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LAND REFORM

GNU big-hitters aligned over agriculture

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As the dust settles after the May 29 elections and the seventh administration begins its term, the next step will be a realignment of policy ideas under the newly formed government of national unity (GNU). Regarding agriculture, the big political parties in the GNU – the ANC, DA and IFP – appear to be broadly aligned.

The ANC has been governing under the vision of the National Development Plan (NDP), which was recently distilled into the agriculture & agro-processing master plan. The aim is to grow an inclusive, competitive agricultural economy.

The approach is through deep-dive value chain and commodity corridors in various regions of SA. Implementation of the plan has been limited so far, but the enthusiasm for it among big stakeholders in the

sector remains high.

The missing element is ensuring buy-in by government officials in provincial and local government who are key to implementing a plan that is centred on collaboration with the private sector.

The ANC government's agricultural policy included the release of nearly 3-million hectares of state land to beneficiaries with title deeds. Indeed, months before the end of her term as agriculture, land reform & rural development minister, Thoko Didiza began

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the process of releasing land with title deeds.

The DA's agricultural approach is hardly any different. In its 2024 election manifesto the party stated that the party would "empower South Africans through land ownership by protecting private ownership of land as outlined in section 25 of the constitution".

The DA says it will "utilise government-owned land and prioritise the use of land owned by the government, focusing on the vast tracts held by the department of agriculture, forestry & fisheries and the department of public works & infrastructure."

"The DA government will focus on underutilised state-owned land for land reform projects, including housing, farming, and providing land access for South Africans."

Furthermore, the DA will "improve post-settlement support by strengthening the institutional capacity of



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provincial structures responsible for post-settlement support and establishing specialised units within provincial departments which are solely mandated with providing pre- and post-settlement support".

It will "prioritise land reform in the budget with feasible project plans and will commit increased funding to land reform, specifically emphasising post-settlement support for beneficiaries".

Such ideas are broadly aligned with the NDP, the agriculture & agro-processing master plan, and indeed various

government-led initiatives such as the blended finance instrument.

The IFP's position on agriculture and land reform is aligned with the ideas of the ANC and DA. The IFP says government must "ensure significant state support, especially for new entrants into the agriculture industry".

This work is already being implemented through the blended finance instrument the department is rolling out in partnership with financial institutions.

The IFP further argues for partnerships, stating that the government must "promote the involvement of both private and public sectors in the country's agricultural development processes".

This partnership approach is at the heart of the agriculture & agro-processing master plan. IFP policy is slightly more ambiguous regarding land policy, stating in its manifesto

that it will "continue to support the policy of land expropriation with reasonable compensation".

There is much alignment in the IFP's agricultural views with those of the ANC and DA, so there should not be many areas of contention as the parties in the GNU work to establish a unified policy agenda.

The ministers of agriculture and land reform & rural development should be able to satisfy the key objectives of all these political parties. The essential programme, which would be the starting point, is the master plan, paired with the continuous release of state land to beneficiaries with title deeds, and blended finance in collaboration with Land Bank and other financial institutions.

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