

Agbiz gearing up for the President's proposed jobs summit

At his maiden State of the Nation Address in February, President Ramaphosa announced that a jobs summit would be convened in 2018 to elevate the key challenge of unemployment, with a special emphasis on youth unemployment, to the top of the national agenda. The aim of the summit is not limited to creating formal employment opportunities but rather to creating viable economic opportunities, including the creation of new enterprises and self-employment opportunities. The summit seeks to address the constraints to job creation, affirm targets and commitments from different entities and solicit proposals for specific projects. To this end, government has enlisted the help of social partners at Nedlac where Agbiz will play a leading role through Business Unity South Africa (BUSA).

Nedlac has established five working groups that will meet on a weekly basis to prepare proposals and refine documentation between now and the proposed jobs summit (date to be announced). The five working groups will look at:

1. economic sector-specific interventions;
2. small and micro-enterprise support;
3. education and skills;
4. inclusive growth, redistribution and transformation; and
5. public and social programmes, labour market and anti-corruption interventions.

Agriculture, fishing and agribusiness was identified as one of the key sectors which the first working group will focus on. Agbiz sent out a call for proposals to its members and received very positive feedback with a number of specific project proposals already sent through to the relevant structures at BUSA. Whilst additional project proposals are more than welcome, we will also be working intensively over the coming months to identify not only viable projects that deserve attention and recognition, but also key constraints holding back growth, employment and transformation in the sector. The net has been cast very wide and the mandate includes highlighting any constraints in policy or implementation that is holding the sector back. We will take full advantage of this opportunity and compile a comprehensive list of regulatory instruments hampering the sector and provide alternative recommendations.

The Inclusive Growth, Redistribution and Transformation Working Group as well as the Public and Social Programmes Group will have a strong emphasis on enterprise creation through land reform. Whilst Agbiz will continue to provide inputs to the Constitutional Review Committee, the jobs summit working committees present an opportunity to address some of the systemic issues hampering successful land reform outside of the expropriation

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debate. Agbiz will play a leading role within BUSA to formulate concrete proposals on how to accelerate the land reform project in a manner that can create meaningful employment and self-employment opportunities. It is a complex issue and as such a multi-faceted approach will be taken to look at land reform through an urban, rural, social and commercial lens in the various working groups.

The jobs summit presents a golden opportunity for Agbiz to play a leading role as part of the business community to shape the future of our country. Inputs and proposals from our membership will, as always, be invaluable. Any inputs, comments or proposals can be directed to the Agbiz office.