



agriculture, land reform & rural development

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

SPEAKING NOTES BY THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT DURING THE WEBINAR ON WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE, MS THOKO DIDIZA

DATE: 31 AUGUST 2020

THEME: "REALISING WOMEN'S EQUALITY THROUGH AGRICULTURE"

The facilitator

Women farmers and those who want to participate in the agriculture value chain

Senior Officials

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honour and privilege that we are closing this Women's Month with a conversation with women producers. On Friday, I was fortunate to engage with women in the Department of Agriculture, Land reform and rural development. Saturday, I was having a conversation with young women farmers and entrepreneurs. These engagements were instructive in that they gave one an insight of the challenges that women in our sector face.

Today I want to reflect a bit of our history and its lessons from the present. The struggle for Women's emancipation has a rich history in South Africa dating back in the 1800s from the women of the then Orange Free State who protested against pass laws. The protest against land dispossession as well as incorporation to homelands continued. In 1994, the Women's National Coalition tabled the Charter for Effective Equality to the then Speaker of Parliament, Free Ginwala as the statement of what women wanted in the democratic South Africa.

Interesting, the Women's coalition through mobilisation of women across the country ensured that the Equality Clause became part of the Constitutional Principle in our interim constitution and the final Constitution.

The Charter for effective equality enabled women delegates in Beijing to ensure that the global plan of action also reflect the concerns of women of South Africa.

Twenty-five years on, as governments and legislature we must reflect the journey we have traversed since then. I will be the first to acknowledge as in our own review as a country that we have progressed in a number of areas to improve the position of women in society. In political representation, in education, in health milestones have been made.

In areas of Economy, this is where we are struggling. I am happy that as a country we are one of those who have joined the Global Coalition whose aim is to champion Economic Justice for women. In this regard, the issue of women's empowerment will be central in our policies, regulatory reform and programmatic intervention. We will also advocate for this using the opportunity of being the Chairperson of the African Union.

The question is how then we make this campaign find expression in the land and agriculture sector: When assuming office as the Head of State, President Ramaphosa highlighted the sector that our country will prioritize in order to rebuild our economy. Amongst these was the importance of the Agriculture and agribusiness sector.

He further announced that, government would rapidly release agricultural state land as its contributions in doing with the vexing problem of land inequity as a result of colonial and apartheid policies and laws.

In the same year, the Advisory Panel on Land and Agriculture also tabled their report, which was agreed to by government.

In response to all these commitments by the President and recommendations by the advisory panel. As a department, therefore we have done the following:

1. Develop a land beneficiary selection policy to guide land allocation
2. Producer support model
3. Agriculture and agribusiness Master plan
4. Poultry and sugar Master plan
5. Developing a plan for land release

These are important milestones in terms of the work that has been done thus far, however in engaging women in the sector the following has emerged:

1. Access to land. Women in the various sub sectors of agriculture have raised the challenges in accessing land either for leasing, acquisition or state land. This relate prices that make it impossible to access. Applications take long on government lease program. The allocation is perceived to favour male farmers. Government through it programmers has not strategically targeted land according to commodities foe acquisition in order to be deliberate on improving participation of women in these sectors.
 2. Financial services, which grants and loan. While women appreciate the support that government is giving through ilima /letsema and comprehensive agricultural program these do not take multiyear support that will enable financial viability
 3. Specific support program taking into consideration challenges that are there in the sector such as marketing and trade requirements
 4. Mechanization and other implements remain a challenge. The agriparks that government implemented which sort to deal with this challenge remain a challenge.
 5. Lack of statistical data of how many women are in the sector and in what commodities are they remains our bigger challenges
 6. Research and technology access remains a problem
 7. Extension and advisory services are far and in between
- Having identified these challenges, do we need to do? Answering this question requires government, government entries, private sector and women producers and agri entrepreneurs.

As government, we have decided to do the following:

1. Release state land with 50 per cent being women
2. Training for beneficiaries
3. Effective land reform through supporting those who had received the land
4. Develop a targeted program for women farmers and entrepreneurs in the space
5. 40 per cent procurement for women businesses

Mobilisation and organization

1. Develop a database of women organization engaged in agriculture as well as agribusiness
2. Round table quarterly with the Minister with women producer's has in order to look at how we can unblock challenges.
3. Women focal point whose task will be to look at policy, programs as well as work with the sector.

I thank you