

Gala Dinner Address

Minister John Steenhuisen (MP)

Gala Dinner following the G20 Agriculture Working Group Ministerial Meeting

18 September 2025

Programme Director,

Member of Executive Council (MEC) for Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism in the Western Cape, Dr Ivan Meyer,

Mayor of the Cape Winelands District Municipality, Ald Dr Elna von Schlicht, Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, distinguished delegates, colleagues, and friends,

Good evening

What a pleasure it is to welcome you to this gala dinner here in the Cape Winelands. After a day of intensive discussions and formal proceedings, tonight is about fellowship, reflection, and celebration.

Let me begin by thanking the Western Cape MEC for Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism for his leadership and support in hosting us, and the Mayor of the Cape Winelands District Municipality for welcoming us so warmly. This region, world-renowned for its wines and hospitality, reminds us that agriculture is never only about economics, it is also about culture, heritage, and identity.

Earlier, we enjoyed the powerful rhythms of the marimba band and the vibrancy of the cultural dance performance. Just as a marimba ensemble only works when every instrument plays in harmony, so too does global agriculture flourish when nations work together in partnership.

Excellencies, this week has reminded us of a simple truth: agriculture cannot succeed in isolation. Farmers rely on markets, markets rely on trade, and trade relies on trust and cooperation between countries. The G20 Agriculture Working Group is at its best when it strengthens those bonds, when it helps us open doors for improved market access, when it ensures that rules are fair and transparent, and when it builds resilience that no nation could achieve alone.

South Africa has seen first-hand how these partnerships bear fruit. In the past year, we secured new protocols to export avocados to China, opening a fast-growing market to our farmers. Our horticultural products are also breaking new ground in Southeast

Asia, with table grapes now reaching the Philippines and Vietnam, and citrus gaining access to Vietnam. These breakthroughs reflect confidence in our production systems and biosecurity standards. In addition, our citrus industry, a backbone of our exports, continues to expand into new destinations thanks to collaborative work on phytosanitary measures and compliance. These successes are proof that cooperation is not an abstract idea; it translates directly into jobs, incomes, and opportunities on the ground.

However, partnerships are not only built through declarations. They are also built through relationships between people. The conversations we share tonight, are just as important as the negotiations in the meeting room, because trust begins with friendship.

Speaking of friendship, I must say: in the Cape Winelands we have a simple rule, when you raise a glass, you do not only toast agreements, but you also toast to good company, good food, and, hopefully, to a very good vintage! So as we prepare to enjoy a delicious dinner, let us toast not only to the work achieved here in South Africa, but to the enduring partnerships between our nations.

Here is to markets that open wider, relationships that grow stronger, and agriculture that continues to be a source not just of food, but of dignity, opportunity, and joy.

Ngiyabonga. Baie dankie. Enkosi. Thank you.