

**CLOSING REMARKS—NCOP BUDGET VOTE DEBATE**

**Honourable John Steenhuisen, MP**

**Minister of Agriculture**

**8 July 2025**

**National Council of Provinces**

**2025/26**

Honourable Chairperson,  
Honourable Members of the National Council of Provinces,  
Esteemed provincial delegates,

Let me begin by thanking each of you for the thoughtful contributions, questions, and challenges raised during today's debate.

What stands out most clearly is a shared conviction—across provinces and across party lines—that agriculture is not a side issue. It is foundational to our country's food sovereignty, rural development, and economic resilience.

This debate has reaffirmed a core truth—**that agriculture lives and breathes in provinces and municipalities**, not in the corridors of national departments. It is in the irrigation schemes of Limpopo, the livestock routes of Northern Cape, the subsistence plots in Eastern Cape, and the agro-processing hubs of KwaZulu-Natal that our budget must find its meaning.

Colleagues, this Budget Vote is more than a set of numbers. It is a **tool for unlocking rural opportunity**, for building food and nutrition security, and for restoring dignity where exclusion has long prevailed.

You have my assurance that this department takes its intergovernmental obligations seriously. We are not here to impose. We are here to partner. The agricultural colleges, veterinary labs, extension officers, and disaster response plans that we are rebuilding will mean little without provincial leadership and local ownership.

I have taken careful note of the specific concerns raised—from infrastructure backlogs and veterinary capacity, to smallholder access. These will inform our engagements with MECs, with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), and through the Minister's and Members of the Executive Council (MINMEC) meetings.

But let me end on this note: **We are not starting from zero.**

We are a country with world-class farmers, robust commodity bodies, and young people hungry to innovate. This budget is a bridge—not just to deliver support, but to enable the sector to lead.

As we move forward, let us remain united by a single principle: That no South African, no matter where they live, should be denied the opportunity to grow food, earn a livelihood, or feed their family.

Chairperson, I wish to thank this House for its engagement and its oversight.

I hereby commend the 2025/26 Budget Vote for the Department of Agriculture to the National Council of Provinces.

I thank you.