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SPEECH BY MINISTER JOHN STEENHUISEN
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE
ADDRESS TO THE BLACK BUSINESS COUNCIL

5 June 2025

Chairperson, members of the council, esteemed colleagues and guests,

It is a great honour to address the Black Business Council today, an institution that plays a pivotal role in shaping inclusive growth and enterprise development in our country. I thank you for the opportunity to reflect not only on the challenges facing our agricultural sector, but also the real and practical strides we are making to ensure that Black farmers, especially those starting at the margins of the economy, are given a viable path toward commercial success.

Across our rural landscape, there are thousands of hardworking farmers—men and women who till the soil not just for their own subsistence, but with the hope of building a legacy, feeding communities, and participating fully in our nation’s agricultural economy. However, too often, those ambitions are curtailed by structural barriers: Access to land, finance, markets, technology, and above all, meaningful support to transition from surviving to thriving.

That is the transformation agenda we are focused on.

One of the central commitments of the Department of Agriculture over the next five years is to substantially increase the share of Black producers in South Africa’s total agricultural output—from 8% currently, to at least 20%. This is not just a policy statement; it is a targeted outcome that informs how we allocate resources, structure partnerships, and measure the impact of public programmes.

We have already taken decisive steps. In March 2024, Cabinet approved the National Policy on Comprehensive Producer Development Support. This policy introduces a clear and



practical framework for how we categorise, support, and monitor the progression of farmers from subsistence to commercial operations. Importantly, the policy also affirms that those who farm for household consumption deserve equal support to ensure sustainable livelihoods and food security.

Let me highlight some of the core initiatives we are implementing to turn vision into action: Through our flagship Blended Finance Scheme, we are combining grants with loan financing to increase black producers' access to affordable capital. Since its inception, over R5,8 billion has been invested in the sector through partnerships with institutions like the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), Land Bank, and ABSA. These funds have already supported 381 Black commercial producers and created thousands of jobs. In the poultry sector alone, this support enables the production of over four million birds per cycle.

We have also launched the Agro-Energy Fund, which supports both Black and White producers with investments in alternative energy solutions. This initiative is not only about sustainability, but about competitiveness in a high-cost energy environment.

Through the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) and Ilima/Letsema conditional grants, we are supporting tens of thousands of smallholder and subsistence producers with inputs, mechanisation, on- and off-farm infrastructure, and market certification. In the 2025/26 financial year, R1,685 billion has been allocated through CASP alone, with the aim of supporting over 10,000 producers and creating more than 4,000 jobs.

We are not only focused on production, but on market readiness. Our Market Readiness Programme, implemented in partnership with the Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB), supports farmers to attain South African Good Agricultural Practices (SAGAP) certification and access to both domestic and international markets. At least 300 smallholder producers will be trained in marketing and certification over the coming year.

Technology is a pivotal enabler of transformation. In partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, we are developing an online platform that will allow farmers to access support services, training resources, and technical information in real time.

In addition, we are shifting the mindset through the Smallholder Empowerment and Promotion (SHEP) Programme, encouraging farmers to "grow to sell" rather than "grow and sell." Paired with the Commodity-Based Extension Approach, we are building a cadre of specialised extension practitioners to strengthen value chains from the ground up.

The challenges of climate change and disaster risk require new thinking. Through our insurance subsidy pilot in partnership with the Land Bank, and in collaboration with National Treasury and the South African Insurance Association, we are exploring the feasibility of a public-private agricultural index insurance model to help producers recover from adverse weather and biosecurity threats.

Chairperson,

Transformation in agriculture will not be achieved by government alone. It requires deep and sustained partnerships with organised business, financial institutions, and farmers themselves. Land access must be tackled alongside production finance, training, infrastructure, and market development.

To the members of the Black Business Council, your role in this journey is essential. Whether through investment, mentorship, enterprise development or value chain inclusion, you hold many of the levers that can turn inclusion into prosperity.

The future of agriculture in South Africa will not be built on large-scale estates alone. It will be built on thousands of smaller farms, cooperatives, and family enterprises that, with the right support, can feed our nation and build a more just and sustainable economy.

We are committed to walking that path with you.

Thank you.

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