

Media Release: Free State Agriculture



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Agriculture is a partnership of many stakeholders – Wilken

Free State Agriculture (FSA) views the statements that 20% of producers produce 80% of South Africa's food as irresponsible and dangerous. This is according to Francois Wilken, President of FSA, after such statements were recently made in the media.

According to him, agriculture in the Free State is seen as an integrated partnership between everyone involved in the agricultural value chain. This include communal, emerging, commercial and so-called mega farmers, many of which are members of organized agriculture. Agricultural businesses and industries, input suppliers, processors and financial institutions are all cardinal role players in the agricultural sector.

"For example, seeing a few large cattle feedlots as the meat suppliers of the country is oversimplified. The cattle supplied to them are first fed and provided by a wide spectrum of producers, regardless of the size of the farm," Wilken said.

Ordinary farmers important

He believes that sacrificing certain parts of the value chain and disguising the inability of government, corruption and ideological opportunism are dangerous and unfair. "Two locomotives for example pull 30 train wagons. You can't decide to simply cut off the wagons and think the locomotives will still reach the destination anyway."

According to Wilken, agricultural production is also much more complex than just the production of staple food. "Take the wool industry as an example. It is a multi-billion export industry where the wool is sometimes produced in some of the most difficult parts of our country by ordinary and smaller farmers."

He said there are therefore many other industries that play a role in generating much-needed foreign currency. Wilken believes the so-called "small farmers" are the farmers who maintain the economy of small towns and provide work to the unskilled labour force.

Get involved with established structures and work together

“Free State Agriculture remains committed to serving the interests of all its members and agriculture in general, and to ensuring that every producer has a fair and equitable opportunity to live out his passion,” Wilken said.

According to him, it is important that farmers become involved in established structures, participate and determine their own future.

“We also need to be alert of the misuse of the media, emotion and personal attacks to achieve short-term goals,” he said. “Every producer has to take responsibility for himself by getting involved, letting his voice heard and not just sitting with a wish list and hoping someone will come by and make it true.”

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