

**SPEECH FOR THE DEPUTY MINISTER ON THE OCCASION ON THE
TRADE FAIR EVENT AS ARRANGED BY AFASA AND THE EU**

Programme Director

EU Commissioner for Trade, Ms Cecilia Malmstrom

EU Ambassador, Mr Marcus Cornaro

Head of Trade of the EU delegation, Massimo de Luca

EU delegation, both from Brussels and Pretoria

President of AFASA, Dr Vuyokazi Mahlathi,

Cristina Miranda Gozalves, Deputy Head of Unit, DG Agriculture, EU
Commission

Director General: Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries,
Mike Mlengana

Joyene Isaacs, Head of Department, Western Cape Department of
Agriculture

Richard Schouten, Director GroentenFruitHuis, Nederlands

CEO's of Industries and Associations

Distinguished members of the industry

Farmers, Ladies & Gentlemen

It is an honour for me to be addressing you just after the President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered his State of the Nation Address (SONA) of 2019. I recall that in his State of the Nation Address 2019, the President emphasized the need to further develop our agricultural sector to:

Unlock the potential to create jobs and economic growth.

Enhance our food security and attract more investments.

Expand the revenue through exports.

He then emphasized that this year we will continue to focus on high value agricultural products with export potential and those include fruit, wine, vegetables industries as well as poultry and red meat.

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries continues to put food security, job creation and growth of the economy at the apex of our agenda. These priorities fall squarely into the current land transformation discussions, which I believe is in the interest of all to always clarify the land discussions in the context of food security, job creation and the economic growth of the Country.

Madam President of AFASA, Dr Vuyo Mahlathi, let me upfront state that in South Africa you cannot speak about ethical agricultural production nor sustainable agriculture without talking about the skewed distribution of land. This skewed distribution was not because of any market forces. On the contrary, it is a result of market distortion

through many apartheid and racist laws of successive apartheid governments, who without any shame, forcefully removed black people from their land. Land Act of 1913 and 1936 ensured that the majority of people of this country were confined to 13 percent of arid and unproductive land. Also, through a plethora of other apartheid laws like Group Areas Act and others, black people were denied access to certain areas of economic activities in our country.

Programme Director, the expropriation of land without compensation that the people of South Africa are currently seized with are informed by that land ownership distortion. The market will never be able to correct that, on the contrary it will worsen it, hence the intervention by government. This is not just a socio- political imperative, it is also an economic necessity.

However, the president summarizes aptly our approach to this emotive matter when he says, “the land reform program will not threaten investment in South Africa’s economy and will not wear away property rights or negatively affect agricultural production.”

We are therefore quite encouraged by today’s dialogue with EU. This must also help black farmers to grow, and assist them to access EU market. We also urge EU to continue with these discussions, and they don’t just become a once off. We hope you will be able to agree on some deliverables within some time frames. Markets access for the

450 black commercial farmers as announced by the President is critical, and all bottlenecks should be unblocked.

South Africa is highly vulnerable and exposed to the impacts of disasters and climate change due, on one hand to the socio-economic context and on the other hand to already high risk natural environment i.e. include high season to season climate variability, extreme weather and severe water stress that affect agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors. While discussing these two concepts (Organic fair and Ethical trade) the country is faced with the negative impact as a result of number of disasters experienced including climate change. The incidents of fires, floods and recent devastating drought throughout the country bears testimony. The management of these will go a long way in improving our food security. Unfortunately again the biggest impact is felt most by small and black emerging farmers who have no insurances to mitigate these disasters.

These increasing frequencies of extreme weather events and climate change can be addressed through widespread adoption of more resilient, productive, sustainable, equitable and increasing efficient farming practices. Increasing the capacity in the disaster risk reduction field and prioritising training, awareness and research so that knowledge about potential hazards and usage of weather and climate information become widespread.

Degradation of natural resources (land, water, and biological diversity) threatens the livelihoods of the poor, particularly in rural areas, where they rely heavily on them. Increasing poverty, in turn, limits the range of available options with regard to the sustainable management of these finite resources. The depletion of natural resources contributes directly to the scourge of climate change.

The South African government is committed to sustainable production systems. The government also believes in ethical and fair trade with all trading partners. Sustainable production systems must be anchored on three pillars, namely:

- Economic sustainability
- Environmental sustainability
- Social sustainability

To ensure that sustainable production takes place in RSA we have done the following:

- Developed a policy on organic farming. The department had worked on amendments to Agricultural Products Standards Act to regulate organic products. Organic agriculture has a smaller footprint on the natural resource base and the health of agricultural workers than conventional agriculture.
- The department also developed other policies on climate smart agriculture as well as on sustainable agriculture.

- DAFF also worked with Food and Agriculture Organisation to pilot conservation farming in South Africa.

Sustainable crop and livestock systems provide ecosystem services that restore productivity, conserve soil, water and biodiversity, sequester carbon, regulate climate and provide landscape and cultural values.

To enhance aquaculture growth and development, the Department has developed a development-friendly Aquaculture Bill which was taken through intensive consultative process with broader stakeholders, including NEDLAC as well as the completion of the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Study (SEIAS) which was certified by DPME. With respect to Food Safety and Certification of Fish and Fisheries, the Department, along with the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS) manage the implementation of a Molluscan Shellfish Monitoring and Control Programme which entails regular sampling of farmed fish destined for local and overseas markets. South Africa also ratified FAO's Ports State Measures Agreement that guards against use of domestic ports as gateway to regional and overseas markets for selling of illegal, unauthorized and unregulated fish.

An effort will be made to retain and expand our footprint in the international markets starting with the African markets where fellow

Africans have worked hard to develop an African Continental Free Trade Area which aims to create a single African market.

Within the European Union, the South African agriculture products continued to benefit from the Free Trade Agreement of the Southern African Customs Union and the European Free Trade Association which has been in force for more than ten years since May 2008.

I applaud the organizers of this event which offered an opportunity for a dialogue between the AFASA and EU

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.