

Remarks by the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson at the Agri Limpopo Conference

13 August 2024

Programme Director;

The Minister of Agriculture, Honourable John Steenhuisen;

The President of Agri South Africa, Jaco Minnaar

The President of Agri Limpopo, Piet Engelbrecht

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Afternoon!

May I take this opportunity to acknowledge our new Minister of Agriculture in the Government of National Unity and the Leader of my political home, the Honourable John

Steenhuisen, for the role he has played in renewing faith in our agriculture sector and in the future of the country.

Through his leadership, we are embarking on a new era of agriculture in South Africa, and our country has a new hope after he joined hands with other political parties to help the GNU and rescue our country. I am sure we will hear about it throughout this conference.

I consider this to be an important gathering taking place at a very opportune time. We in the Government of National Unity are beginning to contemplate new beginnings and map out new trajectories in this journey to deliver inclusive economic growth that delivers jobs and reduces poverty in society.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There can be no doubt that to deliver on the apex priorities that the 7th Administration has set out, partnerships are going to be key, especially with committed stakeholders such as your good selves.

And, it is the commitment of the Government of National Unity (GNU) to ignite agriculture production in South Africa, to grow our economy.

The Government of National Unity represents the biggest opportunity since the dawn of democracy to reset South Africa and restore it to a path of prosperity.

It is the GNU that has practical and implementable plans, and a willingness to work together across sectors of society, to implement the reforms necessary to grow our economy, create jobs and improve the lives of millions of South Africans,

En, oor die land heen, is dit boerdery en boerewat die steunpilaar is van ons nasie se oorlewing.

I want to tell you that I love farmers and I love that they feed our country. You are the unsung heroes of our country! You continue to defy the odds and trying times, and we collectively owe you an enormous debt of gratitude as you play your part in building our country from your fields and barns.

That is why we should build on the successes of places such as the Western Cape to expand support for our farmers, to help grow this important sector.

The province boasts an 83% success rate in Land Reform, compared to a 90% failure rate nationwide, according to an independent report.

It is not by coincidence that agriculture is booming in the province, but is the result of a government which knows that farmers are the backbone of our economy.

The Government of National Unity can replicate the work the Western Cape Government has done alongside restoring the rule of law in our rural communities to ensure that farmers and farm workers can sleep safely at night.

At the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, we have adopted a mantra of “Let's Build South Africa”. We are determined to see farmers and all other producers in the agricultural value chain benefitting meaningfully from what we do as a department, especially in the infrastructure space.

As Public Works and Infrastructure, we are the custodians of all the State's Immovable Assets including State Land. We consider agriculture as critical for the revitalization of rural economies such as here in Limpopo. Our duty as the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure is to ensure that we support the sector by making available underutilised land for production activities, and to farmers who have never had the opportunity to own land.

The DPWI plays a role in the release of land to support and boost agricultural output. In the previous financial year, the DPWI earmarked to release a total of 10 126 hectares of land for various purposes. This included human settlements, agriculture, social development and Eskom. To date, about 109,000 hectares of land have been released.

Here in Limpopo, to date, the Department has released 18 properties measuring 1490 hectares. But we must do more!

We have been releasing land from the Department property portfolio to the Department of Agriculture as well as Land Reform, pieces of land for socio-economic development

purposes. We pledge and commit to releasing more land parcels to stimulate the growth of the agricultural sector in the coming years.

We support farmers by leasing out state-owned land for agricultural purposes. Some agricultural land was available for leasing to emerging farmers and this should be increased.

It is time that we start making small farmers big business in South Africa, a goal my department is committed to contribute to achieving.

Dit is tyd dat ons klein boere groot besigheidmaak in Suid-Afrika - 'n doel wat my department oorreed is om by the dra om te bereik.

Some of the land my department leases are for farming communities to erect communication masts and towers. Departments such as Defence and SAPS use radio coverage over the total surface of South Africa in its fight against crime, including farm murders.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Agriculture holds vast potential to uplift many poor South Africans out of poverty through increased food production, vibrant economic activity, and job creation.

We must all combine our efforts and grow this important sector so that we can make an impact and a positive contribution to food availability, employment and economic growth. It is time that government, business and stakeholders work together to ensure that all underutilised land is brought into production and made available to communities and farmers. No land must lie fallow when God has given us the opportunity to work the ground that he has blessed us with.

Issues of infrastructure establishment and rehabilitation are major issues affecting farmers, especially including Diptanks, Irrigation, Animal handling facilities, Boreholes, Grazing Camps, Dams: scooping and Fencing of arable lands. These will be areas we will look to work together on with the Minister of Agriculture and identify support interventions.

Maar, ons moet nie net praat nie. Ons moetdoen.

This is a service delivery-oriented meeting of minds. Accordingly, our focus must be trained on achieving results. We need to reach new export markets by increasing our production in agriculture and it all starts with working the land.

Let us emerge from this gathering with clear solutions to ignite agriculture investment in South Africa.

Let us take advantage of the whole agriculture value chain and turn our land into sites of production that bring food security in the form of more available goods, but also jobs.

We commit to using our land release programme to support the kickstarting of a major revolution in our agriculture for South Africa.

Together, Let's Build SA