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Media Statement

SOUTH AFRICA AND JAPAN TO STRENGTHEN AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND FOOD SECURITY TIES

In a significant step towards strengthening economic relations, the South African Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, and the Japanese Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries signed a Memorandum of Intent (MoI) today to enhance cooperation in agriculture. The signing ceremony took place at the Lord Charles Hotel in Somerset West, on the sidelines of the Ministerial Meeting of the G20 Agriculture Working Group (AWG).
The MoI serves as a foundational agreement, outlining the commitment of both governments to cooperate in agricultural development, trade, and sustainability. It reflects the shared understanding that a vibrant and progressive agricultural sector is vital for food security and economic prosperity in both nations.

Minister Steenhuisen hailed the signing as a milestone: “This Memorandum of Intent is more than just a document, it is a commitment to jointly solving common problems and meeting shared challenges. It will enable us to tap into Japan’s technology and markets while positioning South African agricultural products more competitively. Importantly, we must always view these efforts through the lens of what benefits our farmers, especially smallholders, and strengthens the food security of our people.”

The MoI identifies several key areas of cooperation tailored to the specific needs of both countries as follows:

- **Development of smallholder farmers:** Through knowledge sharing, technical visits, training programmes, and the exchange of best practices in public policy for small-scale agriculture;

- **Promotion of trade in agricultural products:** By setting out a blueprint to enhance exports and investment opportunities in both countries, benefiting producers and agribusinesses;
- **Food security and stable grain supply:** Through information exchange on food processing, livestock, and crop production; and
- **Intellectual property in agriculture:** By collaborating on plant variety examinations to protect and value agricultural innovations.

To ensure effective implementation, the MoI provides for the possible establishment of a Joint Agricultural Working Committee. This committee will meet regularly to coordinate activities, monitor progress, and ensure that political commitments translate into tangible results.

The MoI launches a three-year period of close collaboration, based on mutual trust and a shared vision. Although non-binding, the partnership can automatically be renewed for further three-year terms, giving both countries the flexibility to adapt cooperation to future needs.

Minister Steenhuisen emphasised that for South Africa, the agreement represents a significant boost in the Department of Agriculture's efforts to expand market access and attract international investment. For Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, it reinforces its commitment to global food security and to building strong, cooperative international partnerships.

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