



agriculture,  
forestry & fisheries

Department:  
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Speech delivered at the 2015 Grain SA Congress in  
Bothaville – Free State**

**by**

**Hon Minister Senzeni Zokwana, MP**

**Date: 04 March 2015**

***SUSTAINABLE GRAIN PRODUCTION DURING THE PROCESS OF  
LAND REFORM***

Mr Steytler, Chairperson of Grain SA, Leadership of Grain SA, MECs and other dignitaries, leaders in the Agricultural sector, members of the media, and most importantly grain farmers of South Africa.

The grain industry is hurting, and I insisted to be here at your Congress with you to share in your pain. Our crops are dying and the leaders of our country are concerned about our farmers and consumers living from the food you produce. The season started so well with lots of momentum from the previous bumper crop of last year. Food security risks were not even on the radar screen. Then came the merciless/ruthless sun and one heat wave after the other in January and February. The load-shedding made us in the cities aware of how hot it is out there because our air conditioners could not work. But as a farmer myself, I realised what was happening and I shivered. This is a true example of 'suffering in silence'.

When I signed the trade deal with China in December last year, I was dreaming of tons of maize exports to them – well, maybe next year. We will continue to seek markets for your products and will not stop because of the current drought. We will rise again!

The DAFF has developed a Food Security Policy and the Government established a food security centre of excellence, but unfortunately rain cannot be made. The department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, in collaboration with the Department of Social Development, put together a National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security which was approved by Cabinet in September 2013. The main objective of the policy is to integrate and coordinate all food and nutrition security programmes in the country championed from different line Ministries and private partners. Plans are afoot and already well-advanced in developing the Food and Nutrition Security Implementation Plan for the Policy. The Implementation Plan will be ready by March 2015.

The blueprint document (the Policy) also prescribes a Centre of Excellence to conduct research on food and nutrition-related matters and to build capacity on these aspects in the country. The University of Pretoria has since been bestowed with this responsibility to illuminate the country and also to serve as a torchbearer in this regard.

The scale of the drought and its impact will change quite a few of our priorities.

Whilst the focus might have been on sustainable production during the Land reform process, we also need to allocate time and resources to maintain sustainable production. My colleague, Mr Gugile Nkwinti, will focus on land reform and I will assist to ensure sustainable production.

I am concerned that this drought will also impact on our ability to produce next season. For that, I need your input and support, not just as farmers, but also as those involved in the value chain (banks, input suppliers and agribusinesses). This is a disaster for the whole sector, not just the farmers. Without the farmers there will be no sales next year. Without production there is no food. We are in this together.

My Department will convene a group of experts to put together some action plans to overcome this challenge. I would like to call on the leaders of the value chain to participate with intent and not to regard it as just a talk show. This won't only be a discussion group. We need action of best practices to get us over this hill. Our farmers are the best in the world and we owe it to them to keep them in production. You have fed us for many years and now is the time to step up and assist you to do what you do best. I have noticed that some of my colleagues from the Provincial legislatures are present here. We all need to get together to find solutions as a country to overcome.

I was also alerted to the difficulty for our new era commercial farmers to access finance. I can assure you that we are close to a breakthrough to resolve this matter. The absence of an operational solution for this matter is the only, but biggest obstacle to speed up the establishment of more commercial Black farmers. I am aware of an application by the NAMC to the Jobs Fund to partner with the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries and the industry to establish a Fund to new grain farmers to get access to a financing facility.

I would like to thank Grain SA for being our partner with your Farmer Development programme. It is not just encouraging to me, but an inspiration to us all! Grain SA has set the benchmark - the results are impressive, but we now have to step up and move from the training phase to commercial production phase. You need to assist those farmers that are going to get loans.

I attended your Grain Farmer of the Year function and was very proud to see the fruit of your harvest. Congratulations to the 2014 winners – to Richard Hobson, Ralph & Praline Swart, Lungelwa Kama and Enoch Khumalo. Let's use these building blocks you have put in place to ensure sustainable production whilst we do land reform and hurdling over the other issues in agriculture such as the current drought.

I want to call upon the Grain Trusts to continue with their partnerships with Grain SA to have sustainable production during the time of transition in agriculture. Your vision and co-operation thus far have delivered the necessary results. Let's grow it and progress to the next level. We can all move South Africa forward.

A little bird told me about your announcement later today regarding funeral policies, hospital plans, and education provisions for the children and a type of savings plan for retirement for the grain farmworkers of the members of Grain SA. I can see your heart in your actions and it fills me with gratefulness. Thanks for assisting us to alleviate poverty not just by been good food producers, but also by been good employers. Your leadership in this regard is applaudable!

I grew up on a farm. I know the saying: "n Boer maak 'n plan" in practise. Let's put our heads together and make a plan. We owe it to ourselves, we owe it to the nation and we owe it to our children and grandchildren.

Climate change and land reform are the immediate hills ahead of us in 2015. The older men in the audience will be able to share their experiences in overcoming the previous droughts. Let's keep a good heart, let's work together and let's pray together for a better future for all. "Alles sal regkom as ons saamwerk!"

Dankie, Thank you, Enkosi