and regional boundaries where residents have economic growth, food security and jobs as a result of agrarian transformation and infrastructure development programmes.

Directives within the NDP guided the overarching framework that informed the Medium Term Strategic Frameworks (MTSF) priorities, which steer service delivery initiatives over the next 5 years, in this case from 2014/15 to 2018/19.

Six policy imperatives, which are the focus of the current MTSF period, are:

- Improved land administration and spatial planning for integrated development in rural areas
- Sustainable land reform (agrarian transformation)
• Improved food security
• Smallholder farmer development and support (technical, financial, infrastructure) for agrarian transformation
• Increased access to quality basic infrastructure and services, particularly in education, healthcare and public transport in rural areas
• Growth of sustainable rural enterprises and industries characterised by strong rural-urban linkages, increased investment in agro-processing, trade development and access to markets and financial services– resulting in rural job creation.

The NDP further mandates that by 2030 agriculture should create close to 1 million new jobs, contributing significantly to reducing overall unemployment.

Critical to the success of all these initiatives are strong and secure partnerships.

The approval of the Agriculture Policy Action Plan (APAP) has put an emphasis on the need to partner with larger organisations such as Agri Mega. APAP seeks to promote labour absorption and expand market sharing through coordinated strategic interventions that target increased value-chain efficiencies and competitiveness. It doesn't help us to produce crops and not be able to process it. We need processing facilities.

Besides observing the decline of the commercial sector, the smallholder sector has not grown with some viewing smallholder support as waste of resources due to their vast challenges. However, smallholder producers tend to use labour-intensive methods rather than capital-intensive ones, and as such, if properly capacitated, smallholder agriculture tends to absorb more labour and use land more intensively. This will contribute to the fulfillment of the New Growth Path (NGP), which has the longer-term target of growing the smallholder sector by 300 000 by the year 2020, as well as creating 145 000 new jobs in agro-processing and upgrade conditions for 660 000 farm workers. It is essential to gear smallholders so that ultimately they can meet a large share of the food requirements.
Empowered smallholder producers will fulfill the food requirements of a larger community in two ways: first, by ensuring a higher and more stable income to a larger number of small-scale farmers; and second, by increasing the amount of locally produced food, which can outcompete food produced by farmers further away, and thus reduce the cost to the poor people in rural areas of accessing a sufficient diet. This has to be achieved amidst the known smallholder challenges which include the lack of sufficient support with South Africa’s Producer Support Estimate currently estimated at 3.2%, versus 4.6% for Brazil, 7.1% for the US, and 18.6% for the OECD average. Our Governments in Africa have pledged that 10% of our budgets must be spent on agriculture. Improved producer support will create an enabling environment and advance comparative advantage. We need to find ways in which government can support our farmers so they can compete with their international counterparts who receive funding from their governments.

DAFF has strategic interventions implemented to realise the vision of eliminating skewed participation in the sector and ensuring food security such as:

- The Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) aimed at providing post settlement support to the targeted beneficiaries, youth included, of land reform and to other producers who have acquired land through private means and are, for example, engaged in value-adding enterprises domestically or involved in export.

- Ilima/Letsema is aimed at supplying all if not most of the agricultural inputs.

- LandCare programme - a community based and government supported approach to the sustainable management and use of agricultural natural resources. The overall goal of LandCare is to optimise productivity and sustainability of natural resources so as to result in greater productivity, food security, job creation and better quality of life for all.

We need to look into the safety of farmers. We need to feel the pain that farmers feel when sleeping alone with their families. We must start by working together and loving those who work for us; in agriculture we need unity. We must send our kids to
schools so they can understand the importance of agriculture and appreciate that our future needs farmers.

It is important that we produce quality products that we can export to international markets. We are engaging markets like China, Russia and others so that you can sell your products. We need to work on processing our produce, agro-processing is key in order for us to realise the full value chain.

In conclusion: We need to work together to transform the agriculture sector in our country. We must do more to introduce and support the youth and women in Agriculture. We want to see more women and young farmers.

On the 17 October in Mbizana, Eastern Cape we will be celebrating World Food Day and you are urged to participate in this selfless initiative either by donating food items or attending. We cannot be an island as a country, we must share and exchange expertise. There is more space for us to do more. We must never undermine the importance of quality as we produce.

I am please to have been invited in this expo. We must work together and produce more. Agro-processing is the way to go.

Ek is baie bly om hier te wees.

I thank you