



## **MEDIA STATEMENT: LAND TENURE SUMMIT**

8 September 2014

### **Summit was really all about land ceilings**

A land tenure summit, called by the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform, Minister Gugile Nkwinti and which took place in Boksburg from 4 to 6 September 2014, was attended by ASUF's chairperson, Mr Japie Grobler, as well as by individual member organisations of ASUF, being NAFU-SA, AFASA, TAU-SA and Agri SA.

"ASUF participated in the summit expecting that the outcomes would be in line with the Constitution, taking stock of implementation failures in the past, and coming up with workable solutions within this framework, which would help speed up land reform without endangering food security", said Japie Grobler in Bothaville today. It was evident from the debates that delegates were frustrated with poor implementation and corruption in the land sector.

"The summit started off on a positive note, with the majority of delegates acting in a disciplined manner and although the debates in the commissions were vibrant and robust, it took place in the spirit of nation building, respect and a fair degree of realism", Grobler added.

Tenure security of farm-dwellers was high on the agenda, and eviction from commercial farms was highlighted as an ongoing problem. A moratorium on evictions was once again called for. There was also a call for effective implementation and enforcement of existing laws and policies, with one commission recommending that the relative rights proposal be shelved until a comprehensive overhaul of existing policies and laws has taken place and options such as equity shareholding schemes and BEE deals considered as viable alternatives. The issue of provision of basic services to farmworkers and farm-dwellers also received attention and it was evident that clarity is required as to who is responsible for providing such basic services. ASUF encourages all its member organisations to help ensure that farmworkers and their families reside in good quality housing and have access to basic services such as clean, running water and proper sanitation.

ASUF welcomes the Minister's efforts to get the communal land into production by way of issuing title deeds. "This is a major step in the right direction" Grobler said.

"It seems however, that Minister Nkwinti's main aim with this summit was to get buy-in for the ANC policy conference resolutions regarding land ceilings. Land ceilings were proposed in the Green Paper, but after almost two years of consultation and negotiations within the National Reference Group process and many expert opinions, research and interactions, there was no buy-in for the concept of land-ceilings.

The Summit was called on relatively short notice and was attended by more than 2000 invitees of which only a handful were from the commercial agricultural sector. From the outset, it was clear that the Minister wanted the summit to give the go-ahead for the implementation of land

ceilings in order to give effect to the Green Paper proposal of private ownership with limited extent”, said Grobler. “It really is a pity that the Minister used this summit to try and force land ceilings through and did so on the basis of a discussion document submitted to him by AFASA.” This, despite the recommendations by the commission working on it to only consider ceilings in exceptional cases and not as an absolute.

“Whilst some of the member organisations of ASUF indicated at the Summit that they might support blanket land-ceilings, this is an extremely complex matter with many probable negative consequences. It was clear from the input of delegates at the summit that there is a host of variables that need to be taken into account if one were to speculate about sustainable farm sizes. It is something which requires informed debate within the ASUF family and will be on the agenda of its next meeting. This debate must take place within the framework of national food security, the stability of the sector, investment in the sector and commodity specific requirements for land. Grobler said. Land ceilings in an absolute form like a maximum number of hectares, could also impact job creation negatively. “As a sector, we would love to see more new entrants and more sustainable equity schemes benefitting farm workers”, Grobler said, “but in the current uncertain policy environment and with small profit margins in most commodities, with limited research and support and very limited access to affordable financing, it is a huge challenge for these new entrants and the reality is that food cannot at this point in time be produced commercially without land being put up as collateral to finance production loans.”

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