

**Wednesday 5 december 2018, 12 h 30, Menlyn Boutique Hotel**

**Condecration of Dr John PURCHASE, AGBIZ CEO,  
by Ambassador of France, Christophe FARNAUD**

Dear Dr John Purchase,

We are all gathered today for this ceremony to confer you the Order of Agricultural Merit.

The Order of Agricultural Merit (French: *Ordre du Mérite agricole*) is an order of merit bestowed by the French Republic for outstanding contributions to agriculture. When it was created in 1883, it was second in importance only to the Legion of Honour.

The Order of Agricultural Merit rewards **people who rendered exceptional services to agriculture, whether in public duties or in the very practice of agriculture**. It also rewards people who distinguished themselves in scientific research or in related publications.

I think, dear John, that **your outstanding career fulfills all the conditions**.

After obtaining your **Bachelors in Sciences (agriculture) at the University of Pretoria in 1980**, you started your career in research at the **Agricultural Research Council, serving in various research and senior managerial positions for 22 years**. In this time you also graduated with a Master's degree and a doctorate (Ph.D) in Agriculture from the University of the Free State.

You then decided to leave the world of research, to go towards functions more related to agricultural production and policy, and you joined **Grain SA in 2002. You quickly became general manager of this organization from 2005 to 2007**.

**Since 2007, you have been Chief Executive Officer of the Agricultural Business Chamber (AGBIZ)**, the most important organization that represents the agricultural and agribusiness sector in South Africa.

You have also served on the boards of the Land & Agricultural Bank of South African and the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) with distinction. You were appointed as **chairman of the Board of the South African Grain Information Services (SAGIS) for a three-year term** and now serve as deputy chairman. Currently you are the Business Convenor in the Trade and Industry Chamber of **Nedlac (national economic development and labor council)** and are deputy chairman of the Economic Policy Committee of **Business Unity South Africa (BUSA)**, and also serve as an alternate director of BUSA.

In June 2013 you were elected to the board of the International Food and Agribusiness Management Association (IFAMA) and still serve in this capacity.

This decoration represents a recognition of **your exceptional career serving South African agriculture and agribusiness**.

**The handover of the order of agricultural merit to foreigners also has an additional meaning: that of emphasizing a particular importance in the exchanges between France and South Africa.**

**France and South Africa are two great agricultural powers.** France is the first agriculture in the European Union and South Africa is the largest agricultural power in sub-Saharan Africa. Agriculture and food industry are pillars of our two economies.

I also have to remember our **particular links in the history of wine**, with the large scale arrival of French “huguenots” at the Cape of Good Hope in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In our two countries, **agriculture and the rural world have always represented, in different forms, one of the pillars in the balance of our societies.** South Africa is engaged in a difficult debate on agrarian reform and I wish to recall the constructive role that AGBIZ, and you personally, are playing in such a sensitive and delicate debate.

**France and South Africa are also two important trading partners in agriculture.**

In 2017, France exported 150 million euros worth of agricultural products to South Africa, mainly wines and spirits. South Africa exported 224 million euros worth of agricultural products to France, mainly citrus fruits. I would like to emphasize that in the agricultural sector, South Africa exports more to France. It is therefore important to maintain free trade relations, and avoid any conflict, as our trade relations are beneficial to both partners

So, I would like to **thank you for your support in organizing several missions of the agricultural and agroindustrial sector from France to South Africa.** The support of AGBIZ, and the contacts which might be implemented with your members, are indeed particularly valuable for the development of trade and investment between our two countries.

Finally, I know that **your family has always played an important role with you, so I want to greet Esté, your wife, who is here today.**

On behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Food, I have the honour to present you with the Order of Agricultural Merit.