Agri SA

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Statesmanship needed in State of the nation address
Staatsmanskap benodig in die Staatsrede

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Statesmanship needed in State of the nation address

"The distress signals coming from the economy and citizens of the country can no longer be ignored" says Johannes Moller. President of Agri SA. The country is perceived as rudderless by many, a view justified by the reality of our country hovering between junk status credit ratings and a desperate need to attract investment he said. Undefined utterances like "radical transformation" with its destructive undertones is also most certainly not supporting the course for a better economic growth trajectory and employment creation. If we as South Africans were to draw an analogy with the vision of Pres Donald Trump of the USA "making South Africa great again" should at least as a point of departure be considered by president Zuma in the upcoming state of the nation address (SONA).

"Clearly South Africans are no longer willing to be exploited as sacrificial lambs for the so-called common good as defined by politicians - the latter being the very people more often than not responsible for the decline of the country through poor custodianship of national assets, poor management of state owned enterprises, fiscal ignorance and levels of corruption taking on epidemic proportions" Moller said. "We as an apolitical organisation representing an important segment of the national and rural economy obviously have a definite interest in the economic well-being of the country and we are most certainly aware of political and constitutional imperatives especially in relation to transformation that have to be adhered to. We have demonstrated this through various submissions, proposals and engagements that in our view could have served economic sustainability, fiscal limitations and transformation through inter alia land reform equally well. Government was inconspicuous in their response thus far in fact clearly impracticable options like land ceilings came to the fore instead. Recently the notion of expropriation has apparently gained traction in political circles. Given fiscal pressures it is not clear what funds will become available in this regard as expropriation implies compensation; unless radical interventions of sorts are contemplated".

Moller said that he was disillusioned with governments lukewarm approach during the recent drought. "In my view, we as an organisation exercised the utmost restrained in our requests to government for support to farmers to financially bridge one of the most severe droughts in history, effectively to very little avail; clearly current and future food security considerations could not bring about better insights.

"Agri SA along with other business partners in Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) are seeking policy certainty on a number of transversal matters, some like the aforementioned

more peculiar to the agricultural sector. President Zuma referred to the National Development Plan in previous SONA's. Some indication of whether it is still to guide the economy in future will be helpful. The role of treasury has been critical in avoiding junk status and in maintaining fiscal discipline. We however expect the President to respect this and to provide a more visionary approach as to how the numerous economic and social ills of the country will be tackled in practical terms."

"Like all leaders, I do believe that Pres Zuma wants to leave a respected legacy behind, previous engagements with him lead me to believe just that. I trust that true statesmanship will be reflected by the SONA in the interest of South Africa."

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"Die noodseine vanaf die ekonomie en burgers van die land kan nie langer geïgnoreer word nie" sê Johannes Möller, President van Agri SA. Baie mense beskou ons land as rigtingloos, 'n siening wat geregverdig word deur die realiteit van ons land wat beweeg tussen rommelstatus-kredietgradering en 'n desperate poging om beleggings te bekom, het hy gesê. Ongedefinieerde uitlatings soos "radikale transformasie" met sy destruktiewe ondertone ondersteun ook ongetwyfeld nie die noodsaak vir 'n beter ekonomiese groeikoers en werkskepping nie. As ons as Suid-Afrikaners 'n vergelyking wil tref met die visie van President Donald Trump van die VSA "*making South Africa great again*", moet dit ten minste as 'n vertrekpunt oorweeg word deur President Zuma in die komende Staatsrede.

"Dit is duidelik dat Suid-Afrikaners nie meer bereid is om uitgebuit te word as lammers ter slagting vir die sogenaamde publieke voordeel soos deur politici gedefinieer nie – laasgenoemde is meer dikwels verantwoordelik vir die agteruitgang in die land as gevolg van swak kuratorskap oor nasionale bates, swak bestuur van staatsondernemings, fiskale onkunde en vlakke van korrupsie wat epidemiese proporsies aanneem, sê Möller. "Agri SA, as 'n a-politiese organisasie wat 'n belangrike segment van die nasionale en plaaslike ekonomie verteenwoordig, het duidelik 'n direkte belang in die ekonomiese welstand van die land en is ook ongetwyfeld bewus van politieke en grondwetlike imperatiewe, veral in verband met transformasie wat nagekom moet word. Dit is gedemonstreer deur verskeie voorleggings, voorstelle en verbintenisse wat, na ons mening, die ekonomie baie goed kon dien. Die regering het tot dusvêr niksseggende antwoorde gegee en het in werklikheid eerder duidelik onpraktiese opsies soos grondplafonne genoem. Die idee van onteiening het blykbaar die afgelope tyd veld gewen in politieke kringe. Gegewe fiskale druk is dit nie duidelik watter fondse beskikbaar kan raak in hierdie verband nie, aangesien onteiening vergoeding impliseer; behalwe as een of ander tipe radikale ingryping beoog word".

Möller sê hy was ontnugter deur regering se louwarm benadering met die onlangse droogte. "Na my mening het ons as organisasie uiterste selfbeheersing aan die dag gelê in ons

versoeke aan die regering vir steun aan boere om een van die ergste droogtes in die geskiedenis die hoof te bied, maar sonder veel sukses. Duidelik kon huidige en toekomstige voedelsekerheidsoorwegings hulle nie tot beter insigte bring nie.

"Agri SA, saam met ander besigheidsvennote in Business Unity South Africa (BUSA), wil beleidsekerheid hê oor 'n aantal transversale aangeleenthede, waarvan sommige soos bogenoemde, van meer direkte belang vir die landbousektor is. President Zuma het in vorige SONA's verwys na die Nasionale Ontwikkelingsplan. Enige aanduiding van of dit nog in die toekoms die ekonomie sal lei, sal baie help. Die rol van die tesourie was baie belangrik om rommelstatus te vermy en fiskale dissipline te behou. Ons verwag van die President om dit te respekteer en 'n meer visioenêre benadering te verskaf oor hoe die vele ekonomiese en sosiale probleme in praktiese terme hanteer gaan word."

"Ek glo dat President Zuma, soos alle leiers, 'n gerespekteerde nalatenskap wil nalaat, vorige interaksies met hom maak my seker daarvan. Ek vertrou dat ware staatsmanskap deur die SONA weerspieël sal word in die beste belang van Suid-Afrika."

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