



agriculture, land reform
& rural development

Department:
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Media Statement

21 April 2020

MINISTER THOKO DIDIZA PARTICIPATES AT THE G20 AGRICULTURE MINISTERS MEETING ON COVID-19

Today, Minister Thoko Didiza (MP) participated in the G20 virtual meeting of Ministers of Agriculture. During her submission, the Minister made the meeting aware that primarily all the countries are concerned about protecting the wellbeing of their citizens from this devastating novel corona virus. The containment measures taken thus far has seen countries closing their borders, increasing testing of citizens and treating those that are sick.

The Minister emphasised that a number of economies are facing serious challenges and more workers have lost their jobs and thereby their livelihoods. She said, the agricultural community have noted the negative impact some of these measures have on food security of nations particularly those that rely on imports for a range of foodstuffs. “At the same time we have noted that, a number of countries have allowed the agriculture and agribusinesses to remain as essential services. Albeit under strict hygiene conditions, she added.”

“It is also, important that I highlight what is a known fact to most of you that the African Agriculture Sector is so different with many smallholder and subsistence farmers globally. Its financial and operational capacity to respond to the crisis is weaker and this situation will need much greater levels of international support,” said Minister Didiza.

The Minister highlighted the negative impact in the production capacities of many countries as they experienced droughts and floods due to climate change.

Covid-19 has added another stress particularly to those countries, which are still battling the locust invasion such as the Horn of Africa. Animal diseases such as Foot-and-Mouth have also had an impact in some countries; therefore as we reflect on measures to ensure food security globally we need to keep this in mind.

“In South Africa we have ensured that agriculture as a sector continues to operate. In terms of our agricultural calendar, we continue with harvesting and soil preparation for the winter season. The government has also allowed the movement of food through our ports as we are inter-linked with our region and continent,” remarked Minister Didiza.

Minister Didiza assured the G20 meeting that the South African government has ensured that production continues and has given financial relief to ensure that farmers in distress can continue to operate.

“In order to ensure that we assess the food security in the continent, as the African Union (AU) STC Chairperson on Agriculture, I convened a meeting last week with the United Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) where majority of Africa’s Ministers of Agricultural participated. At the conclusion of the meeting, we agreed to set up a task team that will continue to monitor the food security situation in the African continent and make interventions where such is necessary,” said the Minister.

It is the Minister’s view that the G20 as a collective should continue to increase awareness and understanding of the potential of technologies to promote sustainable agricultural productivity, to contribute to the environment through the sustainable use of natural resources and to create greater scope for evidence-based policymaking in the sector.

“I would like to propose that as the G20 we need to address export restrictions as already highlighted by other Members - Transparency of available food stocks in Member States,” she said.

“Through the Agriculture Market Information System we can have better information in assessing global food supply and advise G20 countries on levels of food production, consumption and stocks, as well as on food prices, in real time” concluded the Minister.

-Ends-

For media enquiries contact the Media Liaison Officer (MLO), Mr Reggie Ngcobo on 082 883 2458.

Issued by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development.