



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**  
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**TO: ALL MEDIA HOUSES**

**EMBARGO: IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE: 06 MARCH 2021**

**SUBJECT: ISOLEZWE ARTICLE : MISLEADING AND TOTAL DEVOID FROM THE TRUTH**

The Department of Agriculture has met the article by Sabelo Nsele wrote “zigidi zokuxhasa abalimi abasafufusa zibuyele emuva” Isolezwe, Mashi 5, 2021, with total dismay and wishes to set a record straight. The report that “Lo mnyango kuphoqeke ukuthi ubuyisele umuva izigidi zamarandi, ngenxa yokuhluleka” is nothing but an absolute hogwash, a resemble of a crude and sensational journalism with a vehement lack of understanding of the Public Finance Management Act, moreover the work of parliamentary processes including Scopa proceedings which took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

The article headline has warranted undue interests from different stakeholders who feels the department has dismally failed to advance the interests of the “emerging farmers” at the critical epoch of our economic crisis as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The article is very sensational and total devoid from the actual proceedings of the SCOPA meeting. The ultimate agenda of the article clearly points to a scenario which depicts the department as gloom and doom as such is depriving African farmers who mostly rely on government for sustainable support. The department has for the first time received an overwhelming positive feedback from the SCOPA which the article deliberately shaded as non-news worthy for public consumption.

The Department’s response to the questions raised at the SCOPA in relation to the budget performance of the department, particularly expenditure of conditional grants. The department presented its drastically improved budget performance in comparison to the outer years and in the year under review 2019 all applications for roll-over were approved and as such no money was surrendered or returned to National Treasury. The department further developed a turn-around plan to improve budget expenditure and adequate utilization of resources, to ensure that farmers are supported, the department had utilized all resources towards procurement of inputs, such as fertilizers and seeds as well as mechanization program.

The HOD indicated that like all other departments, the Department of Agriculture its budget was cut by National Treasury more than R150 million towards covid-19 programs, "NOT BECAUSE OF POOR PERFORMANCE". That we said will have a negative impact towards farmer support. It either the Mr Nsele deliberately twisted the responses of the department or was never listening.

We have further highlighted at the SCOPA meeting progress the MEC Bongji Sithole-Moloi has achieved since she took over as the portfolio for Agriculture and Rural Development in June 2019, the appointment of permanent Head of Department (HOD), Chief Financial Officer, appointment of district directors and local area managers, furthermore, the department has appointed a chief engineer and director, infrastructure engineer. All these vacancies had a direct link on how the department performed in the past. Among the progress appreciated by the SCOPA members which Mr Nsele deliberately ignored progression in the Auditor-General report from a qualified audit opinion to an unqualified audit opinion which happened for the first time after many years.

- **ISSUED BY DARD COMMUNICATIONS**

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