

DEPUTY MINISTER CAPA (MP)

**SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES
(NCOP) ON THE OCCASION OF THE BUDGET VOTE 2025**

8 JULY 2025

SEVENTH ADMINISTRATION

Honourable Speaker, Ms Refilwe Mtsweni-Tsipane,
All ministers and deputy ministers,
Chairpersons of portfolio committees of the Government of National Unity (GNU),
Premiers,
Local government executives,

In setting the tone for the GNU, President Cyril Ramaphosa captured the following priorities for our sector.

“The people of South Africa want the GNU to pursue inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Through their votes, they asserted that they want enough food to eat. They want a transformed, growing, and inclusive economy that creates jobs for millions of job seekers and offers business opportunities to all entrepreneurs in our nation—women and men, young and old.”

Madam Speaker, our country is still grappling with many developmental and growth challenges. Without an intensified and consistent plan to change the status quo, which affects the poor disproportionately, the situation will gradually become irreversible. We come to your house today to give effect to the changes we wish to see. We come bearing the good news of intervention plans and strategies earmarked for implementation in the current financial year and the plans execution in a staggered approach until the year 2030.

Access to food is a protected right, both in our country and globally. Under international law, the *Right to Food* is enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The covenant stipulates the right to an adequate standard of living, which includes adequate food and the right to be protected from hunger. The Right to Food is realised when all people always have access to adequate food or the means to obtain it. In November 2004, the member states of the United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) adopted the Right to Food Guidelines. When the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) was reformed in

2009, the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food was explicitly included in the CFS's objectives.

The guidelines are based on a human rights approach which places social groups and communities, often unable to exercise their human rights, at the centre of political attention. In the case of South Africa, these would include farmers, landless people, indigenous peoples, refugees, older people, the urban poor, the homeless and other marginalised groups. The human rights approach is based on people as rights-holders and State authorities as obligation providers.

The UN estimates that around 735 million people worldwide were affected by hunger in 2022, an increase of 122 million people compared to the period before the COVID-19 pandemic. Although sufficient food is produced worldwide, many people continue to live in food insecurity.

Zooming into the Republic of South Africa, the Constitution enshrines the right to food security for all citizens, and the State should use legislative interventions to realise this right.

Last year (2024), the former Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) launched a National Food and Nutrition Security Survey, which we commissioned three years earlier, in 2020.

From the report, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) has painted a gloomy picture of some sections of the population suffering from food insecurity, especially the Northern Cape, North-West and Free State being the worst affected. Climate change, combined with limited access to resources and infrastructure and incomplete recovery from COVID-19, contribute to higher levels of household food insecurity in rural areas. The Department of Agriculture is developing an overarching National Food and Nutrition Plan to address the challenges. The plan is also aimed at reversing the historical legacies of the food system by ensuring transformation. The interventions for provinces are as follows:

For the 2025/26 financial year, the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) has a total budget allocation of R1,685,217 (one billion, six hundred and eighty-five million, two hundred and seventeen thousand rand).

- Of this budget, R1,142 billion (one billion, one hundred and forty-two million) will be used to support subsistence and smallholder farmers with infrastructure, training, mentorship, market access support, which will include SA-Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification for those producing perishable products in partnership with our entity the Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB). A total of 10,350 (ten thousand three hundred and fifty) farmers are targeted for support under CASP, creating 4,294 (four thousand two hundred and ninety-four) jobs from supported farms and projects.
- R439,741 million (four hundred and thirty-nine million, seven hundred and forty-one thousand rand) will be used for the Extension Recovery Plan to strengthen extension and advisory services in all provinces.
- And finally, R103,828 million (one hundred and three million, eight hundred and twenty-eight thousand rand) will be used to revitalise infrastructure in agricultural colleges.

For the 2025/26 financial year, the Ilima/Letsema Programme is allocated R677,396 million (six hundred and seventy-seven million, three hundred and ninety-six thousand rand) to increase food production in communal rural areas, in particular, supporting vulnerable households, subsistence and smallholder producers with production inputs and mechanisation.

A total of 63,310 (sixty-three thousand, three hundred and ten) vulnerable households are targeted for support; the programme will also provide inputs to a further 37,307 farmers, creating 9,800 jobs from supported projects and farms.

PARTNERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITY

The department deems partnership with sector role players, including international organisations such as the FAO of the UN, as a catalyst for advancing the empowerment of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in the sector. In its strides to promote economic opportunities for women, youth, and persons with disabilities across the value chain of the sector, the department has supported a multitude of projects for this category that create jobs and alleviate poverty.

To cite a few examples, in Bochum, outside Polokwane in Limpopo, a young female vegetable farmer, Ms Mashoto Ramafolo, is a successful farmer today who exports potatoes to Mozambique and supplies local supermarkets, courtesy of the department and Potato South Africa. She participated in the department's Graduate Placement Programme in 2018.

Another example is Mr Sibusiso Mogale from Mpumalanga, a farmer with disability who continues to grow against all odds as a vegetable farmer using the Smart Agricultural Boxes (SAB) and supplies both the formal and informal markets around Mbombela.

In KwaZulu-Natal, at Kwa-Maphumulo in the Ilembe District, the department supported Ms Nokwanda Mchunu, a female agro-processor of patties, sausages, etc. She experienced a setback during the floods but has since remarkably recovered owing to her passion and determination to succeed in the sector. She supplies supermarkets.

Finally, among many other good stories, is a story in the Western Cape of Ms Carmen Stevens and Ms Berene Damons who are wine producers and are exporting a greater percentage of their produce to the Europe and United States of America markets.

The saying: "You feed a woman, you feed a nation" is more suiting when viewed against the role women play in food production, nurturing households and contributing to overall food security.

To increase the women's role, the department is supporting women-led agricultural projects with funding, technical support provided by extension practitioners and infrastructure in all provinces.

Furthermore, policies are being amended to ensure gender equality, create room for women's unique insights and approaches for innovative solutions, and foster creativity and ultimately ensure social progress.

For women to achieve full potential, their challenges must be highlighted and acted upon. Stereotypes in the workplace should be eliminated—women need work-friendly environments, and the fairness of equal work equal pay. In addition to creating a conducive environment to maximise their potential, the workplace should strive to remove deep-rooted biases that favour men and instead introduce transformative mentorship programmes, networking opportunities through pairing young women with seasoned professionals, skills training, learnerships and internship programmes.

When all interventions have been explored and implemented, the women's caregiver role of providing household food security and nutrition can move beyond just gaining momentum and be expanded in manifold. The department continues to empower women with financial, technical and infrastructure support from previous financial years, and our continuous support will increase in the coming years, as shown in the table above for provincial breakdown for the 2025/26 financial year.

The role of women in agriculture is indispensable to achieving food security, rural development, and sustainable agriculture. By recognising and supporting the contributions of women farmers, policymakers, development practitioners, and agricultural stakeholders can harness the transformative power of gender equality to build resilient and inclusive food systems that benefit all.

NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR THE INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

Madam Speaker, our population is a mixed society of differently-abled people, and among us, live vulnerable groups who also contribute to the economy. However, their

participation requires a special intervention comprising a combination of aids and machinery to help them perform at an optimal level. Where resources can be deployed to make them an integral part of agricultural production, we will ensure that such assistance is extended to them.

COMPREHENSIVE PRODUCER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT (CASP)

The department acknowledges the contribution and role that subsistence and smallholder farmers play in food security in the country and has developed a special programme—the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP). CASP is a departmental programme aimed at expanding the provision of agricultural support services and promoting and facilitating agricultural development by targeting subsistence, smallholder, and black commercial farmers from a previously disadvantaged background. CASP seeks to reduce poverty and inequality, and ultimately improve farming. It primarily targets subsistence, smallholder, and black commercial farmers, as well as agrarian reform beneficiaries, farm workers and self-help groups, to promote efficiency, enhance food security, create wealth in agriculture, and increase pride and dignity in the agricultural sector. We call upon the interested farmers to contact their nearest district agricultural offices for information on how to apply for CASP funding and support.

MARKET ACCESS

Every farmer's goal is market participation, which brings the farmers' subjective and objective well-being. The availability of market access generates income which results in poverty reduction and rural economic growth. Farmers educate themselves by exploring different avenues of market access such as online, and e-commerce, among others, to enhance their market linkages.

Our agency, the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) acknowledges the disproportionate market access by a well-established commercial farming sector, and on the other hand, an underdeveloped small-scale sector found mainly in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and North West. This small-scale sector constitutes about 250,000 smallholder farmers and 1,5 million subsistence farmers who need

support in market access for their products. The department is pulling out all the stops in working towards providing the much-needed market access. Smallholder farmers are crucial to South Africa's agricultural landscape, particularly in rural economies, where they contribute to local food security, community livelihoods, growth, economic development and job creation.

COLLABORATION WITH COGTA

Chapter 13 of the National Development Plan (NDP) outlines a vision for building a capable and developmental state through interdepartmental coordination and strengthening local government. The department remains committed to offering support and assistance to local governments to fulfil their obligations for basic service delivery. The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) is mandated to develop and monitor the implementation of national policy and legislation by providing support and exercising oversight of provincial and local government, as well as its entities. We will actively work with CoGTA to exercise oversight of departmental projects being implemented in collaboration with municipalities.

THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS

Madam Speaker, the availability of land for farmer expansion has proven to be an uneasy challenge to overcome. Simultaneously, we have noted huge pieces of fallow land in the hands of traditional leaders. To alleviate the land hunger for expansion by farmers, the department will engage CoGTA and all the kingships to unlock land for utilisation in agricultural programmes since it is vital for promoting rural development and transforming agriculture.

Traditional leaders wield considerable influence in their communities, especially in rural areas, and their involvement can significantly enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of agricultural initiatives. Additional benefits will be their influence over programmes targeting climate change management, particularly for communities to implement both mitigation and adaptation strategies to preserve soil and avoid soil erosion.

EMBRACING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE (IK)

Integration of indigenous knowledge (IK) can benefit various departmental programmes only if the department, farmers, and community can go beyond the negative tag of regarding it as primitive, backwards, savage, rural, and unscientific.

Indigenous knowledge represents centuries of accumulated wisdom, practices and traditions unique to communities. It offers a rich resource for understanding the natural world, resolving conflicts, and promoting social cohesion. We need to recognise, affirm, develop, promote, and safeguard the indigenous knowledge for the proper conservation of water, biodiversity, and the ecosystem.

I thank you.