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MEDIA STATEMENT **15 MAY 2025**

Clarity on speculations regarding the ban of banana imports from Tanzania to South Africa

In light of recent media reports suggesting a potential ban on the import of agricultural products from South Africa by Tanzanian authorities, based on speculations that South Africa does not permit banana imports from Tanzania, the Department of Agriculture hereby provides clarity on the matter. It is prudent that the South African Ministry of Agriculture emphasises that there is good relations between the two countries regarding agricultural trade, and that there was never a ban on the imports of bananas from Tanzania to South Africa. The National Plant Protection Organization of South Africa (NPPOZA) under the Department of Agriculture, together with their Tanzanian plant health counterparts have previously negotiated and concluded on market access for various plants and plant product commodities between the two nations. Tanzanian avocados have been exported to South Africa over the past four years and have a counter seasonal advantage to local produce, which closes the gap for local consumption.

The two technical counterparts from both South Africa and Tanzania are currently in negotiations to facilitate market access to allow the safe trade of banana from Tanzania into South Africa. The South African Department of Agriculture received a market access request application from Tanzania to export bananas to South Africa in February 2025, and the scientific technical process of conducting a pest risk analysis (PRA) by NPPOZA to draft import requirements is still in progress. The processes will be conducted in accordance with relevant phytosanitary regulatory frameworks and relevant standards of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

It is mutually beneficial for both nations to allow the PRA process to proceed, so that scientifically justified phytosanitary import conditions can be developed, conditions which aim to safeguard biosecurity. Safe international movement of agricultural products is essential considering the

biosecurity risk associated with the spread of quarantine pests. One such pest is the *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *Cubense* TR4 (the most destructive banana disease recorded in history), which poses a serious threat to the banana industry globally. Once the envisaged PRA process has been concluded, the draft phytosanitary import requirements will be finalised and the Tanzanian authorities will be notified accordingly, in line with relevant international prescripts, to confirm compliance. The importation of bananas from Tanzania will only commence after both countries agree with the drafted phytosanitary import requirements.

As a requirement and in accordance with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and IPPC's international prescripts, when dealing with agricultural trade matters, parties officially notify each other in case there will be a ban or lifting of a ban of a particular imported produce or product. To this end, South Africa has never issued any ban on banana from Tanzania because there was never market access granted for banana from Tanzania. Equally, South Africa has never received from Tanzania any official notification or intent to ban South African products exported to Tanzania.

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