

**Media Statement**

**20 May 2020**

## **CELEBRATION OF WORLD BEE DAY**

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development joins the world and in particular the horticultural community and beekeeping community in celebrating the World Bee Day today. It is important to acknowledge and recognise the role of honeybees in the agricultural sector and their benefit to humankind.

As we celebrate World Bee Day the critical role played by all beekeepers in agricultural production is also recognised. The survival of the agricultural sector and humankind, in particular, is dependent on honeybees through crop pollination. The drought experienced during past years and the veld fires in the Western Cape has significantly affected the availability of off-season bee forage and swarms harvested from nature. As we recognise the importance of bees, we remain resilient in our efforts to reserve and conserve bee forage to ensure beekeeping sustainability. The department would like to reaffirm that the value chain of beekeeping activities is critical for food security, economic growth and development, as well as job creation.

Like any other sector, the COVID-19 outbreak has had a negative impact on beekeeping activities. However, in South Africa considering the importance of bees to the agricultural sector, the Level 4 regulations under the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002) provides for beekeeping activities to continue operations under strict conditions. The disruption of beekeeping activities, such as crop pollination services, may adversely affect the country's food production targets and export markets.

Bees and beekeepers supply a critical service to grower farmers, in particular, the fruit and seed sectors. The COVID-19 outbreak occurred at a time that is critical to the success of fruit and seed industries for pollination services and key in the food security value chain. The department recognises the importance of bees, and therefore, allowed the movement of beehives during the lockdown period and for beekeepers to continue with beehive maintenance, which is critical and essential during this time of the year.

It is for this reason that as the South African government is joining the rest of the world in celebrating the World Bee Day under the theme, “BEE ENGAGED: Bees impacting lives and food security.” The United Nations declared this day in December 2017 in recognition of the importance of bees and the role they play in our lives and the environment.

Let us join the international community in celebrating this day and appreciate that without bees, food security would be severely impacted and we would not have any horticultural products to export. Let us all support and recognise the critical role of beekeepers in agricultural production, which includes commercial, developmental and small-scale. We would like to invite and encourage everyone to join hands with the department, beekeepers and farmers in celebrating this day and appreciating the importance of bees to food production and security.

Globally it has been recorded that crop yield will be severely affected without bees and there will be zero agricultural productivity leading to no food on our tables and no agricultural products to export.

Without bees there is no life. Let us work together to protect this precious resource against any harm by foreign or hazardous substance and by so doing we will be caring for humanity and the ecosystem at large. Bee forage and health remain an integral part of beekeeping farming.

A virtual engagement was held earlier in the day focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on the beekeeping sector and the role of beekeeping in supporting rural communities in improving food and nutrition during the crisis and beyond.

*“If the bee disappears from the surface of the earth, man would have no more four years to live.”*

*Albert Einstein*

**For media enquiries, contact Media Liaison Officer, Mr Reggie Ngcobo on 082 883 2458.**

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

**-ENDS-**