

MEDIA STATEMENT

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ACCELERATION OF THE AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-PROCESSING MASTER PLAN

The [National Planning Commission](#) (NPC) and the [National Agricultural Marketing Council](#) (NAMC) jointly held a roundtable discussion under the theme, 'Acceleration of the [Agriculture and Agro-Processing Master Plan](#) (AAMP)' on 31 October 2024 at the Protea Hotel, Hatfield. The AAMP is one of the seven priority plans identified by President Ramaphosa in the State of Nation Address (SONA) of 2019 as part of key economic sectors essential for the economic reconstruction and recovery.

A Master Plan provides an evidence-based planning and implementation framework for sector growth. This is realised through the co-creation and implementation of the plan by government, business, and labour in the sector. It leverages on resources, skills, and experiences to advance economic growth and inclusion as well as the creation of sustainable jobs in the country.

As the AAMP serves as a guide and action plan, the NPC understood that it was well-placed to give effect to the objectives of Chapter 6 of the [National Development Plan: Vision 2030](#) (NDP). The NPC, which is an independent advisory body appointed by the President, is the custodian of South Africa's NDP and is responsible for advising government and Parliament on matters pertaining to the implementation of the NDP as well as mobilising the whole of society, including the private sector, around its objectives.

This collaboration was based on the importance of driving economic growth, promoting inclusion, and creating sustainable jobs in the country as outlined in Chapter 6 of the NDP, which has the goal to generate one million new jobs in this sector by 2030.

The NAMC, which is a strategic state-owned entity that is required to rebuild state capacity through collecting and processing market and industry insights to improve the

credibility of agricultural statistics, rebuild capacity in economic decision tools and policy analysis, is tasked by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development with coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of AAMP by the different social partners.

The Deputy Chairperson of the NPC opened the session with an anecdote to illustrate how the contribution of agriculture and agro-processing can be taken for granted to such an extent that its importance may not even register as a factor for those who depend on its products. This reminder served as a touchstone for the dire consequences that can arise for food security if this sector fails. He warned that the country was facing the type of dystopian society outlined in the prologue of Tracy Ledger's *An Empty Plate*, by noting that the country was facing "rising levels of poverty, not poverty merely as lack of monetary income, but poverty as being confronted by Tracy Ledgers empty plate, morning, noon and evening."

The discussions with stakeholders from government, the private sector, labour unions, farmer organisations, commodity groups, and civil society aimed at identifying priority hurdles in implementing the AAMP and finding solutions that align the efforts of role players and policies and explore priority growth and employment opportunities. It was initiated by a scene setting presentation by Mr Wandile Sihlobo, a member of the Presidential Economic Advisory Council, whose presentation emphasised that agriculture had the potential to make inroads to the overall challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment facing the country. In confirming that the AAMP and the NDP was closely aligned, he warned against it simply becoming another plan that was not implemented and outlined the importance of addressing its resource constraints. In particular, he stressed that "without the release of land, we will not make much inroads on that [high-level constraints], which is a risk that will remain with the sector for some time."

Dr Solly Molepo, the project manager responsible for the AAMP at the NAMC, provided an update on its implementation by outlining the six pillars that underpin the plan and noting progress with its implementation. He pointed out that one of the main obstacles with the implementation process related to the concerns expressed by the labour movement and announced that progress was being made through ongoing consistent engagement about the sticking points, with parties being on the brink of agreement.

The roundtable featured interactive panel discussions on the roles that different organisations can play in accelerating the implementation of the AAMP. These

discussions acknowledged and expressed the need to educate emerging farmers by hosting campaigns and roadshows, to promote the full participation of all citizens, particularly youth and women, and to address the issue of land ownership.

The programme also included a breakaway session to discuss implementation challenges and solutions. Some of the challenges identified were the lack of an implementation plan with explicit milestones and responsibilities of different stakeholders, and the need for stronger project management.

Overall, there was a robust and frank analysis of implementation challenges through identifying the priority areas of concern and the practical solutions to address it. After intense deliberations among the sectoral players about ensuring that the implementation of the AAMP is resourced, the governance aspects be refined to encourage accountability, and the master plan is incorporated in the strategic plans, the session concluded with an agreement that the NPC would compile an advisory note to government about the challenges raised and would propose implementable solutions for the medium term.

For more information about the forum and its outcomes, please contact Dr Zarina Rahman at the NPC at +27823452919 or Zarina@dpme.gov.za and Mr Mashao Mohale at the NAMC at +2773 181 8046 or dmohale@namc.co.za