



MINISTER
AGRICULTURE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X250, Pretoria, 0001; 20 Steve Biko Street, Pretoria, 0001
Tel.: 012 319 6000; Email: queries@nda.gov.za; Web: www.nda.gov.za

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

10 September 2025

MEDIA ADVISORY

Remarks by Mr Dipepeneng Serage, Deputy Director General: Agricultural Production, Biosecurity and Natural Resources

On behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen

TLU SA National Congress 2025

Theme: “Local Farm Strength = Global Opportunity”

Programme Director, President, and leadership of TLU SA, delegates, partners from agribusiness and finance, colleagues from provincial departments, distinguished guests. Good morning and thank you for the invitation. I bring warm greetings from Minister John Steenhuisen and appreciation for the work TLU SA is doing to keep South African agriculture competitive, innovative, and resilient.

I am honoured to stand in for the Minister today. He asked me to convey a simple message: we see you, we hear you, and we intend to work with you to ensure that commercial agriculture thrives, because when local farms are strong, South Africa’s food security, exports, and rural livelihoods are strong.

1) The theme - and the moment

Your theme, “**Local Farm Strength = Global Opportunity,**” captures an essential truth. Markets reward reliability, quality, and scale. But strength at farm level does not happen by accident, it is built through clear rules, working infrastructure, stable biosecurity, fair prices, and access to finance and technology.



Over the past decade, you have kept producing through drought cycles, Covid-19 disruptions, power instability, port congestion, cost inflation and animal and plant disease outbreaks. South African farmers have not only survived; many have led with innovation and productivity. Government's job is to remove friction and back that effort with practical support.

2) The supply chain challenge - taking back control

TLU SA has been frank about a core concern: farmers have lost leverage in the value chain, over who they sell to, how, and at what price. You are introducing a new co-operative model to regain agency. We welcome that ambition. Co-ops are not a relic; they are a modern instrument for bargaining power, input savings, logistics optimisation, market development and risk pooling, if they are well governed, well capitalised, and digitally enabled.

From the Department's side, here is how we will support producer power within the law and in the public interest:

- 1. Fair markets & price transparency.** We will work with NAMC and competition authorities to improve price discovery and transparency in key value chains. Our aim is a public, near-real-time dashboard for reference prices, transport and storage costs, and export differentials in selected commodities, so that bargaining happens on facts, not fog.
- 2. Regulatory clarity for co-ops.** We will convene a regulatory "fast lane" for co-ops that meet governance and capital criteria, standard constitutions, template membership agreements, and clear rules for pooling, grading, payment and dispute resolution. Let's reduce red tape without lowering standards.
- 3. Digital infrastructure.** We will support the adoption of e-trading and e-logistics tools that let co-ops aggregate volumes, schedule collection efficiently, and negotiate transport and storage at scale.

3) Five priority actions from government, designed for farm-level strength

(i) Biosecurity you can bank on.

Animal and plant health are non-negotiable. Key minimum measures identified include:

- Unifying FMD protocols under a national plan.
- Rebuilding vaccine production capacity and training skilled staff.
- Deploying rapid tests in the field and reducing lab turnaround times.
- Expanding animal identification systems to regional benchmarks.
- Strengthening research on local strains and post-vaccination immunity.
- Securing sustainable funding across the value chain.
- Reassessing outdated or unsupported policies, such as fifth quarter disposal.
- An Industry–Government Task Team on Animal Disease Prevention, Management, and Control will now be established.

(ii) Rural safety & border integrity.

We are aligning with SAPS on the National Rural Safety Strategy, with practical focus on stock-theft units, improved patrol mobility along border stretches, and better evidence flow from farm cameras and ALPR systems into case files. We will partner with organised agriculture to prioritise hotspots and share results.

(iii) Energy, water and infrastructure that work.

We are backing on-farm energy resilience through wheeling and embedded generation where feasible. On water, our teams are working with provinces to streamline water-use licensing and support irrigation modernisation that saves water and stabilises output. On logistics, we are engaging with port and rail partners to unlock capacity in cold chain, reefer plugs, and containers, because your global opportunity depends on domestic reliability.

(iv) Finance & risk management.

Through blended finance instruments and partnerships with the banking sector, we will prioritise working capital at reasonable terms, risk-sharing for climate-smart upgrades, and index-based insurance pilots where appropriate. The message is simple: productive farmers must not be starved of cash at the wrong moment in the cycle.

(v) Market access & standards.

We are accelerating digital export certification, pushing for science-based SPS measures in key markets, and coordinating trade promotion so that quality South African product, meat, fruit, grains, wine, wool, earns its premium. The best defence against price squeeze is more buyers at the table.

4) Broad-based Inclusion

Strength at the farm gate must be broad-based. We can grow commercial agriculture and, at the same time, bring new entrants into viable value chains. This is not charity; it is how we future-proof markets and skills. Where TLU SA members partner with emerging producers, through offtake, mentorship, shared logistics or land-use arrangements, the Department will help crowd in support. A bigger, more capable producer base makes the whole sector more investable.

5) Plain language on what farmers can expect this season

- **Clearer guidance** on DMAs, permits and testing windows, issued on a regular cadence.
- **Faster lab turnaround** where possible, with interim field screening to triage risk.
- **Consistent enforcement** at high-risk corridors - predictable rather than sporadic.
- **Improved export logistics coordination** for time-sensitive product.
- **Finance aligned to planting and marketing calendars**, not the other way around.

6) Closing: Local strength, global opportunity

Colleagues, South African agriculture has never asked for favours, only for fair rules, working systems and room to compete. That is our commitment. We will not agree on everything, but we can agree on this: when the farm gate is strong, the nation is strong.

Your co-operative vision speaks to a new chapter: farmers organising for bargaining power, efficiency and market reach. Government will be a constructive partner, firm on standards, flexible on process, and focused on outcomes.

On behalf of the Minister, thank you for your leadership, your courage under pressure, and your commitment to feed this country and the world. May this Congress be a turning point where ideas become institutions and where local farm strength becomes global opportunity, in practice, at scale, and soon.

Ke a leboga. Dankie. Enkosi. Thank you.

-End-

For media enquiries, please contact:

Ms Joylene van Wyk

Ministry of Agriculture Spokesperson

joylenev@nda.gov.za / 063 298 5661

Issued by: The Ministry of Agriculture