

# WHAT DOES THE MASTER PLAN SAY ABOUT LAND AND WATER REFORM?

## Background

The Agricultural and Agro-processing Master Plan (AAMP) was signed at a ceremony in Cape Town on 12 May, after a two-year-long consultation process in which Agbiz fully participated. The Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP) and the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) drafted the initial concept document that was used as a basis for the engagements between social partners that followed. Last-minute objections around issuing of title deeds, water rights, financing and targets for black farmer participation in the value chain were raised by social partners. Some of the issues were finally resolved whilst some parties chose not to sign the document. Further engagements around the implementation of the master plan will now follow. Minister of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development Thoko Didiza stated that the AAMP was intended to ensure clarity on a long-term view of where the industry wants to go and to deal with issues facing the industry.

The vision of the AAMP is to build a growing, equitable, inclusive, competitive, job-creating, low-carbon and sustainable agriculture and agro-processing sectors. The vision includes the aspiration to promote sustainable transformation in the agriculture and agro-processing sectors and enhance resilience to the effects of climate change and promote sustainable management of natural resources and principles of just energy transition.

The AAMP stands on six pillars, namely:

- i) Resolving policy ambiguities and creating an investment-friendly environment
- ii) Investing in, and maintaining enabling infrastructure critical to industry, such as electricity, roads, rail and ports.
- iii) Providing comprehensive farmer assistance, development finance, R&D and extension services
- iv) Improving food security, increasing production and employment and ensuring decency and inclusivity
- v) Facilitating market expansion, improving market access, and promoting trade
- vi) Improving localised food production, reducing imports and expanding agro-processing exports.

Certain cross-cutting interventions are identified in the master plan, these include land and water reform and management. There was a cluster that focused on the natural resources of land and water.

## Proposed interventions and opportunities regarding land and water

The master plan proposes that the Land and Agricultural Agency announced by the president in the 2020 State of the Nation Address will play a leading role in land acquisition

and land donations. The master plan proposes the speeding up of the transfer of state land to deserving beneficiaries and making such land available for beneficiaries either on a titled or a long-term lease basis. Land donations will be promoted following the Land Donations Policy. The master plan also proposes a private-public partnership approach to land identification and procurement.

A further aim of the interventions on land will be to promote secure land tenure and land rights. This will happen through the recording of land rights and strengthening of tenure security for farmers in communal areas, farming communities, and state land. The aim is to record 100% of communal land rights.

It is also the intention to develop a housing support programme for farmworkers and farming communities in the form of housing programmes with tenure rights, mechanisms for the provision of affordable housing, protection against illegal eviction, and protection for spouses and dependents where affordable. This will be done through the existing farm dweller programme of the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) and by using social dialogues between stakeholders.

The master plan also contains a focus on post-settlement support to farmers and land reform beneficiaries. This includes farm management plans, soil management programmes, conservation agriculture promotion and veld management programmes.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives is another focus area.

With regards to water reform, the master plan envisages equitable access to water for irrigation and water policy reforms. DALRRD and the Department of Water and Sanitation will continue to work closely together to assist land reform beneficiaries with water rights. Also, water user associations will be transformed and capacitated to effectively manage irrigation scheme revitalisation.

## **Way forward**

According to the master plan document: "Areas that are not concluded at the signing of this master plan will constitute a built-in agenda of the master plan with outcomes evaluated as part of the review process. The social partners will need to determine the overall shape of the negotiations and the level of ambition, whether new issues, over and above the unfinished business, are introduced. There are various legislation issues and specifics of public-private partnerships and labour regulation. These may require further analysis and new innovative approaches to find practical methods of giving credible expression to labour rights in a wide range of farming units, not to mention the financial difficulties different types of farming units face."

The Executive Oversight Committee, that guided the development of the master plan will continue to exist. Implementation structures will have to be created and operational resources made available for implementation. There will in all likelihood be a stakeholder forum and working groups based on the six pillars of the master plan. According to the

master plan document: “The expectation is that DALRRD will share the final structures and modalities within three months from the sign-off date of the AAMP.

In launching the master plan, Minister Didiza stated that making a success of the master plan implementation will require commitment, patience and determination from all those who are involved. Further engagements between stakeholders in the sector will have to follow with a focus on implementation. Some of these engagements will be tough. Both land and water reform will likely remain controversial. The master plan is not intended to replace existing government programmes and policies but focuses on what the stakeholders can do jointly to take these important, but often emotive debates forward in practical ways that will benefit the agricultural sector.