

ADVISORY NOTE

ACCELERATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-PROCESSING MASTER PLAN

Executive Summary

The Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan (AAMP) provides the mechanism to implement the National Development Plan's Chapter Six goals of enhanced food security, inclusive growth of the agriculture and agro-processing sector, high job creation, and export growth. However, three years into the implementation of the AAMP, the broader challenges of stimulating inclusive sector growth and investment, lack of financial access, poor local and network infrastructure, market access and expansion, the sector remain unaddressed.

Recognising the importance of addressing these challenges, the National Planning Commission, in partnership with the National Agricultural Marketing Council, convened a roundtable discussion under the theme "Accelerating the Implementation of the Agriculture and Agro-Processing Master Plan" on 31 October 2024. The roundtable discussion proposed SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) solutions, which include the importance of establishing clear governance and programmatic roles to align and coordinate interventions, resource and fund the programme, deepening stakeholder collaborations, and detailed implementation plans supported by properly defined monitoring and evaluation systems. Addressing these central challenges through the proposed solutions can significantly enhance the operational effectiveness and strategic impact of the master plan.

This advisory note synthesises insights from the roundtable and provides recommendations to enhance the implementation of the master plan.

1. Introduction and Background

The National Planning Commission (NPC) is an independent advisory body, appointed by the President of South Africa. The NPC is responsible for monitoring, reviewing and assessing progress, and providing advice to achieve the National Development Plan (NDP). The mandate of the third and current NPC includes convening key stakeholders with a view to identifying effective and impactful interventions on a number of key developmental issues facing the country.

The National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) is the government institution contracted to support the delivery of the AAMP. The NAMC was established in terms of the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act (No. 47 of 1996). It is a statutory body reporting to the Minister of Agriculture.

The Agriculture and Agro-Processing Master Plan (AAMP) is an operational document that gives effect to Chapter Six of the NDP on an integrated and inclusive rural economy. The AAMP was formally launched on 12 May 2022 as a social compact, but unfortunately did not receive labour's endorsement until mid-2025. It is a co-created planning and implementation framework that is expected to strategically focus the sector through improved coordination and the leveraging of resources, skills and experience that will promote economic growth and inclusion, as well as create decent jobs.

To achieve its strategic objectives, the AAMP is built on six fundamental pillars:

- Resolving policy ambiguities and creating an investment-friendly climate.
- Creating enabling infrastructure.
- Providing comprehensive farmer support, development finance, research and development, and extension services.
- Ensuring food security, expanded production and employment creation.
- Enabling market expansion, improving market access and trade facilitation.
- Developing localised food, import replacement and expanded agro-processing.

The vision of the AAMP is to build a growing, equitable, inclusive, competitive, job-creating, low-carbon and sustainable agriculture and agro-processing sector. This is underpinned by a theory of change that aims to overcome the duality in the sector, while enabling greater inclusion and participation of black farmers and small-scale and emerging farmers in agricultural production and across the value chain.

A core focus of the AAMP is to foster the coexistence of small- and large-scale farmers while providing targeted support for diverse farming models. Implementation follows a commodity corridor approach, utilising two key models:

- Commodity Value Chain Round Tables (VCRTs) – These well-structured and adequately funded industry platforms strengthen specific agricultural sub-sectors providing an interface between relevant government departments and the sector. Currently, five VCRTs are operational, covering fruits, wool, grains, wine, and livestock.
- Transformation schemes – These initiatives provide dedicated funding and targeted support for historically disadvantaged and emerging farmers within specific commodity value chains.

The AAMP aims to achieve the following goals:

- Promote transformation in the agriculture and agro-processing sector.
- Increase food and nutrition security in South Africa.
- Accelerate the opening of markets and better access conditions.
- Enhance competitiveness and entrepreneurial opportunities through technological innovations, infrastructure development, and digitalisation.
- Create effective farmer support, agro-processing, food wholesale and retail incentives.

- Create decent and inclusive employment and improve working conditions with decent pay in the sector, including in the face of climate change and technology innovations.
- Increase farming community safety and reduce stock theft.
- Create a capable state and enabling policy environment.
- Enhance resilience to climate change and management of natural resources.

2. Problem Statement

The NDP envisions a prosperous and inclusive agricultural sector that utilises natural and human resources effectively for growth and development. However, implementation of this vision, as outlined in the AAMP, has been inadequate due to critical barriers such as under-resourcing, weak coordination and governance and lack of a programmatic monitoring and evaluation system. The advisory note highlights the underlying structural and policy issues that need to be addressed to ensure meticulous and timely implementation of the plan.

3. AAMP Roundtable Discussion

The NPC, in partnership with the NAMC, convened a roundtable discussion under the theme "Accelerating the Implementation of the Agriculture and Agro-Processing Master Plan" on 31 October 2024. The roundtable programme was designed to maximise feedback from the invited stakeholders¹.

The roundtable was attended by a total of 245 (i.e. 167 in-person and 78 online) key stakeholders, including government representatives, the private sector, labour unions, farmer organisations, commodity groups, civil society and communities. The roundtable discussion identified critical challenges and proposed possible interventions and solutions to ensure the successful

¹ The key objectives of the roundtable were to:

- Improve each social partner's understanding of their roles in the implementation of the AAMP.
- Create mutual understanding and a collaborative environment among government bodies, the private sector, labour unions, farmer organisations, commodity groups, civil society stakeholders and community organisations to garner support and accelerate the implementation of the AAMP and ensure its alignment with Chapter 6 of the NDP and the Medium-Term Development Plan (2024-2029).
- Identify and discuss key challenges hindering the effective implementation of the AAMP, and to develop innovative and impactful solutions to these problems.
- Explore opportunities to expand and enhance successful AAMP initiatives, especially in areas like infrastructure development, farmer support, the use of modern technology, and market access.
- Promote policies that support the AAMP objectives, such as broad-based economic growth, competitiveness, and job creation in the agricultural and agro-processing industries.
- Identify opportunities for a robust Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework to track progress, identify areas for improvement, and ensure accountability among stakeholders.

implementation of the plan. The inputs to the roundtable have substantially informed the identification of the top implementation challenges and the solutions thereto.

4. Top Three Implementation Challenges

Three primary themes emerged as critical barriers hindering the effective and timely execution of the AAMP. These were:

- (1) Governance, coordination, and leadership.
- (2) Funding, resources, and financial sustainability.
- (3) Implementation planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

Priority Challenge 1: Governance, Coordination, and Leadership

Disorganised and poorly functioning governance structures, inadequate stakeholder participation, and unclear accountability mechanisms to drive an implementation plan are primary barriers to the successful implementation of the AAMP. Stakeholder participation (within and outside government) is infrequent and haphazard, resulting in low levels of trust. These governance and programmatic deficiencies impede effective coordination and collaboration across sectors, weakening the overall capacity for strategic coordination and implementation.

Priority Challenge 2: Funding, Resources, and Financial Sustainability

The AAMP Project Management Office (PMO) requires bolstering in order to accelerate delivery of the plan. Currently, the PMO functions largely as a secretariat, rather than a delivery unit. The limited availability and inefficient management of financial resources, including inadequately structured financing mechanisms, the absence of dedicated agricultural budgets, and insufficient engagement with financial institutions, restrict the implementation of strategic initiatives outlined in the AAMP.

Priority Challenge 3: Implementation Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

Shortcomings in planning, prioritisation, and monitoring and evaluation act as barriers to the effective implementation of the AAMP. The absence of clearly defined implementation plans, realistic prioritisation of initiatives, measurable targets, and proper monitoring and evaluation frameworks creates uncertainty and hinders progress towards the objectives of the AAMP.

5. SMART Solutions to Address the Top Three Challenges

Recommended solution for challenge 1: Governance, Coordination, and Leadership

The AAMP will only achieve its objectives if it enjoys broad social support and will only work if there is strong leadership and focused implementation across different government departments and spheres of government. There should be clear governance frameworks with precisely defined institutional roles and responsibilities. Specifically, this includes reviving existing governance structures, such as the Executive Oversight Committee, and technical working groups. This requires assigning senior-level officials as champions for cross-sector coordination, and ensuring delivery orientated structured stakeholder engagement through regular, facilitated forums. As a measure of

success, the operational governance structures should be established within six months with comprehensive stakeholder participation built into the implementation plan. This will enhance clarity, reduce coordination delays, and promote accountability across all implementation phases.

Recommended solution for challenge 2: Funding, Resources, and Financial Sustainability

Diversified and structured financing mechanisms involving both private and public sectors should be developed to drive investment in the sector. Specific solutions include establishing dedicated parliamentary budget allocations for agriculture, enhancing blended funding models, and actively engaging development finance institutions (DFIs) and private sector financial institutions.

Progress could be measured through the establishment of clearly structured financing systems and increased resource accessibility within the next financial cycle. This solution aligns directly with the AAMP's goals of achieving sustainable resource mobilisation and financial stability, with immediate feasibility given current institutional and private sector support mechanisms.

Recommended solution for challenge 3: Implementation Planning, and Monitoring and Evaluation

The success of the AAMP will depend on effective planning, implementation and monitoring. Key components include bolstering the capacity of the PMO so that it functions as a focused delivery unit, as well as establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress, identify challenges, and make the necessary adjustments. This includes prioritising a clear and realistic scope of initiatives supported by practical, high impact, implementation plans featuring measurable targets and timelines. Key performance indicators proposed include timely project completions, frequency of stakeholder updates, and capacity enhancement of implementation teams.

This should be complemented by regular communication from entities such as the NAMC and enhanced capacity within project management units. The feasibility of this solution is underscored by the urgency to deliver tangible results by 2026, making immediate action both necessary and realistic to ensure the effective operationalisation of the AAMP.

6. Call to Action

The following are the suggested Call-to-Actions to accelerate the implementation of the AAMP:

- 6.1. Initiate adequate governance (executive oversight committee, workstreams and stakeholder engagement) structures.
- 6.2. Develop an AAMP implementation plan (with clear funding roles, projects, accountability and resourcing).
- 6.3. Bolster the PMO into a well-functioning delivery unit, which will be responsible for driving delivery and management of coordinated interventions, mobilisation of resources, communications, monitoring, evaluation and learning, indicators and measures, and support value chain roundtables, etc.
- 6.4. Improve coordination across government and with external entities outside government, and between commodity and localised approaches.

- 6.5. Prioritise high-impact interventions for implementation (blended finance, climate change mitigation and risk reduction, capacity building, 2,5ml ha of land to be distributed, title deeds, security, infrastructure and dams and irrigation).
- 6.6. Build partnerships and trust amongst stakeholders and role-players.
- 6.7. Drive a solution-oriented approach (i.e., participatory, inclusive, multisectoral, etc.).

7. Conclusion

The NPC, alongside many stakeholders in the sector, recognise the importance of full implementation of the AAMP. The successful implementation of the AAMP is essential for realising the sector's transformative potential and contributing to the broader goals of economic development, food security, and job creation. However, significant challenges persist, including weak governance, fragmented coordination, and limited delivery capabilities that hinder progress.

To address these issues, it is critical to establish robust governance and leadership structures, resource the PMO to function as a delivery unit, ensure effective coordination across all stakeholders, and develop clear and measurable performance indicators to track progress. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing the recommended solutions, the AAMP can drive sustainable, inclusive growth, improve agricultural productivity, and contribute to the NDP goals.