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Agriculture Minister John Steenhuisen briefing notes on the side event on African Fertiliser and soil health (AFSH)

TITLE: Taking Stock of the Implementation of the Nairobi Declaration Strengthening Private Sector participation in the delivery of continental frameworks

Time: 15:00 – 16:30
Date: 10 January 2025
Venue: Kabalenga Hall
H.E Josefa Sacko; Commissioner, AUC-DARBE
H.E. Mme Nardos Bekele-Thomas – CEO, African Union Development Agency (AUDA
Excellencies,

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

The discussion relating to taking stock on the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration on Fertilizers and Soil Health could not have occurred at a better time, taking into consideration that it has been just over 8 months since the Heads of State had signed this declaration. South Africa wishes to take this time to thank the organisers for striking the iron while it is still hot. South Africa's role within this framework is both strategic and vital. As a leading producer and supplier of both organic and inorganic fertilizers, South Africa can bolster the continent's agricultural inputs and strengthen supply chains. Additionally, South Africa's research institutions, expertise in sustainable farming practices, and established partnerships position it as a critical player in supporting the implementation of the Declaration, sharing innovations and collaborating on soil information systems and agricultural extension services, South Africa can contribute to improving productivity and soil health across Africa.

Just as a way of recapping, this Declaration follows the 2006 Abuja Declaration on Fertilizer for the African Green Revolution and further entrenches the objectives of the 2014 CAADP as agreed in Malabo. Since the Abuja Declaration, there has been a significant shift in the investments on fertilizers right through the value chain in Africa. However, the geopolitical tensions in Russia-Ukraine had a negative impact on the progress that we have made.

Approaching the implementation of the Declarations requires systematic planning based on the commitments made and setting national action plans to address the commitments. My input will be made on the commitments:

a. **On the commitment to triple domestic production and distribution of certified quality organic and inorganic fertilizers by 2034 to improve access and**

affordability for smallholder farmers through the following actions – South Africa has the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan which in its formation is aimed at two critical objectives.

- Firstly, to address the issue of increasing production and productivity, thereby increasing yields of different commodities.
- Secondly, to ensure that the growth in production is also accompanied by inclusivity. This inclusivity refers to the total contribution of smallholder farmers, youth women and persons with disabilities.

Achieving this priority and the two objectives means the use of fertilizers, new technologies and contributing to positive soil health are imperative. To this effect we have legislation that support the production of judicious fertilizers and another legislation that preserves and conserves the use of agricultural resources. South Africa is also working on legislation to guide certification of organic farming in the country.

The department is also formalising the national soil partnership forum to enable the implementation of African Fertiliser and soil health (AFSH) and related international obligations, such as the Global Soil Partnership of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation. The national soil partnership and AFSH will be guided by the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (CARA), 43 of 1983, and the Subdivision of Agricultural Land Act (SALA), 70 of 1970.

b. **On the commitment to make available by 2034, to at least 70% of smallholder farmers on the continent, targeted agronomic recommendations for specific crops, soils, and climatic conditions to ensure greater efficiency and sustainable use of fertilizers** – South Africa already has guidelines that guide the use of fertilizers and through legislation we are also working on legislation to guide on the use of fertilizers.

The private sector in South Africa together with the research institutions and universities have already adopted digital technologies that assist in efficacious use of fertilisers, through precision agriculture.

c. **On the commitment to reverse land degradation and restore soil health on at least 30% of degraded soil by 2034 through the following actions** – South Africa through its land care programmes is working on soil rehabilitation programmes through the nine provinces in South Africa.

The new way of engaging is institutionalizing the issue of regenerative agriculture into the broader legislation in our country.

d. **On the commitment towards promoting African solidarity through knowledge sharing, training, development, and transfer programs for best practices in soil fertility and soil health** – South Africa stand ready to extend its expertise to assist in capacity building relating to fertilizers and soil health. South Africa has on the private sector side expertise in fertilizer production. Furthermore, the public sector has legislative and research experts to assist in building capacity in the continent.

e. On the commitment on domestication of this Declaration into the National Agricultural Investment Plans – South Africa as indicated is using the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan as the National Agricultural Investment Plan. The Agriculture and Agro-processing are a co-creation of government, business and industry and will be utilised to address the domestication.

In conclusion South Africa is working on:

- Balancing the regulatory environment and the fertiliser manufacturing industry by encouraging and promoting the use of organic fertiliser. (Inline CAADP strategy and action plan (2026-2035).
- Implementing regenerative Conservation Agriculture will also be key to reducing inorganic fertiliser use and land degradation.
- Strengthening the supply chain and distribution networks to ensure timely and affordable access to fertilizers for all farmers.

In addition, the government will improve the coordination of the fertilizer support system and distribution to ease access to fertilizers to increase productivity in the smallholder sector. The government will also strengthen partnerships with the private sector to negotiate fertiliser affordability in line with CAADP action. Strengthening the bilateral and multilateral fertiliser trading to increase distribution among member states (Fertilizer action plan) is important. Improving the finance and investment opportunities to scale soil health through Conservation, Regenerative Agriculture, and precision farming is vital. It is also important to:

- Facilitate the strengthening of farmer fertilizer use training through technical support from development partners. Enhance technical support through donor funding to support infrastructure and logistics and improve availability and affordability.

- Convene country-wide multi-stakeholder workshops to discuss and internalize the fertilizer declaration.

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Issued by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development

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