

3 February 2016

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Agbiz hosts roundtable meeting with US Trade Representative for Agriculture**

Agbiz hosted a Roundtable Meeting with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in Pretoria on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2016. The meeting was part of an exercise of gathering views and perspectives of the South African private sector regarding the transition from a non-reciprocal arrangement to a reciprocal trade agreement.

Private sector stakeholders present included agribusinesses, banks, processors and commodity organisations. Also in attendance were representatives from the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF). Addressing the delegates at the meeting was the United States Trade Representative (USTR) for Agriculture, Sharon Bomer-Lauristen and African Affairs Director in the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), Alan Treat.

While the roundtable discussion centred around the future of US - SA trade and investment relations post-AGOA, questions were raised regarding the lessons that could be drawn from the past unsuccessful negotiations of establishing a Free Trade Area between the United States and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU).

Bomer-Lauristen noted that one of the lessons from the past was the need for flexibility, and establishing a common level of ambition. Treat supported this view and pointed out that the movement towards a reciprocal trade arrangement may or may not be a traditional FTA, with the US being open to various ideas that can be acceptable to all parties.

A number of questions were raised, and these included Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary issues on grains, poultry, beef and pork. The emerging concerns, given recent AGOA negotiations, centred on how to integrate and harmonize SPS standards between South Africa and the United States in the future, as the two countries seek to strengthen bilateral trade. Another key concern related to how future negotiations around a reciprocal agreement would need to acknowledge the differences between the level of economic development of various SACU member states.

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