

UNREVISED HANSARD  
MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025  
VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 1

TUESDAY, 08 JULY 2025

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**PROCEEDINGS OF MINIPLenary - GOOD HOPE CHAMBER**

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Members of the mini-plenary session met at Good Hope Chamber at 10:00.

House Chairperson Mr W Horn took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

Debate on Vote No 29 - Agriculture:

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: House Chairperson, hon members of the portfolio committee, Deputy Minister, Capa, distinguish colleagues, stakeholders, guests and fellow South Africans. It is a distinct privilege to stand before you today to deliver and present the 2025-2026 Budget Vote for the Department of Agriculture.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 2**

This is more than a simple procedural responsibility, it is a defining moment for agriculture in our country. The restructuring of the department, now solely focused on agriculture, following its separation from Land Reform and Rural Development, marks the beginning of a more intentional, more focused, and more responsive era, in public agricultural policy.

Our mission is as urgent as it is important, to build a food system that is inclusive, competitive, sustainable—and above all, which leaves no South African behind.

South African agriculture stands at a crossroads. On the one side, we see the extraordinary potential that the agricultural sector has to create jobs, contribute further to the gross domestic product growth, strengthen exports, and revitalise rural economies. On the other side, we confront persistent risks, climate shocks, high input costs, biosecurity failures, land degradation, weak infrastructure, and uneven access to markets and finances and of course international shocks.

This morning, we all wake up to the news of the letter, which President Donald Trump has sent to a number of countries

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 3**

around the world, including South Africa, announcing intentions to persist with a 30% tariff, on South African goods and produce exported into the United States from 1 August.

Whilst we can breathe a sigh of relief that this tariff did not come into effect as it was due to tomorrow, it does give us an opportunity to urgently use the next few weeks. To be able to try and negotiate a way forward to prevent this.

Whilst not explicit, the announcement would signal the end of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which gives South Africa's duty-free access to the United States, US, for more than 6000 products. Including goods and automobiles, agriculture and textile industries. The agricultural sector remains particularly exposed in the areas of citrus, wine, nuts and table grapes.

Now more than ever, it highlights the need for urgent reform in South Africa, so that we can ensure that our economy meets the requirements of our trading partners around the world. And I look forward to working with Minister Tau and others in the coming weeks to urgently seek a way through this impasse and

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 4**

ensure that we can avoid the 30% tariff for agricultural sector.

But there's also human reality behind the figures. And this speaks of smallholder farmers, locked out of opportunity or families facing food insecurity or of veterinary professionals overburdened and under resourced. And of a nation that far too often reacts to crisis rather than prepares to prevent it.

This budget to be tabled today, is designed to change that trajectory. It is grounded in the 2025-2030 strategic plan, which articulates the seven key strategic priorities which are placed before this House last year. These are, if I may recall them: Partnerships for growth, a modern and progressive legislative environment, improving market access, providing effective farmer support, strengthening bio security and disaster preparedness, advocacy for a growing sector and improving food and nutrition security. These are not just catchphrases, they're a call to action and a road map to transformation of the sector.

In terms of the budget and the 2025-26 financial year, the department has been allocated a budget aligned to four core

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 5**

programs; Program 1; Administration, Program 2; Agricultural Production Bio Security and Natural Resource Management, Program 3; Food Security and Support and Program 4; Economic Development, Trade and Marketing. Each program will be executed with a focus on impact value for money, reduction of wastage and intergovernmental coordination.

Let me now detail some of these key interventions. Under Program 1; Administration. We cannot talk about delivery until we have built a capable and ethical state. We are busy finalizing a new macro structure after the separation from the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development and streamlining key systems. We're aiming to increase our digital integration from 18% to 30% by 2030. This includes revamping of procurement oversight, reducing the adverse audit findings and ensuring that every single manager is held accountable for the performance outcomes within their units and departments. A department that promotes food security must be secured itself. Secure against waste, inefficiency and mismanagement. And that must be our first responsibility.

Under Program 2, which deals with agricultural production, bio security and natural resources. We must agree that one of the

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 6**

greatest unseen threats to our sector today, is not only climate but also bio security failure. The 2023 avian flu outbreak taught us that. It was not just a health incident; it was a systemic shock to the system. Egg prices skyrocketed, small producers folded, and consumer confidence plummeted. Today, as we also face an outbreak of foot and mouth disease. And we face concerns around swine flu and other livestock diseases. Let me be very clear, bio security is not only a veterinary issue. It is a national priority, and it is as important to our future as electricity, roads, water and sanitation.

We're therefore establishing the Bio Security Council with the whole of society mandate to coordinate public, private and community responses in a better way. We've launched the National Bio Security Compact, which is an agreement with clear roles, vaccine stock levels, determined, predetermined outbreak protocols and infrastructure commitments.

We're also deploying 50 animal health technicians to assist with urgent vaccination rollouts. We're prioritizing the containment of the foot and mouth diseases in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng with forward and backward tracing. And just this

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 7**

week we were able to lift the disease management areas in the Eastern Cape and the Limpopo Province. And that was largely due to the incredible cooperation we received from farmers, organized agriculture, agricultural bodies and, of course, the veterinary services in those provinces and national.

We are strengthening oversight and capability at the Onderstepoort Biological Products to address backlogs and modernise production. And I want to pay particular thanks to the committee chairperson for their relentless, dogged oversight of that particular facility as well. And I'm convinced that with enough pressure from the ministry and from the portfolio committee, we will see the turnaround at OBP that we all want.

We're also expanding the partnerships with the University of Pretoria's National Bio Security Hub, enhancing surveillance, Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures, SPS, capacity as well as graduate training. This will strengthen our ability to manage future outbreaks before they escalate. The climate change adaptation and mitigation plan will improve water use efficiency, promote drought resistant crops and reinforce

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 8**

resilience among smallholders and emerging producers. These are the essential survival tools in a rapidly warming climate.

Program 3 deals with food security and support. Now food security is not an aspirational goal. It is a daily crisis for millions. According to the National Food and Security Survey released by the department last year, only 36,5% of our households are food secure. Nearly 18% experienced severe food insecurity. These are not just figures, they are expressions of a child going to bed hungry, of a parent sacrificing meals of dreams deferred. And to respond, we're implementing the 2024-29 national Food and Nutrition Security Plan, coordinated with health, education, social development and environment.

We'll be scaling up the school gardens and community food hubs, as well as encouraging home production. And we are promoting neglected and underutilized species. Over 66,000 farmers have received training and over 3000 of our agricultural graduates have been placed through our internship programs. We are the process of integrating all 11 agricultural colleges into the higher education system to ensure that they become centres of excellence and the hubs of producing the farmers of tomorrow.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 9**

This is also a budget for youth. As I said at the Bio Security Summit, the future of agriculture will be decided by the next generation. Not only those who receive the land, but those who study climate smart techniques, monitor disease outbreaks and build the data systems for traceability. And that is why we're opening up pathways for young people into veterinary science, extension services agritech and on farm learning. Let us empower them to build a new kind of agriculture, one rooted in science, community, innovation and opportunity.

Program 4 deals with economic development, trade and marketing. And we're very proud of our record in this regard. Two hundred and fifty-eight billion Rand in agricultural exports in 2024 alone. But this will not continue unless we protect and expand market access. We've also seen how important the agriculture sector is for our growth domestic product, GDP, being the largest contributor, our sector in the first quarter of this year.

And so, we will be focusing on not only expanding existing markets but looking continuously for new markets. Some of the policy interventions that we will have for the 2025-26 years, to finalise the Fertilizer and Stock Remedies Act, launch the

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 10**

agricultural digital platform with the Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO, and operationalize the producer support portal. We'll be hosting agricultural extension weeks, reigniting technical support at the farm gate level.

Now, no matter how sound our strategy is, we cannot succeed if our institutions themselves are broken. And that is why we're introducing a ministerial oversight framework. With biannual performance and audit reviews, improved accountability of all boards within the sector, ensuring alignment with the decadal plan, consequence management for non-performance has to be essential.

Entities like the Agricultural Research Council, ARC, Onderstepoort Biological Products, OBP, the Perishable Products Export Control Board, PPECB and the National Agricultural Marketing Council, NAMC, exist to deliver not just to drift.

So, this budget is more than just a set of figures. It is a statement of intent. A commitment to build a new kind of inclusive agriculture. An agriculture, that is youth driven, science-based, climate smart and importantly, inclusive. An

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 11**

agriculture that understands that the farmer in Lebogang or Lusikisiki is just as vital to our food system, as the Chief Executive Officer, CEO, of a global Agri export firm.

We are not starting from scratch. We are building on the strengths of a sector that already works, that is already organized, but that is hungry to grow. As President Mandela famously said:

After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.

As a department, we are ready, so let's climb together. I'd like to take this opportunity, before I close to thank the portfolio committee for their vigorous oversight interactions. And also, to thank my Deputy Minister for her enduring and continued support, both in committee but also out in the communities. She is always a constant reminder that the best laid plans of government mean nothing unless they are inculcated at a community level. I'd also like to thank the senior management of the department, the Director General, DG, and Deputy Director Generals DGGs and his team. I'd like to thank my staff in the Ministry for ensuring that by and large

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 12**

we get kept on course. And I'd also like to thank organised agriculture, who constantly are provider of support and advice in the sector.

We are very, very lucky as well to be blessed with the best farmers and farm workers in the world and they really are the envy of all of the international countries that I've travelled to. It is incredible that they are able to compete against heavily subsidized economies in an environment where they are not subsidized but are still able to come out on top in many sectors. I have a table the Budget Vote for the Department of Agriculture. I thank you.

Ms D D PULE: Hon House Chairperson, hon Minister and Deputy Minister, distinguished members of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, director-general, DG, and your team, leaders of the entities of the department, hon Members of Parliament and fellow South Africans, thank you for the opportunity to present the report of the portfolio committee and contribute to this vital debate. As we consider the 2025-26 Budget Vote for Agriculture, I rise on behalf of the ANC to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to food security, robust support for

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 13**

smallholder subsistence farmers and the equitable allocation of resources across our agricultural sector.

Our Constitution enshrines the right to sufficient food and calls on government to achieve it. In that spirit the Department of Agriculture's core purpose is precisely to lead and support sustainable farming to achieve economic growth, job creation and, above all, food security, rural development and transformation in our countryside. This is the framework guiding all our rural development efforts.

The ANC has long recognised that food security is fundamental to the wellbeing of our people and stability of our nation. One of the three critical focus areas in our current term is ensuring food security by strengthening agriculture and rural areas, boost production and creating jobs. We are meant to turn these words into action, hon Minister and hon Deputy Minister.

This budget continues to prioritise food security initiatives from community and school nutrition gardens to commercial food production schemes, while also easing the cost of living by expanding VAT free food basket for so that rising prices do

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 14

not deny our people nourishment. In line with the Freedom Charter's enduring call for food to be plentiful and no one shall go hungry; our aim is to achieve zero hunger through both increased food availability and affordability.

Hon Chairperson, food security is not achievable without active inclusion of our thousands of small-scale and subsistence farmers across the country. The ANC championed these farmers as the key to transforming our agricultural landscape and bringing previously excluded communities into the economy. We bade this commitment with tangible resources over the five the past five years through flagship support programmes such as the past and Ilima Letsima - I am sorry, hon House Chairperson. That is *isilungu se* information technology, IT, [English IT.] Hon House Chairperson, ...

*IsiXhosa:*

... ewe ndithethe ngesiXhosa.

*English:*

Alright. Thank you very much.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 15**

Over the past five years, through flagship support programmes such as the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, Casp, and Ilima/Letsema, government has invested billions to uplift smallholder farmers. For example, between 2019 and 2020 and 2023-24 Casp alone spent R6,66 billion on over 2 100 projects benefiting nearly 60 000 smallholder producers and creating over 21 700 jobs while the Ilima/Letsema Programme invested R2,61 billion to support roughly 297 000 subsistence farmers and smallholder farmers creating over 81 000 jobs in the process. These are not abstract numbers they represent emerging farmers empowered with irrigation systems, tractors, seeds, training and mentorship. They represent families that are now able to produce food for both their tables and their local markets.

In the current financial year, the department has allocated an additional R1,74 billion, especially to support over 6 000 smallholder producers across all nine provinces and R448 million to assist 67 500 vulnerable households to boost food production and create almost 9 500 farming jobs at the household level. This massive investment underscores the ANC's belief that smallholder farmers are the backbone of local food security.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 16**

Let me illustrate what these support programmes mean on the ground. They mean fencing a community vegetable plot in Limpopo so that crops are not lost to roaming livestock. They mean building a pack house and cold storage facility for a co-operative apple farmer in the Western Cape, enabling them to meet market standards. They mean giving women in rural KwaZulu-Natal, access to quality poultry feed and vaccination so that they can raise chickens for sale and nutrition.

Concretely, our farmer support packages, including on farm and off farm infrastructure like boreholes, irrigation and storage facilities, provision of input, seeds, fertilisers and mechanisation support in the form of tractors and equipment, as well as training, extension services and mentorship.

Government is also helping small producers' meet market standards, for example, through the SA Good Agricultural Practices Certification Programme, in partnership with the Perishable Products Export Control Board, which certify smallholders to supply safe high quality food to retailers and the public. These efforts enable emerging farmers to break into value-chains from which they were previously excluded, broadening market access even at the grassroots level.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 17**

The ANC remains resolute that the historical injustices in agriculture must continue to be addressed. Equitable access to resources, land, water, finance and technology is fundamental to true freedom for our people. The Budget Vote of the department's plans over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework reflects a clear drive towards transformation and inclusion in agriculture.

Since the dawn of democracy, our government has redistributed about 5,3 million hectares of land to over 315 000 beneficiaries, including farm dwellers and labour tenants, through land reform programmes. This land redistribution, alongside affirmative procurement and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment measures, is transforming the face of farming by bringing thousands of black farmers, many of them women and youth, into the sector.

Crucially, equitable resource allocation also means targeting our public investments where they yield the greatest socioeconomic impact, namely to small-scale farmers, rural women and youth, ensuring transparency and accountability in how these funds are used.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 18**

We as the portfolio committee are concerned about instances where funds which are meant for farmer support did not reach inter that beneficiaries. We will tighten oversight so that grant funding flows only to provinces with proper plans and robust reporting, hon Minister and hon Deputy Minister. We will not tolerate any misappropriation that robs our farmers of the support they are due.

The ANC is backing up commitments with good governance because every rand in this budget must translate into ploughs in the fields and food on the table.

As I conclude, hon members, we confront the reality that South Africa, like many countries, has been buffeted by global crises from pandemics to conflicts which have driven up food prices and tested our food system. Yet, thanks to the resilience of our farmers and the support of proactive government measures, we have remained food secure as a nation, although we still need to do more to produce food for all South Africans, especially the vulnerable.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 19**

We are a net exporter of many agricultural products and even in the challenging times, agriculture has continued to create jobs and opportunities.

Hon Chairperson, the ANC is determined to deepen these gains because agrarian reform is integral to social justice. We do so inspired by the ordinary Eastern Cape farmer who, with a small grant and training, turned her homestead plot into a thriving farm feeding her village, an example of empowerment multiplied thousand times by our policies.

Let us all support this budget, which is truly a budget for security and inclusion, because the food security and farmer support programme receives the largest allocation from this Vote. In doing so, we will be upholding the call of the Freedom Charter and our Constitution to fulfil our people's right to food. The ANC-led Government of National Unity, GNU will continue to ensure that the fruits of our land are shared by all, not just a few. Working together government, farmers, big and small and communities, we will ensure South Africa's food sovereignty and eradicate hunger once and for all.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 20**

Hon Minister, we call upon yourself and the hon Deputy Minister to handle the issues that arose from the Land Bank, all the calls that are done to the portfolio committee and to yourself so that the blended finance scheme finds a way to be able to assist farmers that are needed to be grown into commercial farming. If we do not do that, hon Minister and hon Deputy Minister, we are going to have a problem.

So, I am calling upon on behalf of the portfolio committee that you deal with those issues together with the Minister of Finance. Hon Chairperson, I would like to thank you.

[Applause.]

Mr J A MNGXITAM: Chair, let's start from the beginning. The MK party rejects this Budget Vote. Let us put the South African agricultural sector in its correct historical context. The development of modern South African white dominated agricultural sector is the outcome of a deliberate destruction of the African peasantry as indigenous agricultural production systems. In other words, the development of white agriculture in South Africa was dependent on the underdevelopment and destruction of African agricultural system and paradigms which were based on indigenous knowledge systems and ethical

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 21

production systems which respected the environment, animals and humans.

We do well to characterize the South African agricultural sector correctly as white settler and racists. It is driven by the European violent mentality which perceive the native and the land as factors of production to be exploited for profits. This model of agriculture is based on exploitation of black labour and the promotion of genetically modified organisms' production systems. It is essentially driven by profits over the wellbeing of the people. This is magnified by the export-orientation instead of food security for the nation.

Over 15% - now hon members, let us observe this - over 15% of the nation is without food security. However, this sector, which is white agriculture, produce for export markets. Our people eat heads and feet of chicken.

*Setswana:*

Re ja ditlhogo le maotwana.

*English:*

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 22**

Driven by the anarchy capitalist logic, the South African export maize on one hand and import maize on the other. The much-praised white agricultural sector can't produce enough chicken to feed the nation, so we import chicken from Brazil and the United States of America. This is madness. The government is scared to regulate the market and bring some order and logic to the madness of free market running. The state has created a conducive environment for exports to thrive. That is why the Minister is here lamenting the fact that Trump has imposed those tariffs. It is because the South African agriculture is based on exporting food instead of addressing our food needs as a nation.

The white agriculture is deeply implicated in colonialism and apartheid. When the British and Afrikaners made peace in Vereeniging in 1902, it was based on the parcelling out of land and agricultural sector to the Afrikaners. Soon after the two foreign forces join hands and enacted the 1913 Natives Land Act to restrict Africans firstly, to only 7% of the land and then later to 13%. This brutal land dispossession process was in part fuelled by the need for cheap African labour. So long as Africans had land, they would not work for a settler colonialist.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 23**

The colonialist settlers then took our land and enforced all manner of taxes payable by the currency of the settlers. This triggered the Bhambatha resistance war over land. Land dispossession and the destruction of agricultural sector go hand in hand. We cannot talk about reforming agricultural sector without talking about land reform. This is the challenge a progressive government will recognise. Land and agriculture are Siamese twins.

The Budget Vote does not contribute to dismantling the apartheid and colonial agricultural sector, which is economically highly ineffective, contributing only 2,9% to the Gross Domestic Product, GDP. The white dominated agricultural sector is highly inefficient and as exemplified by its contribution to the GDP.

If anything, this Budget Vote should have addressed the plight of the 5000 currently unemployed agricultural professional assistants. The department sends our children to agricultural colleges, when they finish, they are sent home to be destroyed by unemployment. This is a betrayal of our children and confirmation that this department serves white agriculture at the expense of black needs. The sad thing about these 5000

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 24**

black young professionals is that the portfolio committee has committed to supporting them, it is in the minutes. But right now, in this budget, we are talking about supporting 320 instead of 5000. This is a serious betrayal of these young black people which were sent to colleges, they got their education, now they are sitting at home. We must all bow our heads in shame.

All the entities under the department are biased towards supporting white commercial agriculture. This includes exports and the vaccine production and distribution. The Department of Agriculture needs a massive transformation process in order to serve the interests of the 2 million black small-scale farmers. This department is a tool of global and local white agricultural elites.

Right now the department spends billions in litigation on behalf of global multinationals who teamed up with local white agriculture to systematically poison a nation with genetically modified crops, GMO. Why is the department standing with these killers instead of defending the nation? Europe, China, Russia have basically stopped feeding their people GMO maize. Not here, we eat GMO in the morning, at lunch, and dinner. Little

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 25**

wonder our people are so sick. The national budget goes to these systematic poisoning of our people for profits. Until the agricultural paradigm is changed to a more sustainable and healthier organic production, it will be unethical to support this budget.

Locally driven agricultural models are possible. There is a jewel in Makhathini Flats in KwaZulu-Natal. With systematic support, the area can kickstart a massive rural development and modernisation process. But there is no vision or our commitment to promoting black agricultural excellence by this department. Support is lethargic and slow. The sugar cane farmers of Makhathini Flats are betrayed by this lethargic support.

It must be asked, Minister, where is the 10% commitment of the national budget to go to agriculture as agreed in Maputo and many subsequent meetings of the African Union, AU? The MK party reject this Budget Vote. [Time expired.]

Mr C F B SMIT: Hon House Chair, members and fellow South Africans, today I am proud to reflect on the work being done

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 26**

under the leadership of Minister John Steenhuisen in the Department of Agriculture, to showcase the DA's difference.

Guided by seven clear priorities, Minister Steenhuisen has championed reforms that are not only revitalising our agricultural sector but also creating jobs, driving inclusive growth and empowering the next generation of commercial farmers.

Participation with growth. At the core of his approach lies a firm belief in public-private partnerships. Minister Steenhuisen has forged strong ties with businesses such as Unilever, that not only train but also ensure a sustainable market for 100 emerging farmers of herbs and peppers in Jozini, KwaZulu-Natal.

The partnership with SA Breweries, SAB, integrating emerging producers into its corona lime supply chain is a shining example of how inclusive value chains can uplift emerging farmers while sustaining local economies.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 27**

These partnerships have created pathways to profitability and job creation, showing that transformation and productivity can go hand in hand.

Legislative and regulatory review. Minister Steenhuisen understands that innovation cannot flourish under outdated laws, that's why he announced a comprehensive review of outdated legislation, regulations and administrative systems. These reforms include laws governing fertilisers and genetically modified organisms, GMOs, at the AVI Africa Conference.

By cutting red tape and modernising agricultural regulations, we are clearing the way for biotech innovation, safer food systems and a faster product development, all essential ingredients for a competitive and modern economy.

Improved market access. Access to markets determine whether a farmer thrives or fails. This year, under the Minister's leadership, we celebrate the reopening of apple exports, Thailand, ending a 16-year hiatus.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 28**

Our trade reach has also expanded into China, Vietnam and the European Union, EU, through enhanced phytosanitary protocols and streamlined export systems. These gains don't just grow exports, they sustain agri-processing jobs, foreign income and rural development.

Effective support for farmers. Support must be practical, not patronising. The blended finance scheme has unlocked R5,8 billion in capital for 381 emerging commercial farmers, empowering them to grow beyond survivalist operations.

Through the Perishable Products Export Control Board, PPECB, Market Readiness Programme, over 300 smallholder farmers were trained in export certification and compliance. These exports are building a new class of agri-entrepreneurs who are job creators, not just land recipients.

Strengthened biosecurity. Nothing threatens rural livelihoods more than disease outbreaks. Minister Steenhuisen has taken decisive steps towards national biosecurity by tightening regulations once he identified loopholes that allowed industry players to get away with serious violations in movement of animals out of disease areas.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 29**

He also initiated a first of its kind, mass vaccination programme to contain threats of avian flu and foot-and-mouth disease. With this, protecting billions in agricultural value and jobs that depend on it, particularly in the livestock and poultry sector where emerging farmers are most vulnerable.

Advocacy for a growing sector. Agriculture does not operate in isolation, it depends on efficient ports, secure roads and access to energy and digital infrastructure. Minister Steenhuisen consistently advocates for improvements in rural infrastructure, port operations and broadband access.

This is now becoming a reality with the assistance of another DA Minister, for Communication and Digital Technologies, Solly Malatsi's action to open the market with the relaxation of regulations that allow for low orbit satellite internet providers.

The DA sees agriculture not as a sector on the margins but as a key driver for job creation and national recovery, especially in underdeveloped regions.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 30**

Improved food security. Finally, the expansion of community seed banks in Limpopo, Eastern Cape and North West, with plans for KwaZulu-Natal and Northern Cape, is a vital step towards seed sovereignty, food independence and preservation of indigenous crops.

These banks ensure that our smallholder farmers can continue planting in even the face of drought, climate change and market shocks.

In conclusion, under Minister Steenhuisen and the DA, the Department of Agriculture has become a beacon of good governance, smart investment and inclusive opportunity. We are providing that with the right leadership.

Agriculture can be the springboard out of poverty, a creator of jobs and a backbone of sustainable growth.

Let us continue to invest, innovate and include so that every farmer, no matter where they start, can contribute to feeding our nation and growing our economy. I thank you.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 31**

Mr M K MONTWEDI: House Chairperson, the previous speaker comes here, continue to sing songs of praises to individual DA Ministers, leaving capable black professionals in the department because without them, the Minister will not achieve whatever that is in this budget.

House Chairperson, the EFF does not support this budget vote.

The budget vote fails to appreciate the challenges faced by the agricultural sector and does not bring any tangible solution to addressing such.

Disease outbreaks remain a serious threat to the livestock sector, and emerging black producers are mostly affected by these diseases.

The department, through the Agricultural Research Council, ARC, has failed for more than 10 years to put systems in place to manufacture foot-and-mouth disease vaccines, and now relies on Botswana to supply us with foot-and-mouth disease vaccines.

Minister, failure to prioritise biosecurity remains a serious concern. We must tackle the emergence of foot-and-mouth

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 32

disease, avian influenza, African swine flu fever and brucellosis, that continue to negatively affect the industry.

We are in a manmade crisis of foot-and-mouth disease because the Minister dropped the ball and dissolved a multidisciplinary team established by former Minister Thoko Didiza and replaced it with some task team of DA light veterinary, only to reinstate the multidisciplinary team later when his preferred task team has failed. Therefore, we must locate the current challenges of foot-and-mouth disease right in the doorstep of the DA Minister of Agriculture.

House Chairperson, we have warned that this Government of National Unity, GNU, was established ... we have warned that the establishment of the GNU was only possessed with securing business interests and for politicians to line up their pockets. And here in this budget vote we see a substantial increase in the budget for the Ministry under Programme 1 on Administration, with 34,6%.

*Setswana:*

Modulasetilo, bogodu jwa leruo bo tswelela go ama ikonomi ya naga le pholo ya baruakgomo.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 33

Mme morago ga puo ya ga General Mkhwanazi ka Sontaga e tlhomamisa pelaelo ya rona ya gore go na le segongwana bosenyi seo se tlhotlhelediwang ke bangwe ba sepodisi go tseela batho ba rona leruo ka dikgoka e bile ba itshubi, ka ba na le tshireletso ya sepodisi.

*English:*

The two conditional grants, Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, CASP, and Ilima Letsema, constitute 73% of the total budget of Programme 3. A programme that should be at the forefront of supporting subsistence farming remains very silent on how they land to support these key sections of farmers, with the department's annual performance plan, APP, not having measurable targets for provinces on the utilisation of these key grants.

Market access remains a serious challenge in the sector, with both the department and National Marketing Agricultural Council having dismally failed to create market opportunities for our black producers to access markets, forcing our farmers to sell their produce at the cheapest prices because of fear of losing their produce.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 34**

We are calling for the department to assist black producers with storage facilities to keep their produce and to be deliberate to ensure that black farmers have shelf-space in local retailers.

For South Africa to continue to grow its export markets, particularly for the beef industry, due to the foot-and-mouth concerns, the need for a comprehensive farm to fork traceability system is non-negotiable. This was one of the key conditions for securing South Africa's exports to China post 2019 export ban on beef, wool and associated products due to foot-and-mouth disease.

House Chairperson, another ticking time bomb is the shortage of veterinarians, where we see only 60 to 70 veterinarians servicing a population of one million citizens, against an international norm of 400 to 60 vets servicing a population of one million citizens, and a vacancy rate of 45% in the veterinarian section in this high employment rate.

We are calling for the reintroduction of the community service programme for vets and that this programme, as opposed to what

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 35**

the Minister has done, must focus only on rural smallholder farmers, as that's where the problem is.

We remain concerned with the recycling of executives at the Onderstepoort Biological Products. With the entity under a DA Minister, continuing to keep pensioners who should be at home playing with their grandchildren, whilst many qualified and capable graduates languish the streets unemployed.

The budget vote is not alive to challenges confronted by the black livestock sector. The livestock industry continues to be a significant pillar to the South African farm economy.

Lebo Mabe is a young farmer in the Dr Ruth Mompati District Municipality, with many other livestock farmers having to compete with heavily subsidised farmers from Botswana and Namibia, who have flooded the market with winners at auctions and abattoir, which has drastically dropped the price of winners to the benefit of those highly subsidised farmers in Botswana and Namibia.

The department has not done anything to create a conducive environment for farmers to compete.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 36**

The budget vote fails to put agricultural colleges at the centre of excellence and agricultural development.

Agricultural colleges are collapsing for the last ... and been neglected for the last 30 years.

We are calling for the finalisation of agricultural colleges to the status of institutions of higher learning, a process that started some 12 years ago and not completed thus far.

We are calling for the Minister to ensure that all agricultural colleges have trading accounts, and that the issue of articulation is urgently addressed and for the linking of agricultural colleges to academic financial year.

Land Bank received the largest transfer from the Department of Agriculture, having dismally failed to account to the department.

We want to thank all political parties that supported the EFF's motion without notice for Parliament to review the location of Land Bank as an entity of the Department of Finance.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 37**

The EFF rejects this budget vote. Thank you very much.

*IsiZulu:*

Inkosi R N CEBEKHULU: Ngibonge ithuba, Sihlalo

*English:*

While the IFP commends the outlined priority areas such as farmer support, land reform, and rural development, we question whether the current budget reflects the scale and complexity of the challenges confronting the sector.

Smallholder farmers, particularly in provinces like KZN continue to struggle with access to land, mechanisation and markets. Yet, despite repeated commitments support for subsistence and small-scale farmers remains a challenge.

We believe this is a missed opportunity to tackle rural poverty, youth unemployment and food insecurity, simultaneously. We note the strategic role of entities such as the ARC, OBP, Land and Agricultural Development Bank of South Africa, yet several concerns arise. Land Bank's continued reliance on bailouts and failure to disburse adequate credit to small-scale farmers must be addressed. OBP instability and ageing infrastructure threaten animal vaccine security,

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 38**

particularly for rural livestock farmers, which are mostly communal farmers where we come from. It must also be noted that South Africa faces a foot and mouth disease outbreak across certain provinces. OBP is unable to produce vaccines and instead relies on Botswana for supply, which is unfortunate for an organisation which was once producing and selling to other countries.

The ARC continues to underperform on critical innovations. While funding remains inadequate to meet the research demand of the climate threatening sector. Rural development component remains underfunded, underprioritised and poorly co-ordinated. This is unacceptable. We need visible integrated rural development zones, centres of local agricultural production, processing, and trade connected to the national infrastructure and supported by technical extension officers. South Africa faces increasing risk of droughts, floods, and soil degradation. Again, we should be seeing a reasonable budget for climate change mitigation and disaster response in agriculture.

The budget and APP are not merely financial tools. They are instruments of justice, equity and rural renewal. We cannot

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 39**

afford to fail the millions who depend on agriculture, not only for food, but for dignity and livelihood. In consideration of the comments made, the IFP supports this Budget Vote. Thank you.

Ms M L MATHOPA: House Chairperson, hon members, ladies and gentlemen, agriculture remains the backbone of our economy and a critical sector in addressing poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity. This budget represents a vital step towards transforming the agricultural sector, empowering smallholder farmers and ensuring food security for all South Africans. We welcome the budget's focus on supporting 180 000 subsistence and smallholder producers and advancing the commercialisation of 300 smallholder farmers through the blended finance model. These initiatives must be implemented with urgency and transparency to ensure tangible benefits reach those who need them most.

However, we call for the following key interventions to strengthen this budget's impact. National Agricultural Marketing Council, transparency on food prices. We urge the National Agricultural Marketing Council to proactively provide policymakers with clear actionable data on food pricing to

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 40**

help keep food costs as low as possible. In these trying economic times, South Africans cannot afford unchecked prices and price increases. The National Agricultural Marketing Council must play a more active role in monitoring and advising on measures to stabilise food prices for consumers.

Agricultural Research Council, empowering smallholder farmers. The ARC must prioritise the inclusion of smallholder farmers in its skills and technology transfer programmes by equipping emerging farmers with modern technologies, research-backed knowledge and sustainable practises. We can unlock their potential and integrate them into the mainstream agricultural economy, accelerating food security and blended finance support. The commitment to support subsistence and smallholder farmers must translate into real on-the-ground results. We demand strict oversight to ensure that financial support through the blended finance model reaches the intended beneficiaries efficiently without unnecessary bureaucratic delays. The Patriotic Alliance ...

*Setswana:*

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 41

... e dumela gore temothuo ga se fela lekala la batsayakarolo ba bagolo ba kgwebo, mme ke tsela ya botshelo ya dimilione tsa maAforikaborwa.

*English:*

This budget must be a tool for radical inclusion, ensuring that small-scale farmers, rural communities, and ordinary citizens benefit from our nation's agricultural potential. We support this budget with expectations that it promises will be delivered without fail. Let us work together to make food security a reality and build an agricultural sector that serves all South Africans. I thank you.

*Afrikaans:*

Dr W J BOSHOFF: Agb Huisvoorsitter, ons lees van die eerste departement van landbou so 'n goeie 4 000 jaar gelede hier in Afrika. Ons lees daarvan in Genesis. Die grondlegger van die eerste departement van landbou was niemand anders as Josef nie – Josef wie die Farao se droom van die sewe maer jare en die sewe vet jare uitgelê het, en die sewe maer jare wat so arm was dat hulle die vet jare opgeëet het, of wat in die vorm van sewe vet koringare of sewe vet koeie was. Die maer jare het hulle verslind dat daar niks van oorgebly het nie.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 42

Dit is die werklikheid van landbou in Afrika. Dit is siklies. Die klimaat is party jare wonderlik. As ons net in die vet jare kon geboer het dan sou daar geen tekorte ooit in Suid-Afrika en in Afrika gewees het nie, maar ons het die maer jare en daarvoor moet 'n mens beplan en daarvoor het jy 'n hele stelsel nodig.

Die stelsel waarvan ons in Egipte lees is aan die een kant suksesvol. Daar is graan opgeberg, al die landbouprodukte is vir die maer jare opgeberg, maar wat het toe in die maer jare gebeur? Mense moes eers al hul besittings aan die Farao verkoop. Later moes hulle hulself as slawe aan die Farao gaan verkoop en 'n feodale stelsel het ontstaan waar mense die huurders op die grond wat eens op 'n tyd hulle s'n was geword het omdat hulle eenvoudig nie aan die gang kon bly nie. Dit is nie 'n baie goeie sosiale stelsel nie en dit is ook iets wat ons in Suid-Afrika wil vermy.

Nou as ons na Suid-Afrika se landbou terugkom, dan het die ANC aan bewind gekom met 'n beleid wat die EFF en die MK Party nou nog baie graag geïmplementeer sou wou sien. Die vraag is hoekom het die ANC dit nie geïmplementeer nie, want dit was hul beleid?

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 43

Die antwoord is omdat daar genoeg historiese voorbeelde is van wat gebeur as jy inkom met 'n kommunistiese beleid in 'n hele landboustelsel wat op die vryemark en op privaat inisiatief gegrond is meteens omverwerp. Jy kry wat jy in Rusland na die Kommunistiese Rewolusie gekry het, of in Sjina of in Vietnam, of baie onlangs in Zimbabwe. Jy kry miljoene mense wat van honger doodgaan omdat daar nie kos is nie, omdat jy dink jy kan die voedselstelsel beter beplan as wat die boere op die grond dit self met hul aanmoedigingsmaatreëls van wins en vermyding van verlies kan doen.

Wat die staat wel moet doen is om die landbou te ondersteun. Daar het ons die Onderstepoort Biologiese Produkte, OBP, waar ek sien dat ons in hierdie jaar die oordrag van R1 000 het. Dit is dieselfde bedrag as wat die departement verdien uit die verkoop van afvalpapier. Ek is nie heeltemal seker wat die rasionaliteit daar is nie. So drie jaar gelede was daar wel R25 miljoen, maar ons het uit 'n ander verslag gesien dat daardie geld nie goed spandeer is nie en dat die bek-en-klouseer entstowwe uit Botswana ingevoer word teen sowat tien maal wat dit hier vervaardig moes word.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 44

Ek moet darem sê dat ons die departement behoort geluk te wens met die opheffing van die beperkings wat daar gelê is, wat eintlik 'n ekonomiese ramp in sekere gebiede was ... waar dit in noord Natal nog voortgaan. Maar die herinwerkingstelling van OBP om regtig sy werk te doen ... Ek sien hy sit op 'n hele hoop kontant en op 'n kapitaal reserwe van 'n paar honderd miljoen rand. Die ding moet tog reggesien kan word.

Dan is daar die Comprehensive Agricultural Support program wat nuwe boere moet ondersteun wat sowat R2 miljard rand kry en die Rural Development program by die Departement van Grondhervorming en Landelike Ontwikkeling wat R900 miljoen kry. Wie doen wat in die hele uitmekaarhaal van die departemente? Is dit vasgestel?

Ten slotte kan 'n mens sê dat landbou in Suid-Afrika sekerlik die ingewikkeldste industrie ... [Onhoorbaar.] [Tyd verstreke.]

*English:*

Mr R A P TROLLIP: House Chair, Action SA thanks the committee, the chairperson and the support staff for the compilation of this report. We will consider supporting this budget. For a

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 45**

department that supports the only sector to show any meaningful growth in the first quarter of this year, one would venture that it deserves a greater allocation from the fiscus. However, underspending on conditional grants and AgriBEE militates against this.

These gains, however, are related more to good fortune, good rains rather than good governance, and the resilience of the commercial agricultural sector that has become resilient and self-sustaining due to the fact that they get little to no departmental support outside of some market access assistance and advocacy. The department's focus on supporting farmers with resource infrastructure, strengthening biosecurity and disease control, advocacy for rural development and agricultural growth, is reflected in the lion share of this department's budget allocated to these objectives under programmes 2 and 3.

Programme 2 is responsible for biosecurity, inspection, quarantine, plant and animal production. This remains severely underfunded and is a matter of concern. Just for the record, China and Russia do use genetically modified organisms, GMOs. It also focuses on natural resources and disaster management,

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 46**

focusing on sustainable land management and land care, which deals with the control of erosion and conservation. This is neglected at our long-term peril.

An objective and honest assessment of these responsibilities would recognise that the department's performance in this regard is suboptimal to say the least. This means that our finite and primary production resources are not adequately protected and our local and export markets are vulnerable to disease outbreaks, which is the greatest threat to economic growth and job creation, and consumer health and safety.

Here we wish to raise the alarm that the Agricultural Research Council, ARC, and OBP are seemingly out of their depth and cannot fulfil their responsibility. The recent announcements about the lifting of disease management areas for foot-and-mouth disease, FMD, in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo are welcomed, but the biosecurity risks related to FMD remain high and recent recognition in a claim given to the responsible manager in a portfolio committee is premature, especially as we rely on the importation of vaccines from a neighbouring country that is our greatest competitor. This is a major risk area.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 47**

The critical lack of veterinarians and animal health technicians only compounds the poor performance of the ARC and OBP. If this sounds unfair, allow me to quote from Malcolm X, who said: "I'm for truth, no matter who tells it."

Programme 3 deals with food security and support. Our committee's oversight and my personal experience, reinforced by the Auditor-General of SA, AGSA, showed that the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, Casp, and the Ilima Letsema grant funding programmes are literally metaphoric black holes or siphons for wasteful expenditure with very little effort of real transformation, improved agricultural production and infrastructural resource support. Hence, our overreliance on imports, and that is going to come at a major cost with the new 30% tariff imposed by the USA.

There are just too many examples of wasteful expenditure. Support programmes and funding don't reach beneficiaries timeously and bureaucratic carelessness compromises improved production and transformation endeavours. This too we observed on our oversight endeavours.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 48

The partnership with the Land Bank through the blended finance scheme is a matter of serious concern, not only because they don't even bother to report on the use of funds transferred to them by the department, as per the AGSA.

What we witnessed first-hand was detachment and questionable value for money in the acquisition of farms for land reform beneficiaries. This needs urgent remediation. Thank you.

*IsiZulu:*

USEKELA NGQONGQOSHE WEZOLIMO: Uyakuphi? Ungijwayela kabi. Ugogo lo?

*English:*

Hon House Chairperson, hon members of the House, all Ministers and Deputy Ministers present, chairpersons of portfolio committees of the Government of National Unity, our premiers in the country, ...

*IsiXhosa:*

... amakhosi nabo bonke abantu ababalulekileyo elizweni lethu.

*English:*

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 49**

An African proverb says: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together". This highlights the benefits of teamwork, co-operation that will lead to a lasting success, as well as significant achievements attained through collective action over quick individual results that you will seek when you go it alone. I would like to urge hon members that it does not help to go to a team, do the teamwork and then pick a few and appraise them to say they are doing the best as if they were alone. If we leave that there will be peace here at home.

Secondly, the Department of Agriculture is actually taking the latter, that is walking along as a department with all other departments. If I wanted to have as the Deputy Minister a borehole and irrigation in a small village, what would I do without the Ministry of Agriculture? There are so many examples we have given. I'm calling for unity and I'm also calling for a collective action to fight all the ills that were spoken about.

Hon members, in this, when we say we want to collaborate and work together with all departments, we include the sphere of local government. We cannot jump here from national ... and go

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 50

to a corner in North West, and do some work without involving the local government executives in that particular area as well as collaborating with traditional leaders in that particular area, for better quick results and sustainable development in their own area. Those areas are not ours, but they are indeed that of the people and their leaders of all kinds where they live.

Madam Chair, we are in Parliament today indeed wearing a new face and a new cap through the face of the Minister Mr John ... [Inaudible] ... yes, it's a ... hello, no, no, no don't mislead the old woman. Don't mislead. We are now a reconfigured department having finalised our divorce, but a very nice one with the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development.

We are coming now as that Department of Agriculture. We believe that our relationship with our ex will continue to be a sound one, where we will take care of the work we did together and also support them for the work they are still going to do because we need that land. As the Department of Agriculture, we stand firm that whenever there is an indication that land will be handed over to a particular

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 51

claimant, we will be there understanding what the needs are and actually developing that land for the benefit of the poor.

Hon Chair, we are also bringing to this Parliament focus and cutting-edge plans to propel forward agricultural development, trade growth, food and national food security aligned with national priorities of the Seventh Administration of which I won't repeat. The Minister has actually alluded to that. I support it as a Deputy Minister in that particular area, because those seven ... guide the Government of National Unity.

We want equality as that structure which is temporal though. We also want to ensure that the principles that are set by the President through the Government of National Unity must be implemented, particularly passing ...

*IsiXhosa:*

... sizivotele ...

*English:*

... those laws ...

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 52

*IsiXhosa:*

... imithetho le efuna ukuba makubekho inguqu kude kulingwane. Silapha ngaloo nto, sifuna umakulingwane. Asithi makususwe abaphezulu baye ezantsi, akumnandanga ezantsi. Masihambeni sonke siye phambili. Kule nto ye ...

*English:*

... food security, in October 2024 ...

*IsiXhosa:*

... ndifuna ukunikhumbuza ...

*English:*

... we launched a National Food and Nutrition Survey with Statistics SA which painted a gloomy picture of a higher percentage of households not meeting their food and nutritional needs in our country. Therefore, we must address that. All of us. There is no time for finger pointing now to say who did what or what has been done.

*IsiXhosa:*

Sikulento sikuyo. Kusehlele okusehleleyo kodwa ...

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 53

*English:*

... for now, let us move forward and never backward. The Department of Agriculture is co-ordinating the implementation of the second iteration of the 2024-29 multi-sector National Food and Nutrition Security Plan.

*IsiXhosa:*

Uze usikhangele apho ke ...

*English:*

... that is what we are doing. The plan serves as a single, coherent blueprint, which embodies collective actions and harnessed efforts towards a common vision, I repeat, common vision, which is to realise the right to food for all citizens as set out in the Constitution.

As part of the United Nation's food systems transformation initiative that culminated in the Food Systems Summit in 2021 in South Africa in partnership with the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO is co-ordinating the roll-out of inclusive multi-stakeholder implementation of four food systems pathways. I really appeal to you good ladies and gentlemen ...

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 54

*IsiXhosa:*

... le nto yegadi ayifuni izigidi ezigidi ndingakupha imbewu phaya.

*English:*

I've got seeds from my own garden, from my own pumpkins. Let us start with what we can do.

*IsiXhosa:*

Makungabikho mzi ungenayo igadi. Umntu omdala olingana nam ongenayo igadi, masiye kuye simncedise. Nam ningandincedisa, kodwa mna andithengi kutya.

*English:*

I never buy food, and I will never. That is my actual orientation and socialisation. Never buy what you can produce. I look at people pushing trolleys, there's pumpkin, cabbage, spinach oh...

*IsiXhosa:*

... Nkosi ...

*English:*

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 55

... with which funds? Where will we get funds to do that? The little we have, I'm not saying we have enough hon members, but if when you go to collect your social grant, you can also carry what you will sell to those who are coming to collect theirs. So, let us wake up. The time is against us. We are calling ... indeed as a member of this House and also as a member in the Department of Agriculture I say, the District Development Model implementation which is taking place though undermined in various areas in 44 districts and metros ... [Inaudible] ... approach addresses service delivery changes.

*IsiXhosa:*

Ndiyabulela. Nihambe kakuhle sakubonana emasimini.

Mr W M THRING: Hon Chairperson, the ACDP affirms the vital role of agriculture in securing food, growing rural development and building economic resilience. Food producers are the backbone of national survival and sovereignty.

The department's 2025-26 allocation of R7,6 billion focuses on infrastructure and biosecurity. We remain concerned by underperformance in supporting emerging farmers because few

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 56**

transition to commercial viability and many lack access to finance and extension services.

The ACDP calls for the accelerating of the Agro-Processing Master Plan and the fast tracking of blended finance to reach our marginalised farmers. We assert that regimes that dismiss the agricultural base through over-taxation, land dispossession or neglect invite food insecurity, unrest and ultimately collapse.

This is why the government's dismissive attitude to the systematic murder of farmers and workers is irrational or intentional. These murders know no colour and the ACDP condemns these heinous crimes, as we do all other murderous criminal acts.

The ACDP acknowledges the work done by the Agricultural Research Council as the country's principal agricultural research institution, with Onderstepoort Biological Products, OBP having the potential to manufacture animal vaccines, and in particular, the foot and mouth vaccine for the continent.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 57**

On the intended poultry avian influenza vaccination, however, the ACDP notes the caution of Professor Tim Noakes, who mentioned that in the United States of America, USA, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, National Institutes of Health, NIH and Food and Drug Administration, FDA have all advised against the vaccination of poultry, noting that most nations will not import vaccinated poultry from the USA.

The rationale is that if you vaccinate with a leaky vaccine, you turn those flocks into mutation factories. One of the three vaccines, the Vectormune recombinant DNA vaccine, places a live turkey herpes virus, into a chicken, affecting the chicken's DNA.

On 6 June 2025 poultry vaccination began. Three weeks later, on 1 July bird flu was detected amongst our poultry. The ACDP would like to know the specifics of these poultry vaccinations. What are the contents and efficacy? Are they Messenger RNA, mRNA vaccines? Have longitudinal studies been conducted on the effect of these vaccines on humans?

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 58

As kingdom builders, the ACDP calls for a just agricultural economy rooted in good governance and ethical stewardship. Until we obtain answers to our questions, the ACDP will not support this Budget Vote. Thank you.

*Xitsonga:*

Tat S M GANA: Mutshamaxitulu, ...

*English:*

Hon members, fellow South Africans, this morning I rise for a South African farmer, not the one who spreads fear about white genocide, but the one who wakes up before dawn, works the land, creates jobs, feeds the nation, and believes in a future for all of us. A patriotic farmer, black or white. A farmer who understands that our destinies are tied together, and who is committed to a South Africa that works.

As Rise Mzansi, we are committed to building a safe, prosperous, equal and United South Africa in one generation. And we take agriculture very seriously. A prosperous South Africa begins with a thriving agricultural sector. One that ensures food security, contributes to economic growth and create jobs. This budget must therefore be used to expand

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 59**

access to local and international markets, to ensure that there's proper regulation and support the journey from smallholder farmers to commercial farmers.

We commend leaders like member of the executive council, MEC Vuyiswa Ramokgopa in Gauteng, who has shown how to transform agriculture through empowering black women and young farmers. We need more of that across all provinces. As Rise Mzansi, we also understand that agriculture is not charity. It is a business. We must produce enough food not through donations, but through smart support, infrastructure and market access.

South Africans expect this budget to do three things, grow the economy and create jobs for South Africans and bridge the historic racial divide in the sector. We cannot continue to be a country of two agricultures, one advanced, the other struggling. We need one interdependent agricultural sector that works for all.

And as the world shift with markets like the USA under threat, we must leverage the Brics and new trade partnerships to secure our exports and open new opportunities. Climate change,

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 60

animal health and drought are not future threats but current, and this department must be proactive, not reactive.

Minister, South Africans expect you to be the voice of all farmers, black and white and to use this budget to build one agricultural sector for the economy that creates jobs for the people of South Africa.

*Xitsonga:*

Ndza khensa swinene, Mutshamaxitulu.

Mr L W MAHLATSI: Chairperson ...

*Sesotho:*

... kgotso, Maafrica.

*English:*

The UAT rises in opposition to Budget Vote 29. We do not reject agriculture. We reject incompetence. We reject ghost governance. We reject elite enrichment while African families remain landless and hungry. We do so not out of hostility towards agriculture but because we are committed to transforming it from colonial inheritance to African

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 61**

instrument for food sovereignty, land, land justice and economic dignity.

The misalignment between strategic plan and the Annual Performance Plans, APPs is more than just technical. It's political negligence. How does the department claim to fight hunger yet exclude full self-employment and export growth from its measurable targets? The Agri-BBE fund designed to transform the sector still has no monitoring and evaluation framework. What are we funding if we cannot measure the impact?

Chairperson, the government's failures are appalling. The National Agriculture Marketing Council Board expired in May 2025 and remain without replacement. This is shameful. The Land Bank continues to receive billions even as it dodges quarterly reporting, the blended finance scheme is funded without accountability. We must ask, who is benefiting, while the poor starve?

On budget allocation, again, the numbers betray the rhetoric. Programme 3, food security and agrarian support suffer budget cut despite the department claiming food security is an

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 62**

international priority meanwhile, R2,9 billion, 88% of this budget is transferred to provinces and the Land Bank with no clarity on how it will be spent or monitored.

This is not decentralisation. It's a delicate dysfunction. Worse still, R179 million was turned unspent in the last year when rural communities in Limpopo, the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal go to bed hungry. It is not because we lack funds, but because we lack urgency.

Where is the plan to address our agricultural human crisis with thousands of unemployed agricultural graduates? Yet the department could only hire 230 extension officers. South Africa faced a critical shortage of veterinarians, but there is no training in the pipeline, no retention plan, no coordination on the Department of High Education and Training for foreign qualifications.

Programme 4, its unaccountable black hole bringing ... [Time expired.] ...

The UAT rejects this vote.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 63

*Xitsonga:*

Khanimambo!

Mr W A S AUCAMP: Hon House Chair, hon Minister, hon Deputy Minister, fellow members, agriculture is the backbone of our economy. It is a cornerstone of employment, and it is a vital pillar against the fight against poverty. Our farmers deserve only the best and this budget will take us closer in providing that to them. Allow me to extend our sincere appreciation to the hon Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, for his steadfast leadership and the strides that he and his department continue to make in transforming this critical sector. His unwavering commitment to inclusive growth, biosecurity, modernization of agriculture and the pursuit of food security is commendable. Their efforts led to agriculture being the fastest growing sector of our economy in the first quarter of this year. This appropriation, hon Chairperson, represents more than a monetary commitment, as Minister Steenhuisen has said, it is a statement of intent. It is a call to action to ensure food security, to support smaller holder producers, to enhance biosecurity, to expand markets and to develop a sustainable infrastructure. However, it is also a budget that demands accountability and strategic

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 64**

execution. The Minister as well as the committee has rightly emphasized the urgent need to address South Africa's biosecurity crisis, particularly the recurring of the foot and mouth disease outbreaks. Our national hurt and, by extension, our food security is under threat, whilst the Agricultural Research Council, ARC, and Onderstepoort Biological Products, OBP, have for many years regrettably failed to live up to their core mandates. The ARC delay in constructing the foot-and-mouth disease vaccine facilities is a national embarrassment. It is shameful that over a decade after first receiving money, we still have to import foot-and-mouth disease vaccines from Botswana. These failures led to livestock farmers being left vulnerable, exports being lost and rural economies suffering. While we commend the efforts of OBP to address backlogs and install new freeze dryers, reality is that OBP is not meeting its vaccine production targets and continues to underperform. Good Manufacturing Practice, GMP, certification product project is years behind schedule and management instability persists.

Hon Chairperson, the risks that outbreaks, such as the current foot-and-mouth disease outbreak, poses to food security and jobs in our country showed us once more the importance of

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 65

getting these vaccines manufacturing facilities completed as soon as possible. The risks associated will not be able to provide these vaccines and proper biosecurity far outweigh the cost required to complete these facilities. We therefore welcome Minister Steenhuisen's undertaking to continue to liaise with the Minister of Finance to consider reprioritization of funds from underperforming programmes and non-critical activities to address biosecurity challenges. Despite these and various other challenges, we must commend the Minister and his department for their strategic alignment with the Medium-Term Development Plan.

The Minister's commitment to modernizing legislation supporting smallholder producers, unlocking landfill production, our keys deliveries, key levers for inclusive economic growth, and his focus on increasing participation in agriculture by upcoming farmers of all races, expanding market access and investing in biosecurity and infrastructure is visionary.

*Afrikaans:*

Al hierdie dinge kan egter nie gebeur vir solank as wat ons land se boere voortdurend aangeval word nie. Plaasmoorde,

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 66

landelike veiligheid en veediefstal moet behoorlik aangespreek word. Dit het tyd geword dat plaasmoorde as 'n prioriteitsmisdryf verklaar word. Ons boerderygemeenskappe is onder beleg en die wreedheid van hierdie aanvalle is nie net 'n menslike tragedie nie; dit is 'n bedreiging vir voedselsekerheid, landelike stabiliteit en ons nasionale moraal.

Die DA wil Minister Steenhuisen loof vir sy optrede om hierdie dringende saak in sy gesprek in die VSA met President Donald Trump in die Withuis aan te spreek en die wêreld daarop te wys dat die veiligheid van ons boere nie onderhandelbaar is nie. Die Parlement moet nou ook voortgaan om dit te prioritiseer.

*English:*

Hon Chairperson, this Budget Vote is more than a balance sheet. It is a blueprint for our country's agricultural future. It is a call to renew our institutions, to restore accountability and to reinvest in our farmers to put food on our tables, especially now with increase in export tariffs from the US that were announced yesterday. Let us support this appropriation with a clear understanding that oversight must

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 67

be vigilant, that performance must be measured, and failure where it occurs must be addressed without fear or favour.

*Afrikaans:*

Landbou is nie net ons verlede en ons hede nie. Dit is ons toekoms. Die boere van Suid-Afrika, wit, swart en bruin, groot en klein, is ons land se ruggraat, en ons is dit aan hulle verskuldig om seker te maak dat ons hierdie begroting tot hulle voordeel sal aanwend. Met die leiding van Minister Steenhuisen, is ek oortuig daarvan dat ons daarin sal slaag. Ek dank u.

Ms S W DAVIDS: Hon House Chairperson, hon Minister, Deputy Minister, hon chairperson of the committee, hon members, the Director-General and his staff, the support staff of the committee and also South Africa at large, thank you for this opportunity to debate a budget that is of central to our nation's future, the budget for agriculture. I rise on behalf of the ANC to speak about market access, transformation and economic growth in the agricultural sector. Agriculture is not just an economic sector, it's the heartbeat of rural development, a source of jobs and dignity, and a key pillar in achieving food security and inclusive growth. Over the past

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 68**

few years, the sector has shown resilience and growth despite global shocks between 2019 and 2023. Agriculture value added output grew by over 25%, creating more than 113 jobs and expanding exports by R47 billion. This performance is no accident. It is the outcome of the liberation policies championed by the ANC-led government. Yet, we know that growth alone is not enough if it does not include all our people. The dual structure of our agricultural sector with a small group of large commercial players and a vast majority of struggling emerging farmers must be transformed. We must break this divide. Under the ANC leadership transformation is not an option, it's a moral and economic imperative. Central to this effort is the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan, AAMP, is a landmark initiative adopted in 2022. This plan aligns with the ANC manifesto and Medium-Term Development Plan, focusing on inclusive growth, job creation and rural industrialization. This AAMP addresses value chains commodity by commodity, identifying various and unlocking opportunities for emerging black farmers. We are already seeing impact in the food industry. We have supported black growers to extend pack houses and entered export markets.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 69**

The Maluti Fruit plant apple project is assignment example of transformation in action with black farmers now contribute to both local supply and exports. On the international front of agricultural development, diplomacy is opening doors. South Africa advocates avocados are now exporting to Japan, China and India. We have secured new markets for beef in Iran and fresh produce in Vietnam. These perspectives empower farmers, especially new entrants to benefit from high value global markets.

Domestically, we have revitalising local markets by upgrading 21 fresh produce markets across the country, particularly in townships and secondary towns like our hon Deputy Minister said. It must not all be about the country, it must be about the towns and the second townships, not about the elite only like the DA wants claim.

Transformation also demand access to finance and land. The blended finance scheme is in partnership with Land Bank and commercial banks have already unlocked R3,1 billion for black commercial farmers. Collaborative approach through the master plan has united government, industry and farmers chicken small around the Shaivism. We have also had concerns about delays

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 70**

and bottlenecks. We acknowledge these challenges in addressing them head on, streamlining approval processing, improve coordination between agriculture and land reform tightening gran, mobile monitoring and adding firmly against corruption. Importantly, the budget supports agro processing and value addition crucial for rural industrialization. We want farmers to move behind the raw progress to add value, create jobs and grow local economics through incentive and infrastructure support. We are enabling cooperatives to process dairy, fruit and meat products, thus create employment up and down the value chain. Furthermore, we are investing in young people by modernizing agricultural colleges, supporting Agritech Startups and providing internship. We are cultivating the next generation of farmers and agri-entrepreneurs. We want young people to see agriculture as a future of innovation and prosperity, not a sector of survival.

Hon members, agriculture is a powerful multiply effect on broader economy. When farmers succeed, transporters, processors, retailers and the entire rural towns benefits. By revitalizing rural infrastructure and supporting market access, the budget stimulates economic activity and reduce urban migration pressures.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 71**

In approving this Budget Vote, we are voting for a sector that uplifts, transform and feed the nation. We are voting for more jobs, create inclusivity and stronger rural economics. We are reaffirming the ANC commitment to both of South Africa, where no farmers are left behind and no community is excluded from economic opportunities. The ANC has led a solid foundation. The budget strengthened it further. Let us support this wholeheartedly and as relate transformation together, let us grow South Africa together from the soil up. I thank you.

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: House Chairperson, thank you very much. I only have five minutes, so it's impossible for me to respond to every single one of the points made, but I do thank the hon members for their contributions. Are you?

[Interjections.] Of course, I am. Of course, I am. Okay. But thank you very much for the inputs made by members from across the spectrum, some clearly more useful than others, but I will try and deal with some of the key themes that were raised.

Look, we have a problem with foot-and-mouth disease in South Africa. I hate to disappoint the hon Montwedi, however, but he can't land at my door - unless I was born in 1892, when the first outbreak happened, or around in 1903, when the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE

Page: 72

Camperdown outbreak happened, or in 2000, when the northern KwaZulu-Natal outbreak happened, or in 2016, when the last current batch was with us. It is a disease that has been endemic in South Africa, and it is endemic in Buffalo, and that's why provinces like KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo are particularly difficult to get under control.

Letting the red line go was a big mistake, and adopting a lax approach to biosecurity has set us back clearly. That is why one of the key seven pillars that we have determined in the department is biosecurity and is everybody's responsibility. In highlighting that, I want to say that vaccines are just one tool in a far bigger toolkit that is required to deal with biosecurity outbreaks. There is an entire chain that starts with surveillance, the legislature and regulatory environment, and you have noticed we put out a new *Gazette* on regulations around movements of animals and auctions. It involves surveillance, veterinary services, quarantine measures, and vaccination. It is just one part of the toolkit that is required, and we have to get the entire toolbox right if we are going to ever get on top of biosecurity going forward.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 73**

I agree that there is a problem with veterinarian shortages in the country, and it's impossible to dispute that. I also think we need to understand that the Constitution makes veterinary services an exclusive area of provincial legislative competence, not a national competence. Our national competence on veterinary services is to deal with the regulation of the industry.

That being said, however, we cannot sit back as the national department and just say it's not our responsibility, and a number of interventions are taking place. I don't know where the hon Montwedi got the idea that community service had been scrapped. It absolutely has not been scrapped - not once, not ever. It is still in place, and we use that system to ensure that rural areas are covered by veterinary services. Do we have enough veterinary surgeons? Absolutely not. Is the department doing what it can do within its resources to ensure that we can meet the challenge? Absolutely.

The hon Gana talks about the genetically modified organisms, GMO, issue. Let me be clear - genetically modified organisms is not a function of departmental decision-making. The Genetically Modified Organisms Act was passed by Parliament,

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 74**

and our department's job is to implement the law as decided by our Parliament, and I am bound by that to do so. If you are unhappy with the way the GMO situation is currently managed, there is an opportunity for you to bring a Private Members' Bill in the House, and I would encourage you to do so. But until the law changes, I am duty-bound to implement the law.

Inkosi Cebekhulu, thank you very much for your input there. I would remind members that the projects are derived from the ground up. Our national department provides tranches to provinces. In provinces like KwaZulu-Natal, it is up to the provincial Department of Agriculture to identify those smallholder projects and to then make the case for them so that they can receive the funding that they require. I am very happy to work with you and the MEC in KwaZulu-Natal to ensure that we can address that. Onderstepoort Biological Products, OBP, remains a huge concern, and that is why the committee and the Ministry are both so exercised in ensuring that we get on top of it.

I am also very encouraged by the fact that the Agricultural Research Council, ARC, is working on a South African vaccine that will cover the SAT 1, 2, and 3 strains of foot-and-mouth

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

**VOTE NO 29 - AGRICULTURE**

**Page: 75**

disease, so that we will in the future be able to ensure that we are self-sufficient when it comes to access to vaccines. Thank you very much for the debate, and I look forward to taking many of these issues up further within the committee. I would encourage members to submit written questions, or oral questions should they require further elucidation. Thank you very much.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Thank you. Hon members, you are reminded that two debates are scheduled to take place simultaneously today at 2 o'clock. The Home Affairs Budget Vote debate will be held in this Chamber - the Good Hope Chamber, while the Tourism Budget Vote debate will take place in Committee Room M46 in the Marks Building.

Debate Concluded.

The mini-plenary session rose at 11:44.