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AGRI SA's HOLISTIC PLAN FOR LAND REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Agri SA's General Council has appointed a technical task team to advise it on approaches and related solutions with regard to land reform, also referred to in this document as TTT. Input were also obtained from affiliates during prior meetings, two workshops and from the General Council.

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

- Land reform proposals must empower farmers and rural dwellers to determine their own future. It should lead to an increase in the number of persons from previously disadvantaged communities who have property rights to agricultural land and who contribute towards meeting the increasing demand for food.



- A well-designed and well-implemented land reform dispensation will contribute to a stable, viable and profitable agricultural industry, which in turn will help to stimulate agricultural development in communal and other under-developed areas. It will further ensure that agriculture expands its contribution towards the achievement of national objectives such as food security, job creation and poverty alleviation.
- Agri SA is committed to developing and implementing proposals whereby the agricultural community can play a leading role in sustainable land reform, the development of entrepreneurship and the social upliftment and development of farm workers and farm worker communities.



- Such proposals must:
 - comply with the guidelines of the Constitution of South Africa;
 - give full recognition to economic and market realities;
 - not necessarily be dependent on state support; while
 - utilising the potential of private-public partnerships as far as possible.

- Such approaches must build forth on chapter 6 of the National Development Plan (NDP) which deals with “An integrated and inclusive rural economy”, as well as Agri SA’s mandates around land reform.



- Land reform proposals must recognise the diversity of agriculture (regions, commodity branches and size/scope of farming units, etc.). This requires suppleness within a variety of options whereby land reform can be achieved.
- Participation must not be compulsory, but it should be sufficiently incentivised in order for all landowners to consider participation. This includes commercial farmers, irrespective of scale-size or race, as well as emerging farmers.



- While private property rights is Agri SA's preferred approach to agricultural development, attention should also be given to approaches whereby commercial agricultural development can be promoted in communal areas.
- AgriBEE codes of good practise and related scorecards should provide for full reflection of contributions to empowerment.
- Good leadership, down to local level, is needed to implement land reform successfully.

- The details of the proposals must be developed in conjunction with other role players in order to promote consensus and ownership thereof and in so-doing also greater unity within organised agriculture.



PROPOSALS

Restitution

Restitution holds risks for sustainable agricultural production and could impede land redistribution and related empowerment. As recommended by the TTT, alternative institutional arrangements, financing models and viable support programmes should be considered. Furthermore, in instances where land redistribution (including empowerment) has taken place prior to the approval of a restitution claim, successful claimants should be compensated in cash rather than through the restitution of land rights.



NDP as a model for land reform

The NDP's land reform model, but also other models whereby empowerment can be successfully achieved such as equity schemes and joint-farming models based on a symbiotic relationship between commercial and emerging farmers, must be evaluated and where necessary adjusted for purposes of wider application. The expansion of pilot projects and an inclusive approach to the evaluation thereof will build confidence and accelerate implementation. The TTT's recommendations on permutations of land reform models and financing options need to be explored.



Implementing structures

The value and functionality of district committees, as envisaged by the National Development Plan, must be evaluated as a medium for promoting successful land reform. Such committees must be involved in the identification of land and potential land beneficiaries, as well as in the support and supervision of land reform initiatives within their communities.



Data requirements

- A comprehensive and accessible database of land reform models as applied in different regions and commodity branches, must be compiled and maintained.
- Up-to-date information on progress made with land reform must be captured in a database, as envisaged with a land audit.



Oversight and implementation - SPV

A Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) must be established on a partnership basis to evaluate land reform models and promote the implementation of viable options. It would also be responsible for facilitating the mobilisation of funds and for securing incentives for land reform. Agri SA will cooperate with other organisations whose participation in such a SPV is of critical importance for the establishment and functional operation thereof.



Selection of beneficiaries and settlement support

With redistribution, the identification and evaluation of beneficiaries are of critical importance for success. This must be backed by relevant training and technical support. Farmers from communal areas must also obtain access to such training and technical support. AgriSETA and training institutions must set this as a priority for their programmes.



Limitation on land ownership

Agri SA's position on the negative impact and unacceptability of physical land ceilings were confirmed during the NAREG process and in other forums. For large farming operations, compliance with AgriBEE requirements could be a more acceptable approach to empowerment and could include the implementation of participatory models as a prerequisite for expansion of land ownership.



Right of first refusal

A right of first refusal and a pre-emptive right are instruments whereby the state can expand its access to the land market for purposes of land reform. However, since this could give rise to distortion and malpractice, it is essential that a variety of technical criteria be met to support the acceptability thereof. Conditions proposed by the TTT will have to be considered, e.g. strict timeframes and the setting of rules in collaboration with experienced conveyancers.



Social dimensions

Tenure security of farm workers and the upliftment of farm worker communities require the involvement and input of a wide range of organisations given the multi-disciplinary nature thereof. Measures aimed at achieving this should not constrain production and the competitiveness of farming enterprises but rather contribute towards the stability, wellbeing and welfare of farmworker communities.



Social dimensions (continues)

It should preferably also promote employment creation in the sector. It includes access to housing in viable “off-farm” housing developments where property rights can be obtained and a wide range of services can be provided cost effectively. This challenge requires a holistic approach in terms of the values and objectives strived for, as well as the respective responsibilities which should preferably be defined in an agreement between the stakeholders (a social accord).



Closing remarks

Within this framework, Agri SA undertakes to participate in projects in a dedicated manner with a view to enhancing confidence in agriculture, unlocking growth possibilities and broadening participation in agriculture. However, this is clearly a multi-dimensional matter to be addressed on various levels. A holistic approach is, therefore, required to address these challenges.

We trust that government and other stakeholders will consider Agri SA's input and involvement as a constructive contribution towards land reform and rural development, while also accepting their responsibility in this regard.

