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### **Agbiz welcomes move to alert level 2 (AL2), including the lifting of the ban on alcohol and tobacco product sales**

The Agricultural Business Chamber (Agbiz) strongly welcomes the announcement by President Cyril Ramaphosa over the weekend to move from alert level 3 to alert level 2 and to open up the economy as far as possible, within obvious measures to curb the spread of Covid-19. “The lifting of the ban on alcohol and tobacco sales is very good news and we commend the government for this necessary and well-considered decision,” says Agbiz CEO Dr John Purchase.

Under alert level 2, sales of tobacco products are allowed, and alcohol sales are permitted between 9:00 and 17:00 at liquor stores from Monday to Thursday, while on-site consumption of alcohol at restaurants and pubs is permitted until 22:00 in the evenings, also over weekends.

“We trust that the industries in the liquor and tobacco value chains can now begin to recover. However, government will need to take the necessary steps to stop the illicit trade that has flourished in the prohibition period. Since the introduction of sales restrictions in March, many stakeholders in these industries have recorded serious economic and livelihood losses. South Africa’s agriculture value chain has a central role to play in driving economic growth and social stability in the country, including in these specific industries.”

Dr Purchase says that since the state of disaster was announced in March and the country was put on full lockdown, Agbiz, together with other industry organisations, have engaged with government to allow the wine industry to complete the 2020 harvest and then to allow wine exports and domestic trade to continue.

“Negotiating a social compact through Nedlac dialogue and engagement was absolutely key to convince government of the devastating effects the alcohol and tobacco ban had on various industries and livelihoods in the liquor and tobacco value chains, not just in the agricultural sector. Through the Nedlac platform, we engaged at a top level with government, business, labour and civil society. We have been working with all these sectors towards establishing agreement in finding targeted solutions for the challenges linked to alcohol abuse and its impact on the capacity of the health sector to cope with Covid-19.”

“While we live in an increasingly imperfect and uncertain world, also in South Africa where brazen corruption seemingly knows no boundaries, constructive dialogue is the only way to rebuild our country. We now have to focus on saving enterprises and livelihoods, attracting investment and creating jobs.”

### **Agbiz verwelkom die oorgang na waarskuwingsvlak 2, insluitend die opheffing van die verbod op die verkoop van alkohol- en tabakprodukte**

Die landboubesigheidskamer, Agbiz, verwelkom president Cyril Ramaphosa se onlangse aankondiging dat die waarskuwingsvlak in die land van vlak 3 na vlak 2 verlaag word en dat die ekonomie sover moontlik oopgestel kan word, tesame met ooglopende maatreëls om die verspreiding van Covid-19 te bekamp. "Die opheffing van die verbod op die verkoop van alkohol- en tabakprodukte is baie goeie nuus, en ons loof die regering vir hierdie noodsaaklike en weldeurdagte besluit," sê dr. John Purchase, uitvoerende hoof van Agbiz.

Ingevolge die regulasies onder waarskuwingsvlak 2, word die verkoop van tabakprodukte toegelaat, en alkoholverkope word van Maandag tot Donderdag tussen 09:00 en 17:00 in drankwinkels toegelaat, terwyl alkoholverkope in restaurante en kroeë toegelaat word tot 22:00 saans, ook oor naweke.

“Ons vertrou dat die bedrywe in die drank- en tabakwaardekettings nou kan begin herstel. Die regering sal egter die nodige stappe moet doen om die onwettige handel wat in die verbodstydperk gefloreer het, stop te sit. Sedert die instelling van die beperkings in Maart, het baie belanghebbendes in hierdie bedrywe ernstige ekonomiese verliese en verlies aan mense se lewensbestaan aangeteken. Suid-Afrika se landbouwaardeketting speel nou 'n sentrale rol om ekonomiese groei en sosiale stabiliteit in die land te stimuleer, ook in hierdie spesifieke bedrywe.”

Dr Purchase sê sedert die ramptoestand en gepaardgaande grendeltyd in Maart aangekondig is, het Agbiz, in samewerking met ander bedryfsorganisasies, gereeld met die regering beraadslaag om die wynbedryf toe te laat om die 2020-oes te voltooi, en daarna om wynuitvoere en binnelandse verkope weer oop te stel.

“Ons rol en betrokkenheid in die dialoog by Nedlac, waar ons 'n nuwe sosiale ooreenkoms onderhandel het, het 'n sleutelrol gespeel om die regering te oortuig van die verwoestende gevolge wat die alkohol- en tabakverbod op die verskillende bedrywe, en mense se lewensbestaan, in die drank- en tabakwaardekettings gehad het, nie net in die landbousektor nie. Deur die Nedlac-platform het ons op die hoogste vlak met die regering, die sakewêreld, arbeid en die burgerlike samelewing onderhandel. Ons het saam met al hierdie sektore gewerk om 'n ooreenkoms te bewerkstellig om doelgerigte oplossings te vind vir die uitdagings verbonde aan alkoholmisbruik en die uitwerking daarvan op die gesondheidssektor se vermoë om Covid-19 die hoof te bied.

”Alhoewel ons tans in ‘n toenemend onvolmaakte en onsekere wêreld leef, ook in Suid-Afrika waar skaamtelose korrupsie skynbaar geen perke ken nie, is konstruktiewe dialoog die enigste manier om ons land te herbou. Ons moet nou daarop fokus om ondernemings te red, mense se lewensbestaan te beskerm, beleggings te lok en werk te skep.”

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