_____

PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

_____

The Council met at 14:01.

The Deputy Chairperson took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayers or meditation.

The Deputy Chairperson announced that the sitting constituted a sitting of the National Council of Provinces.

APRROPRIATION BILL

(Policy debate)

Debate on Budget Vote 31 – Employment and Labour:

The MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR: Hon Deputy Chair ...

Tshivenda:

Aa!

UNREVISED HANSARD

English:

... hon members, hon Deputy Ministers of Employment and Labour, Deputy Minister Judith Nemadzinga-Tshabalala and Deputy Minister Jomo Sibiya, Acting Director-General, Ms Jacky Molisane, deputy directors-general of our department, chief executive officers, CEOs, commissioners, directors of our entities, chairpersons of our entities, our national and international social partners, and fellow South Africans, we table this Budget Vote of the Department of Employment and Labour at a moment of both difficult determination, urgency, and action for our country. As the National Council of Provinces, this House understands better than most that the realities of our labour market differ across provinces. Our budget and targets, therefore, reflect both the diversity of provincial economies and the principle of equitable development. Provinces with the largest populations and economic output naturally carry the largest share of our targets, reflecting the scale of our economic activity and labour market demand within their jurisdictions. At the same time, we have been deliberate in ensuring that smaller provinces are not neglected. The Northern Cape, North West, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, and Free State each have dedicated interventions and targets that respond to their unique labour market conditions, including rural unemployment, geographic

UNREVISED HANSARD

dispersion, limited economic opportunities, and barriers to labour market access. This balanced approach demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that the services of the department and its entities reach workers, job seekers, employers, and communities in every province of our Republic, whether in our major metropolitan centres, mining communities, farming districts, or remote rural areas, our objective remains the same: to expand access to decent work, strengthen labour market institutions, enforce compliance with labour legislation, and contribute meaningfully to economic inclusion.

This Budget Vote is therefore not merely an allocation of resources. It is an investment in the dignity of work, the protection of workers, and the development of a labour market that serves all South Africans, regardless of where they live. This is a defining time in South Africa where, on one hand, we are seeing real signs of economic stabilization, our electricity supply is improving, and investor confidence is renewing; on the other hand, despite periods of economic growth over the past approximately two decades, South Africa has failed to generate sufficient employment opportunities for young people. By 2024, about 1 million people entered the labour market, yet only around 40% secured stable employment,

UNREVISED HANSARD

while the remainder either survived through precarious work or joined the growing ranks of the long-term unemployed. This reflects a broader missing jobs crisis in which the economy is simply not generating sufficient work opportunities at the scale required.

Government and social partners, therefore, have a responsibility to intervene strategically through active labour market programmes, public employment initiatives, and stronger partnerships with business and labour to create sustainable pathways into work, livelihoods, and economic inclusion.

In 1976, the youth of South Africa rose against exclusion and the denial of opportunity. As we honour their sacrifice, we have declared 2026 as the year of putting young South Africans to work in honour of the 1976 youth in commemoration of the youth uprising golden jubilee. This is a national commitment to place youth employment skills, workplace experience, and economic participation at the centre of government, business, and society. Happy Youth Month for all our young South Africans.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The latest data shows that our official unemployment rate is at 32,7%. The largest increases were recorded in Mpumalanga, Limpopo, and the Northern Cape, highlighting the vulnerability of provinces where economic opportunities are more limited and labour markets are less diversified. By contrast, KwaZulu-Natal was the only province to record an increase in employment, demonstrating that labour market outcomes can differ considerably across provinces and require tailored responses. However, this increase follows two consecutive quarterly declines recorded during the second-half of 2025, when the unemployment rate fell from 33,2% in the second quarter of 2025 to 31,9% in the third quarter and further down to 31,4% in the fourth quarter of 2025. Significantly, the 31,4% recorded in the last quarter of 2025 represented the lowest unemployment rate since the third quarter of 2020, signalling modest but important progress in stabilizing the labour market. The work that we will undertake in the 2026-27 financial year is backed by significant public investment. The Department of Employment and Labour has been allocated a budget of R4,578 billion, representing 10,2% increase from the previous financial year and reflecting a deliberate realignment of resources towards employment creation, labour market activation, and improved service delivery. This allocation is complemented by a R41 billion budget of the

UNREVISED HANSARD

Unemployment Insurance Fund, which continues to provide critical income support while investing in programmes that facilitate the reintegration of job seekers into the economy.

In addition, the Compensation Fund's budget of R28 billion will strengthen social protection for workers and support the fund's ongoing institutional modernization. Collectively, these resources position the department and its entities to respond decisively to the unemployment crisis while advancing economic inclusion, work protection, and social injustice. We have repurposed the Labour Activation Programme, LAP, which serves as our flagship intervention to help unemployed South African access opportunities, acquire skills, and enter the world of work. The LAP has been an important intervention over the years, but a review of the programme revealed that it was not achieving the scale and impact required to respond effectively to South Africa's unemployment crisis. The reviewed LAP's strategy under employability is now centred on three focused pillars aimed at providing demand-led skills, labour market absorption, strengthening workplace experience, and supporting enterprise-led job creation. The first pillar focuses on development aligned to the needs of the labour market. The second pillar prioritizes the placement of graduates, Technical and Vocational Education and Training,

UNREVISED HANSARD

TVET, students, and learners from higher education and training institutions into internships and work-integrated learning opportunities so that they can complete their qualifications and gain the workplace exposure necessary to enter the labour market. The target is to recruit 200 000 unemployed people in the current financial year alone. Of those, we will be placing 20 000 TVET students on work-integrated learning, chartered financial analysts, chartered accountants, professional technicians and engineers, law students, and health inspectors. In addition, we will train 10 000 youth on digital skills and 10 000 of driving licences. Importantly, 70% of all opportunities will be directed towards the youth, reflecting a deliberate commitment to address the plight of unemployed young people. The third pillar focuses on intervention for micro, small, and medium enterprises through blended finance mechanisms aimed at stimulating economic activity, supporting business growth, and expanding job creation. We have budgeted R36,6 billion over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, for the LAP.

We call upon all employers to partner with us and open opportunities for young South Africans to enter, complete their studies, or gain first-time work experience through internships. The mandate is to inspect and enforce labour

UNREVISED HANSARD

laws. The inspection capacity is currently under strain, wherein there are only 2 300 inspectors to inspect over 2 million companies in the country. It is for this reason that the department has embarked on the largest phased expansion of labour inspection capacity in the democratic South Africa through Project 20K inspector interns. We are also embarking on the recruitment of 10 000 permanent labour inspectors announced during this year's state of the nation address. This is one of the most significant expansions of labour market enforcement capacity in democratic South Africa. This intervention expands and rebuilds the state's enforcement capability to ensure that labour rights are not theoretical rights, but rights defended on the factory floor, on farms, in restaurants, warehouses, mines, construction sites, and across every workplace in our economy. We have set aside R5 billion for the MTEF period, and we have engaged the National Treasury regarding funding of the permanent inspectors. We plan to modernize labour inspection systems through hybrid inspection that leverages digitization and smart technology to improve and strengthen compliance and monitoring across workplaces.

Public Employment Services, PES, is a frontline instrument in the fight against unemployment, where millions of job seekers face exclusion not only because of the shortage of jobs, but

UNREVISED HANSARD

also because of distance, cost, information barriers, and fragmented systems. Access itself becomes a matter of justice. The department has built Employment Services of SA, the largest government job seeker database in the country. Employers must utilise our online system, which can be accessed via www.labour.gov.za. We directly recruit and match with unemployed job seekers, whether they require chefs, waiters, drivers, plumbers, artisans, etc.

During the 2026-27 financial year, the department targets to register more than a million work stickers as part of advancing more coherent and impactful Public Employment Programmes. I have approved the progression of the Public Employment Programmes review report to the directors-general clusters and Cabinet processes. The report is informed by the need to strengthen co-ordination, planning, and implementation of approximately 106 Public Employment Programmes introduced since 1994. Upon completion of the approval processes, the report will be released for public comment as part of advancing a more coherent and impactful Public Employment Programmes Framework.

Three hundred and fifty million has been committed to the government and business partnership working with The

UNREVISED HANSARD

Presidency and the National Pathway Management Network to place 130 000 young people into learning opportunities, work exposure programmes, and employment interventions. In addition, R95 million has been committed to the Industrial Development Corporation, IDC, to support youth employment innovation projects aimed at placing 7 000 young people into productive economic activity. One of the interventions supported through this programme has been the Assistant Teacher Programme. During the 2025-26 financial year. Over 158,000 opportunities were created. We funded this programme with R4 billion as part of LAP.

Through the NEDLAC processes, the Labor Laws Amendment Bill proposes critical reforms to the Labor Relations Act, Basic Conditions of Employment Act, National Minimum Wage Act, and Employment Equity Act. These changes are aimed at strengthening worker protection, improving dispute resolutions, reducing unnecessary compliance patterns for small businesses, and aligning legislation with Constitutional Court and Labor Court judgments. Progress is already measurable. The Labor Laws Amendment Bill was approved by Cabinet for public comment and published in the Government Gazette on 27 February 2026, generating 216 public submissions, and is currently under review. In parallel, the

UNREVISED HANSARD

Unemployment Insurance Fund, UIF, and Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Amendment Bills have successfully passed the Socioeconomic Impact Assessment System process. Since the introduction of the National Minimum Wage, it has benefited an estimated six million workers. Following the promulgation of the Employment Equity Amendment and the introduction of sectoral numerical targets in January 2025, more than 14 000 designated employers submitted employment equity reports, while over 11,000 non-designated employers applied for compliance certificates. In the 2025-26 financial year, the department targeted 3 324 employment equity inspections, including director-general reviews, reassessments, and monitoring interventions. A total of 1 948 employers were reviewed and served with recommendations. Of these, only 181 employers were found compliant, representing a compliance rate of 9%, while 1,767 employers were found to be non-compliant and were issued with recommendations for corrective actions. During the 2025-26 financial year, the UIF, through the Temporary Employer Relief Scheme, TERS, has supported 30 companies with approximately 295 million, saving more than 9 300 jobs during a period of economic pressure. This intervention demonstrates the fund’s critical role in sustaining business, protecting workers, and strengthening economic resilience. The performance of the TERS has been

UNREVISED HANSARD

below satisfactory, with strengthened operational efficiency, improved turnaround times, and enhanced capacity to support companies in distress and preserve jobs. The TERS budget allocation for 2026-27 is R2,4 billion. The compensation fund also continues to invest in the future of our young people through the R300 million bursary programme that currently supports about 4 000 students in scarce skill qualifications across South African universities. Supported Employment Enterprise, SEE, is the only state manufacturing entity whose core mandate is the large-scale employment of persons with disabilities. I therefore want to challenge the Ministers, premiers, MECs, mayors, and all leaders across government to actively approach the National Treasury to seek an exemption that will enable them to procure from Supported Employment Enterprises, whether it is office furniture, school furniture, hospital linen, bed and protective clothing, or institutional textiles, the government must use its own procurement muscle to support enterprises that employ persons with disability. Public procurement must become an instrument of social transformation, not merely a matter of compliance. The work of the NEDLAC continues to demonstrate the strategic importance of social compacting. NEDLAC, during 2025-26 facilitated extensive engagement on labour laws, resulting in the finalisation of amendments to key labour legislations, which

UNREVISED HANSARD

are now before Parliament. Productivity SA is being repositioned as a strategic delivery arm for productivity-driven growth, enterprise sustainability, and job retention, particularly for SMMEs and vulnerable enterprises. The institution continues to build on positive momentum from the previous financial year, where targets related to enterprise support, skills development, and job retention were exceeded. In the current financial year, Productivity SA aims to support more than 1 300 enterprises, capacitate 2 500 workers and managers, develop 350 productivity champions, and save approximately 4 000 jobs through turnaround interventions.

The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration, CCMA, is increasingly becoming a proactive institution focused on conflict prevention, strengthening collective bargaining, and contributing to job retention. In the current ... [Inaudible.] ... targets to resolve 99% of cases within prescribed timeframes and seeks to address 90% of public interest disputes while supporting the preservation of jobs during retrenchment processes.

In conclusion, in a constrained fiscal environment, the challenge of unemployment may be national, but its impact is felt locally in every province, municipality, and community

UNREVISED HANSARD

across our country. This budget reflects a deliberate choice to direct resources where they can make the greatest impact in jobs, protection, enforcement, and reform while building a more capable, ethical, and developmental state, which is our third priority in the country's Medium-Term Development Plan 2024 to 2029. I therefore present to this House the Budget Vote 31 as a statement of national purpose to build a labour market and an economy that works for all our people. I appreciate the support of the Deputy Ministers, the select committee, my special advisors, the director-general, and the entire Department of Employment and Labour family executives, and the entire team in my office, who spent sleepless nights contributing towards the finalization of this Budget Vote speech. Thank you, hon Deputy Chairman.

Ms H S BOSHOFF: Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, hon members, and fellow South Africans, good day. Today we debate Budget Vote 31 of the Department of Employment and Labour. This department carries one of the most difficult responsibilities in government because it sits directly at the intersection of unemployment, economic growth, worker protection and business sustainability.

UNREVISED HANSARD

For millions of South Africans, this department represents hope for employment, stability and dignity. As a committee, our oversight must remain balanced and constructive. Where progress is evident, it must be acknowledged. Where weaknesses exist, accountability must follow because accountability strengthens institutions.

The department enters the 2026-27 financial year with a total allocation of approximately R4,58 billion. In addition, Parliament exercises oversight over major labour institutions such as the Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Compensation Fund, which collectively manage tens of billions of rands annually and remain central to South Africa’s labour market support system.

Chairperson, the latest unemployment figures for the first quarter of 2026 paint a deeply concerning picture. The expanded unemployment rate has risen to 43,7%, with more than 301 000 additional unemployed persons recorded during the quarter. Particularly concerning is that sectors such as construction and community services experienced further job losses, while many young South Africans continue struggling to access opportunities.

UNREVISED HANSARD

This is simply not a statistic. It is a warning sign for economic growth, social stability and the future of an entire generation increasingly excluded from meaningful economic participation. At the same time, global instability, rising fuel prices, inflationary pressure and weaker growth forecasts continue placing additional strain on households, businesses, and job creation.

This means every programme, intervention, and rand allocated to this department must demonstrate measurable impact. Deputy Chair, there are areas where the Department deserves recognition. The Public Employment Services Branch continues expanding access to employment support systems. During the previous financial year, more than 1,3 million work seekers were registered on the *Employment Services of South Africa* system.

However, hon members, registration alone cannot become the measure of success. The real question is whether these systems are resulting in placements, whether they are linked to labour market demand, and whether sectors with growth potential are being targeted effectively? Deputy Chair, a healthy labour market also requires balance. Workers must be protected, but

UNREVISED HANSARD

employers must also be supported, because sustainable jobs cannot exist without sustainable businesses.

Many employers, particularly small businesses, are already operating under severe pressure from electricity costs, logistic failures, crime, municipal collapse and growing compliance burdens. Labour protections remain essential, but systems must also be fair, efficient, and predictable. Employers should not spend months waiting for UIF processing, compensation fund matters or labour dispute resolutions while businesses suffer productivity losses.

The department must therefore ensure that compliance systems are not only strict, but also efficient and accessible. Approximately R702 million has been allocated to inspection and enforcement services for the 26-27 financial year. Labour laws mean very little if enforcement is weak. Workers must be protected from exploitation and unsafe working conditions, but inspections must also remain fair, professional and targeted.

Employers making genuine efforts to comply should be assisted to correct shortcomings, while repeat offenders must face decisive action. The modernisation of the inspectorate therefore remains essential. Inspectors require better

UNREVISED HANSARD

technology, stronger data systems and more effective coordination mechanisms so that enforcement becomes smarter, more targeted and more efficient.

The CCMA continues playing one of the most important stabilising roles within the labour market. In a high unemployment environment, trusted dispute resolution institutions remain critical for labour peace and economic stability. The CCMA deserves recognition for the role it continues to play in mediation, arbitration and dispute resolution, particularly during retrenchment processes. This entity will receive more than R1 billion during this financial year. However, turnaround times and accessibility must continue improving here because delayed dispute resolution harms both workers and employers.

Efficiency within labour dispute resolution is, therefore, hon Minister, not a luxury; it is an economic necessity. The Unemployment Insurance Fund remains one of South Africa’s important social protection mechanisms. The UIF provides relief to workers during unemployment, illnesses, maternity and economic distress. Improvements in digitisation and verification systems must be acknowledged.

UNREVISED HANSARD

However, serious concerns have emerged regarding outdated UIF portal systems and the apparent failure to fully migrate users onto a stable and efficient platform. Reports indicate that this has contributed to delays, backlogs, and significant frustration for both workers and employers. At a time of exceptionally high unemployment, unemployed South Africans cannot afford administrative dysfunction within one of the country's most important safety nets.

For many households, UIF payments represent the difference between stability and desperation. If outdated systems continue undermining service delivery, then this becomes more than just an administrative problem. It becomes a governance and accountability concern with direct human consequences. The committee will therefore continue exercising close oversight over UIF digitisation system migration and service delivery performance.

Deputy Chair, the compensation fund also requires continued oversight. The fund exists to support workers injured or made ill in the course of their employment. While progress has been made regarding online system and modernisation initiatives, concerns remain regarding claims processing delays, audit outcomes and continued dependence on consultants. Workers who

UNREVISED HANSARD

are injured cannot spend months navigating administrative dysfunction. At the same time, employers who comply with the law also require efficient processing because delays impact workplace stability and operations.

Deputy Chair, *Productivity South Africa* also deserves mention. The entity continues playing an important role in productivity improvement, business turnaround interventions and job preservation initiatives. The committee must, however, ensure that public funding translates into measurable business recovery, productivity improvements and meaningful job preservation.

One entity that deserves particular attention is the Supported Employment Enterprises, commonly referred to as the SEE. Too often, persons with disabilities are treated as an afterthought within economic planning when in reality they should form part of the centre of economic inclusion. The SEE creates employment opportunities through factory operations and production facilities that employ persons with disabilities in supportive environments. For many South Africans, SEE represents dignity, independence and inclusion.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Approximately R206 million has been allocated to SEE for the 2026-27 financial year, but demand continues to exceed available support. The entity cannot really survive; it must be strengthened. We must ensure that SEE is adequately supported to modernise operations, expand production capacity and access new markets. Supporting the SEEs is not charity; it is economic inclusion.

Deputy Chair, while there are positive developments, serious concerns remain. The Department received a qualified audit opinion during the previous financial year. Irregular expenditure remains a major concern and exceeds R1 billion cumulatively. The AG also raised concerns regarding performance reporting, supporting documentation and weaknesses in internal controls. This matters because a department responsible for enforcing compliance across the labour market must itself maintain the highest standards of governance and accountability. No question about that: Consequence management cannot remain weak.

Deputy Chair, unemployment cannot be addressed through labour interventions alone if the broader economy is not creating conditions for investment, growth and job creation. When infrastructure deteriorates, municipalities fail and investor

UNREVISED HANSARD

confidence weakens, the pressure ultimately reaches the labour market. Labour institutions can help protect and support workers, but they cannot substitute economic growth. Stronger co-ordination across the economic cluster therefore remains essential.

In conclusion, Deputy Chair, the Department of Employment and Labour remains one of the most important departments within government because its work affects the livelihoods, the dignity and economic stability. There has been progress in areas such as digitisation, labour dispute resolution, inspection work and employment services. But governance weaknesses, irregular expenditure, slow implementation, and service delivery failures cannot be ignored.

Workers must be protected, but employers must also be supported through efficient and predictable systems, because without sustainable businesses, there will be no sustainable jobs. The message, therefore, from this committee must remain clear: We acknowledge progress where progress is evident, but we will continue demanding accountability, measurable outcomes and implementation that improves the lives of South Africans.

UNREVISED HANSARD

For these reasons, while recognising both the progress made and the serious challenges that remain, the Select Committee on Economic Development and Trade adopted and supports Budget Vote 31 of the Department of Employment and Labour - and take note, hon Minister - with no objections or abstentions.

South Africa, however, does not need more promises. It needs economic growth, functioning institutions, protected workers, supported businesses, inclusion for persons with disabilities and real jobs. That must remain the standard against which this department will be measured. Thank you, Deputy Chair.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Thank you, hon Boshoff, for your inputs. Now I call upon the hon Mabilo who will debate for 15 minutes on behalf of the ANC.

Mr S P MABILO: Deputy Chair, hon Chief Whip, hon Minister and the two deputies, hon MEC from the Northern Cape, hon Blennies-Magage and all MECs on the virtual platform, the House Chairpersons, all members ...

Setswana:

... dumelang.

UNREVISED HANSARD

English:

Deputy Chair, this year marks the 30th of the signing of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which was adopted on the 10th 1996 and it took effect on 4 February 1997. The milestone presents a significant moment to reflect on the country's democratic journey and the transformative vision embedded in the Constitution, widely regarded as one of the most progressive Constitutions in the world.

The Constitution stands as a cornerstone of our country's democracy, guaranteeing the protection of human rights, equality before the law and the rule of law. It represents the culminations of decades of struggle against oppression and injustice. It serves as a living document that continues to guide the nation's pursuit of freedom, justice, dignity for all who live in it. Today we converge for the policy debate on Budget Vote 31, Employment and Labour, which direct funding strategic policies to drive job creation, enforce workplace equity, protect vulnerable workers and many social safety nets, as well as the Unemployment Insurance Fund, UIF, and the Compensation Fund.

This budget speaks to our commitment to reduce unemployment, poverty and inequality by pursuing the objectives of decent

UNREVISED HANSARD

work for all through employment creation and enterprise development. It also allows us to reflect on the work our government is doing to set standards and protect rights in the workplace, including facilitating equal opportunities and social dialogue and providing social protection to the working class and the poor. Critical for us as the ANC, it also allocates funds to government programmes designed to combat unemployment and support small businesses such as small, medium, and micro enterprises, SMMEs, and facilitate vocational training and youth employment pathways.

This budget funds regular vote, regulatory bodies and institutions such as the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration, CCMA, to ensure fair labour practice, safe working conditions and enforcement of the National Minimum Wage. Hon Deputy Chair, for us as the ANC, this policy debate is a testament to the brave struggles of workers in the face of forces opposed to change. It is rooted in the ANC's worker protection policy, which is firmly grounded in the pillars of the Freedom Charter and is enshrined in South Africa's constitution, guaranteeing the right to fair labour practice, the freedom to join trade unions, the right to strike and the right to collective bargaining.

UNREVISED HANSARD

This budget also allows us to speak to millions of South Africans who are either excluded from the labour market entirely to suffer from underemployment, struggling to ensure enough working hours or adequate pay escape to brutal traps of poverty. It also allows us to speak to millions of our people who are facing relentless rise in cost of living, which continues to shrink household budgets and cause major financial distress that follows workers from their workplaces to the very communities where they live as they battle to make ends meet. It gives hope to the millions of workers who continue to fight for job security while risking their lives to free themselves and their families from the bondage of poverty, poor wages and economic abuses.

The Department of Employment and Labour derives its mandate and legislative mandate from the Constitution of the country, particularly the Bill of Rights, which is given effect through acts that regulate labour matters in South Africa. The most important are these - just to mention a few: the Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1993, the Labour Relations Act of 1995, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997, the Employment Equity Act of 1998 and the Employment Services Act of 2014, which is a progressive legislation.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The mandate of the department is to regulate market through policies and programmes developed in consultation with all social partners to ensure that there is work, peace and a conducive environment for productivity. To improve economic efficiency and productivity while also facilitating the creation of decent jobs and employment. It also plays a critical role in promoting labour standards and fundamental rights at work, which aims to provide adequate social safety nets to protect vulnerable workers, foster sound labour relations for equity and eliminate unfair discrimination in the workplace.

When we gained our freedom in 1994, we were fully aware that the struggles facing workers in our country were interconnected and dialectical. It is for this reason that we made a conscious decision to co-ordinate the ANC-led government to work towards transforming the workplace and fighting the monster of apartheid labour practices, which pushed workers to the margins of the economy, working dangerously deep under the ground, barely an extractive system that did not benefit them. As we celebrate 30 years of democracy, we remain firm in our commitment to transform the labour regime, to bridge the wide gap that many of our people continue to face. We remain committed to ensuring equity among

UNREVISED HANSARD

workers and working class decisively and the safety of the workplace.

It is for this reason that we welcome the department's strive to facilitate access to decent employment by seeking to register a total of over 3,3 million work seekers, provide employment counselling to over 870 work seekers and place a total number of 250 000 work seekers in registered employment opportunities. We are also aware that the higher achievement in previous years is attributed to hosting job fairs and imbizos, as well as the use of interns.

As the ANC, we welcome the department's effort to create over 130 000 job opportunities through a once-off Presidential Youth Employment Initiative, with an allocation of a total amount of R459 million for the 2026-27 financial year. We also welcome the department's effort to finalise NEP, the National Employment Policy and the National Labour Migration Policy, which are geared towards regulating the country's workplace, balancing economic demands and protecting local workers. Together, these two critical policies aim to stimulate domestic job creation while mapping and managing international skills, foreign employment quotas and safeguard cross-border migration.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The National Employment Policy is fundamental to our country's macroeconomic framework, which seeks to drive job creation by delineating targeted interventions to stimulate growth in key economic sectors and also to boost productivity and align labour output with the National Development Plan. This policy will also assist us in reactivating work by focusing on reducing unemployment through targeted strategies to re-evaluate discouraged and inactive work seekers.

It will also help us strengthen our skills development intervention by bridging the gap between worker skills and the skills employers need to navigate modern economic shifts, such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Most critically for us as the ANC, it will help us promote worker inclusivity by guiding the creation of fair, equitable, and inclusive labour markets, ensuring that marginalised groups and youth have access to opportunities. The Labour Migration Policy will assist us in managing the flow of documented foreign nationals entering the country and of citizens seeking work abroad.

Its significance lies in balancing economic needs and local employment, which helps balance the need for critical, scarce skills and brain gain with the expectation of local population and worsening domestic unemployment. The policy will also

UNREVISED HANSARD

allow the government to facilitate legislative quotas for the employment of foreign nationals in major economic sectors, such as agriculture, construction, and hospitality, to ensure that citizens have priority access to local job markets. It will also assist us in containing, combating the exploitation of workers, curbing the exploitation of undocumented workers, and preventing employers from undercutting standard wage rates.

As the ANC, we want to welcome the department's commitment to provide public employment services by registering a total number of 1 050 000 work seekers on the employment services of certificate database, while also providing employment counselling to 280 000 work seekers, facilitating 75 000 registered employment opportunities, and registering a total of 125 work opportunities in the employment services on the certificate database.

Hon Deputy Chair, I have two minutes left. We also welcome the department's commitment to contribute to increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities over the medium term by providing quality funding and monitoring disability organisations on an ongoing basis. This is critical for us as the ANC, because people with disabilities in South Africa

UNREVISED HANSARD

continue to face severe barriers in the workplace, including structural inaccessibility, stigma, and high unemployment rate. Despite the protective legislation Like Employment Equity, disabled individuals make up less than one percent of the national workforce, failing far short of the three percent target.

Finally, we want to reassure the hon Minister, the hon Deputy Ministers, that we will monitor these commitments. We will continue to ensure that the programmes of this department contribute to the honour and dignity of our people. As the ANC, we support the budget. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Thank you very much, hon Mabilo for monitoring your time as well as your commitment to monitor the department. Thank you very much for that. Hon delegates, I now have the pleasure to call upon the hon J H P Britz for seven minutes.

Mr J H P BRITZ: Hon Deputy Chairperson, hon Minister, hon Deputy Minister, hon members, and fellow South Africans, good day. Today, we debate this Budget Vote against the backdrop of one of the greatest unemployment crises in South Africa.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Millions of South Africans wake up every morning without work, without a salary, and without certainty about tomorrow. For many, unemployment has become a permanent condition. And this hardship is not limited to the uneducated or undereducated South Africans.

Lihle Dlamini graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in development studies, but she is unemployed and said this about her situation: "The hardest part about unemployment is the guilt that comes with not being able to financially support my family back home. As one of the oldest girls, I shoulder a lot of responsibility in the family."

Afrikaans:

Maar, net soos die geval van Lihle, verwys ek u na die geval van Francois, wie in die Noord Kaap woon. Hy is 36 jaar oud. Hy het nie werk nie en hy woon nog steeds by sy ouers, wie self werkloos is.

English:

While government repeatedly announces plans, frameworks, summits and strategies, South Africans are asking a far simpler question: Where are the jobs? According to Statistic SA, employed South Africans are down by 345 000, giving us

UNREVISED HANSARD

roughly 16,8 million employed South Africans. Unemployment increased with 301 000 to a staggering 8,1 million unemployed South Africans.

The burden of unemployment is carried by young people. Those aged 15 to 24 face the highest unemployment rate at 60,9%, followed by those aged 25 to 34 at an unemployment rate of 40,6%.

The Department of Employment and Labour cannot be assessed merely on how much money it spends, how many programmes it launches or how many reports it produces. It must ultimately be judged on one outcome, and one outcome alone: Has more South Africans entered meaningful employment? Because a budget that cannot translate into jobs, becomes little more than an expensive administrative exercise.

For too long government has approached job creation as something the state must administer, rather than something the economy must generate. Government does not employ millions of people. Businesses, entrepreneurs, investors, farmers, manufacturers, and small businesses do. Government’s responsibility is to create an environment in which they can succeed.

UNREVISED HANSARD

None of the department’s proposed performance indicators show any signs of co-operation and co-ordination with the Department of Trade and Industry, with the Department of Small Business Development or with the Treasury. These should be the providers of employment. Government can only employ a small amount of people. The Department of Employment and Labour should be driving initiatives that make employing people easier for the private sector. Where is the innovation in this?

Instead of creating this, South Africa continues to battle unreliable logistics, deteriorating municipal infrastructure, regulatory uncertainty, failing local government, rising business costs and collapsing investor confidence. These are job killers.

There are concerns around claims, ICT failures, inefficiencies, weak consequence management and recurring audit findings that continue to undermine public confidence. To add to these woes, we have seen how the UIF and the Compensation Fund have failed their annual audits year after year.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The lack of these consequences means that pensioners and workers who contributed to UIF have been cheated out of their hard-earned money. Take for example, Mrs C Burger of Klerksdorp, Matlosana. She received her monthly Compensation Fund pension as a beneficiary, after her husband's fatal injury on duty. However, the last payment she received was in November 2023.

She instructed an advocate and he referred it to me. They were informed by the CFO of the department that Mrs Burger's claim must be migrated from the Compensation Fund in Klerksdorp to their pensions section at head office. Now, Minister, I ask you: How long does this take?

She still does not receive her pension! Minister, Mrs Burger, and others like her have been desperate and without money for years! Situations such as these are undefendable. The department must therefore focus on institutional competence.

The DA supports fair labour standards, workplace dignity and the protection of vulnerable workers. But we reject the notion that workers can be protected into prosperity, while jobs disappear around them. A country cannot regulate itself out of

UNREVISED HANSARD

unemployment. It cannot subsidise itself into growth. It cannot inspect its way into job creation.

South Africa requires economic expansion, investment confidence, functioning infrastructure and capable governance. These are the foundations upon which sustainable employment is built. Minister, South Africans do not need another promise of jobs.

The true measure of this Budget Vote will not be what is written in departmental plans. It will be whether more South Africans are working when we return here next year to debate the next Budget Vote. I thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you very much, hon Britz, and good afternoon, delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr X NQATHA (Eastern Cape): Hon House Chair, greetings to you. Hon Minister, Deputy Ministers, hon members and distinguished guests, we rise today in support of this Budget Vote 31 for the Department of Employment and Labour as led by hon Minister Meth. Deputy Chair, I must agree with you, the Minister looks elegant.

UNREVISED HANSARD

IsiXhosa:

Usimele, Mphathiswa.

English:

This budget comes before Parliament at a time when our country continues to grapple with one of its greatest challenges, unemployment, particularly among youth. For provinces such as the Eastern Cape where poverty, inequality and unemployment continue to affect many households the measures announced by the department are not merely budget allocations they represent hope, opportunity and a pathway to dignity for our people. We welcome the department's recognition that South Africa's unemployment crisis is structural and requires a co-ordinated response from government, business, labour and society.

I must add, hon Deputy Chair, it requires an urgent need to transform the structure of the economy because the crisis is structural and therefore the issue of transformation of the economy becomes urgent more than ever before. We particularly welcome the emphasis on youth employment, skills development labour market activation and stronger partnerships to connect unemployed South Africans with economic opportunities. For the people of the Eastern Cape, hon Deputy Chair, the commitment

UNREVISED HANSARD

to place young people into work opportunities, internships, workplace experience programmes and school's development initiatives is specifically significant.

Our province has one of the youngest populations in the country, and every year thousands of graduates and the Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, students and young job seekers enter the labour market searching for opportunities that are often difficult to find. The department's commitment to register over one million work seekers, expand opportunities through Employment Services of South Africa, Essa, and strengthen the national pathway management network must directly benefit young people in our towns, villages and rural communities.

We encourage all employers in the Eastern Cape, both public and private, to actively utilise these platforms to recruit local talent and provide opportunities for first-time work seekers. We further welcome the substantial investment in labour activation programme. The planned support for work-integrated learning internships, digital skills development and enterprise support, aligns closely with our provincial priorities of building skills, supporting economic

UNREVISED HANSARD

participation and preparation of youth for changing world of work.

The commitment to place thousands of TVET students and graduates into workplace opportunities is particularly important for the Eastern Cape, which is home of several universities and TVET colleges that continue to produce talented young people who require practical experience to enter the labour market successfully. Hon members, the Eastern Cape remains a province of enormous economic potential. We are seeing a growing investment in automotive manufacturing, renewable energy, agroprocessing, logistics, tourism and infrastructure development.

However, the success of these sectors depends on ensuring that local people have access to skills, training and employment opportunities that accompany economic growth and this budget provides important instruments therefore to achieve that objective. We also welcome the strengthening of the labour inspections and enforcement. Workers in every province deserve safe workplaces, fair wages and protection from exploitation. The expansion of the labour inspectorate will help ensure that labour rights are not merely protected in legislation but are enforced in practice.

UNREVISED HANSARD

For farm workers, domestic workers, security personnel, retail workers and many vulnerable workers across the Eastern Cape, strong enforcement labour laws are essential to advancing dignity and social justice. We further support the Department's continued commitment to employment equity, workplace transformation and the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Economic growth must be accompanied by meaningful inclusion and no community should be left behind.

Hon Deputy Chair, we are particularly encouraged by declaration of 2026 as the year of putting young South Africans to work. This is a call to action that must resonate in every municipality, every provincial development, every education institution and all spheres of government. As the Eastern Cape provincial government, we stand ready to work with the Department of Employment and Labour, organised business, labour and other stakeholders to ensure that the opportunities created through this budget translate into real jobs, real skills and real hope for the people. For the people of the Eastern Cape, this budget must become an instrument for transformation, for inclusion, for dignity and development. We therefore welcome and support this budget vote. Thank you, Deputy Chair.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you very much indeed, hon Nqatha. Hon delegates, speaking next on behalf of the Ministry will be the Deputy Minister of Employment and Labour, hon N M Sibiya.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR (Mr N M Sibiya): Hon House Chairperson, the members of the NCOP, the Minister and the Deputy Minister, MEC's present, special delegates, all the officials from Parliament and the department who are part of us, the 2 June 1999 was the national and provincial elections, which came after tremendous progress was made in crafting the laws of the democratic country free of oppression and exploitation. For instance, the country has already developed and adopted on 8 May 1996 a Constitution of a democratic South Africa, a Constitution with section 23 which states that:

> Everyone has the right to fair labour practices, every worker has a right to form and join trade union, to participate in the activities and programs of the trade union, and every worker has the right to strike.

Now quick in the heels of the adoption of the Constitution on the 8 May 1996, the Labor Relations Act came into effect on

UNREVISED HANSARD

the 11 November 1996, deriving its existence from section 23 of the Constitution and with explicit intentions of aligning labour laws with the Constitution and the international law. Let us remember that before 1994 the exploitation of workers was a feature of life in South Africa for decades. Apartheid thrived on cheap labour. Workers had to contend with the migrant labour system, job reservations and other oppressive practices.

Again, before those elections on 2 June 1999, the Employment Equity Act of 1998 had already been crafted and came into effect two months after those elections. To be exact, on Women's Day in 1999, meaning on the 9 August 1999, prohibiting amongst other things, unfair discrimination on grounds of gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status and race.

Now it should be clear that individual groupings, formations, organizations fighting South African labour laws are actually fighting the South African Constitution. No small wonder they have been losing in our South African courts on a daily basis. Currently they are even losing in international courts. As we all know, it is one thing to have these good labour laws, it is another to ensure that they foster development, empowerment and transformation of our country.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Once we noticed that despite the existence of these labour laws, the developmental empowerment and transformational agenda is stalled, we intervened with amendments as it is a case with the Employment Equity Act of 1998. We came up with the Employment Equity Act Amendment Act 4 of 2022 to reduce the regulatory burden for small players, that is those employers that employ between one to 49 employees.

To empower the Minister to regulate the sector-specific numerical employment equity targets, to promulgate section 53 and to strengthen compliance through the issuing of employment equity compliance certificates. Key in the implementation of amendment regulations is the setting of five-year sector employment equity targets.

The enhancement of employment equity system, the National Employers Association of SA, Neasa and Sakeliga were among the first to file for an urgent application with the Gauteng High Court in Pretoria to fight the implementation of the South African Constitution. They interdicted the implementation of Employment Equity Amendment Act. The High Court declined to suspend what is regarded as lawful exercise of statutory authority.

UNREVISED HANSARD

As the department, we are focusing more on heightening and increasing our work when it comes to inspection and enforcement work in the department. This is deliberate as we want to make it clear that non-compliance is non-negotiable. We can negotiate with any employer who want to undermine the labour laws of this country. Project 20K case and the 10 000 permanent inspectors announced by the President are a clear indication that our government don't tolerate any act of undermining of our labour laws. We are a country of laws, and we are saying all our laws must be respected.

We are calling on all employers to comply with our labour laws. Those who continue to undermine and deliberately disregard our laws must know that time has ended; that era has ended. We are coming and we are going to come hard on them. On the top of that, we must say to them that we want every employer to prioritize South Africans. We have a huge problem in South Africa of unemployment. So we want to say to them that you can't continue employing illegal foreign immigrants at the expense of South Africans. You need to prioritize South Africans so that we are able to deal with the challenges that we are faced with of unemployment; where we want to see every South African being employed in our country.

UNREVISED HANSARD

In doing so, we know that a number of employers are even budgeting for non-compliance. They reserve some money because they know that our fines are not as harsh and steep as we want them to be. That's why we are changing that altogether. But we are saying to them it's important to work with your own government and make sure that you prioritize your own people. This is done to exploit these illegal foreign immigrants. Pay them peanuts and make them work long hours and not give them leave. They don't have contracts. They don't get pay slips. They are paid whatever that they want to pay, undermining the National Minimum Wage Act and undermining the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, BCEA, and Occupational Health and Safety Act. This exposes workers to the most dangerous working environment in the country as we have seen. And they treat these illegal foreign immigrants like animals, and it can't be done in the country of laws. That's why we are strengthening this part where we do our inspection and enforcement work.

We are going to make it difficult for anyone to continue undermining these labour laws. The proposed Employment Service Amendment Bill and the reforms on National Migration Policy are going to be a game changer in protecting workers, but also in enhancing our enforcement work. We're increasing fines for those who continue to undermine these laws.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The regulation of the recruitment of foreign nationals is being strengthened so that it protects opportunities for South Africans. We are saying to every employer, let us be patriotic, let us fight unemployment together, prioritize South Africans. We repeat, those who budget for non-compliance, stop such conduct. Use that money to employ more South Africans.

We are committed to work with any employer who needs our assistance as the department so that they understand our labour laws better. We do have some who will claim that they don't understand the labour laws, but we are saying we are available at any labour centre in our country. They can go there. Our inspectors and officials are waiting for them to assist them to comply because we are readily available to work with them, as we are doing with the hospitality sector right now. We are making sure that that sector starts to comply with our labour laws.

Before I continue, I want just to respond to two issues that were raised by hon Britz here. I think the Minister has eloquently presented our plan as the department on how we intend to create jobs. She went to town; she literally went to town. A plan that I will say the committee must just monitor,

UNREVISED HANSARD

play your oversight and see what we are going to give the committee. That plan is a well-thought plan and it's a plan that is pragmatic; it's not a theory.

Further to that, I want to say when it comes to you saying that investors are doubting our country, the country is collapsing because the investor confidence is no longer what it used to be. Let me remind you, just recently, I hope you saw what Moody's has said. Moody's has just revised South African sovereign credit outlook from a stable to positive one; citing that there is an improved fiscal performance and also a sustained structural reform. It can't get better than that. That tells you that investors are confident with the work that we are doing as the country. So we must avoid saying things that don't stand in the House.

Also, further to that, we must be honest. We all want growth in this country. Ours is to see this country growing, its economy and our people being employed, but it can never be at the expense of workers. It can never be at the expense of workers. Workers can never be paying peanuts because we just want growth. We must balance the protection of workers, but on the other hand making sure that business does thrive and it

UNREVISED HANSARD

does employ more of our people because that's what we want to see.

We are both for business and workers, but that balance must be ... [Inaudible.] We can't just say we want business to thrive. We want to see the economy growing only and workers must be exposed to the worst conditions. They must work under difficult environment. We must protect our workers. They are the backbone of this economy. No country can survive without workers.

In addition, governance challenges with social security fund outdated definitions of an employee and inefficiencies in appeals processes have hindered effective service delivery, leaving some individuals without timely support in moments of need. The Constitutional Court in 2025 ruling on parental leave has further underscored the urgency of aligning our laws with constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination. This budget advances bold and practical measures to address these shortcomings.

The Labour Law Amendment Bill of 2025 developed through National Economic Development and Labour Council, Nedlac, processes and recently published to public comment aims to

UNREVISED HANSARD

strengthen protection for on-call workers, codify constitutionally compliant shared parental benefits, but also enhance severance pay provisions in key areas and clarify minimum conditions of employment and simplify compliance for small businesses. At the same time, enhance dispute resolutions mechanisms by expanding the jurisdiction of both the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration, CCMA, and the Bargaining Council in dealing with labour disputes.

In addition, the Unemployment Insurance Amendment Bill of 2026 and Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Disease Amendment Bill of 2026 propose the establishment of independent accounting authority boards aligned with the Public Finance Management Act. These reforms will introduce professional governance structures, separate fund operations from the department, to modernise the definition of employee, to extended coverage to vulnerable workers and provide clear test to distinguish genuine independent contractors. They will also enable electronic applications and payment of benefits.

Importantly, these reforms are designed to ease the compliance burden on small and medium-sized enterprises - the true engines of job creation - by reducing administrative

UNREVISED HANSARD

complexity and lowering cost, thereby enabling small businesses to employ more people and contributing meaningfully. Hon Britz, that's where we are coming in for business as well.

In this budget, we are reaffirming that a transformed South Africa is one where every worker is valued, every family is supported in times of need, and our economy grows with justice at its core, striking the balance. To protect disability rights, labour legislation, particularly the Code of Good Practice on Employment of Persons with Disabilities, provide frameworks for including people with disabilities as autonomous members of the workforce though implementation remains a challenge.

Additionally, to redress power imbalances, the Labour Relations Act promotes collective bargaining, permitting workers to negotiate terms and conditions collectively, which is critical for balancing the power between capital and labour. To protect vulnerable workers, the Basic Condition of Employment Act makes provisions for specific sectoral determination for domestic and farm workers which have brought some of the most exploited previously unprotected groups under the ambit of labour protection.

UNREVISED HANSARD

In closing, our commitment to the well-being of both business and workers is unwavering. We want to see business thriving and our economy growing so that our people are employed, and are employed in numbers, and they get to be paid decent salaries and work under conducive environment.

On the other hand, workers' rights are human rights. Their dignity is fundamental. We must strike this balance. We are on the journey towards creating a better country for our children than the country that we inherited, as we leave no one behind, and creating a better country for everyone, and creating a better life for all, as the ANC commitment. Thank you very much, Chairperson.

Mr J S MAJOLA: Hon House Chairperson, hon members, hon Minister and hon Deputy Ministers, and the public at large, Vote No 31 is the most critical Budget Vote as it fund the department’s responsibility to prepare workers and enforce labour laws and regulate labour migration and expand access to decent work opportunities for South Africa. As we enter this debate which honours the courage of the youth of 1976, nearly 50 years later millions of South Africans remain excluded from the meaningful participation, with the youth still one of the country’s greatest challenges.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The department as the Minister alluded the unemployment is sitting at 32% which is more than 4,8 million young people between 15 and 34 still unemployed. The reality should shape the aspect of this budget. Yet Budget Vote No 31 does not reflect the urgency required to control the unemployment and crisis facing our people.

The Department received R4,5 million in 2026-27, yet over the medium-term the budget declines from R4,5 billion in 2026-27 to R4,1 billion, 2027-28 before the slight increase to R4,2 billion in 2028-28.

The Public Employment Services which should centre the employment support, received R1,1 billion in 2026-27 but allocation dropped sharply to R770,2 million in 2028 and R794,2 million in 2028-29. The department’s plan to register more than 3,3 million workers over the Medium -Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF period, yet only projected 25 000 placements into the employment opportunities. South Africans are tired of statistics data base and performance, they want jobs.

Hon House Chairperson, the National Development Plan, NDP, promised that by 2030, South Africa will drastically reduce

UNREVISED HANSARD

the unemployment by building labour absorbing the economy, However, the government is nowhere near those targets.

Agriculture should absorb rural youth; the mining should create employment for the community living next to the mines. The manufacturing should be rebuilding the industrial jobs, construction and infrastructure should employ artisans and technician's graduates. Instead, many of these sectors are stiffening and shedding jobs or failing to absorb labour at the scale it requires.

Hon House Chairperson, we must speak honestly about what is happening in our workplaces across the country. We have recently seen the raiding targeting illegal workers and noncomplying employers.

The MK party welcomes the enforcement of these laws. However, the question is: Why now? Why does government allow employers to bypass labour practices minimum wage requirements and employment regulations for years without decisive intervention? This department must accept the responsibility for work enforcement and poor regulations of the labour market.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Hon House Chairperson, the department admits that the Employment Services Amendment Bill and the National Labour Migration Policy are still being finalised for implementation. This is part of the problem with this government. Policies remain trapped in consultation and drafting while communities continue waiting for meaningful actions.

The department also places major emphasis on inspection and it plans to conduct nearly 993 000 inspections over the MTEF period and more than 312 inspections annually. However, inspections without consequences means very little. Workers continue facing exploitation, unsafe working conditions and abuse while employers continue operating without fear.

Hon House Chairperson as I conclude, the MK party, speaks for the young people who do not appear in glossy annual performance plans, APPS, presentations and strategic plans. The graduate sitting at home without opportunities, mine workers facing retrenchment, farm workers earning below the living wage, township youth who survive on temporary work, and artisans who are unable to secure placements. The MK party rejects Budget Vote No 31! Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Ms L V BLENNIES-MAGAGE (Northern Cape): Hon Chair, the hon Minister of Employment and Labour, the Deputy Ministers of Employment and Labour, and hon members of the National Council of Provinces, today we gather in this House, and we do so in a month that changed the course of South African history. June is not merely another month on the calendar; it is a month in which young people stood up and declared that they would not accept a future that had already been decided for them.

In June 1976, students from Soweto confronted an apartheid system that used Bantu education as a weapon of economic exclusion. They rejected an education system that was designed to prepare black people for cheap labour, dependency, and permanent marginalization from the mainstream economy. Many of those young people never returned home. The image of Hector Peterson remains a permanent reminder of the price paid by a generation that believed that South Africa could be better than what it was.

Fifty years later, the question before us is simple: What would those young people say if they looked at the labour market facing South Africans, especially young South Africans today? What would they say to the graduate who submits hundreds of CVs without receiving a single response? What

UNREVISED HANSARD

would they say to the young artisan who cannot secure workplace experience? What would they say to the young entrepreneur with talent, innovation, and determination, but no access to funding? What would they say when 10 vacancies attract more than 10 000 applications? And what would they say when millions of young people remain trapped between education and employment with no clear action in the economy? These are not abstract questions. They are the lived realities of young South Africans today, and it is precisely why this Budget Vote matters.

This debate is not merely about numbers. It is not merely about allocation. It is not merely about programmes; it is about whether the democratic state is succeeding in its responsibility to convert freedom into opportunity. It is about whether national policy translates into jobs, skills, dignity, and economic security. It is about whether we are building an economy capable of absorbing the aspirations of generations that have waited too long. Against this backdrop, the Department of Employment and Labour’s declaration of 2026 as the year of putting young South Africans to work could not be more appropriate. And as a Northern Cape, we support this Budget Vote because it aligns directly with our provincial

UNREVISED HANSARD

priorities and because it recognizes that economic growth and employment creation must work hand in hand.

The Minister has been clear about the scale of challenges that are confronting us. National unemployment, which remains at 32,7%, youth unemployment, which remains close to 46%, and these figures represent one of the greatest social and economic challenges facing our democracy. Behind every percentage point is a young South African whose future is being delayed. Behind every statistic is a household under pressure. And behind every unemployment figure is a dream deferred.

The Northern Cape has demonstrated that unemployment is not an unchangeable reality; it can be reduced through deliberate policy choices. In the fourth quarter of 2025, the Northern Cape recorded the largest decline in unemployment in South Africa, falling from 31,2% to 27,1%, a reduction of 4,1 percentage points. Despite the dire economic challenges that have plagued the globe, our unemployment rate has remained resilient at 30% in quarter one of 2026, meaning that the Northern Cape holds the second-lowest unemployment rate in South Africa. A provincial gross domestic product, GDP, has grown from R119 billion in 2019 to R166 billion in 2025. These

UNREVISED HANSARD

outcomes did not happen by accident. They are the result of deliberately aligning labour activation, investment attraction, industrialization, and economic planning. They demonstrate that where investment and economic growth occur, jobs follow. This is precisely why the Northern Cape should be viewed as South Africa’s next growth frontier. For too long, South Africa’s economic growth has been concentrated in a limited number of regions, yet the future drivers of the economy increasingly lie elsewhere. They lie where there is land, energy, where there are strategic minerals, and where industrial expansion can occur at scale, and that is in the Northern Cape. Our province possesses some of the world’s most significant deposits of manganese, zinc, copper, iron ore, and critical minerals required for the global energy transition. We possess approximately 11 000 gigawatts of solar potential and 846 gigawatts of wind potential. We host approximately 60% of South Africa’s renewable energy projects, and we are strategically positioned to become a leader of green hydrogen production, renewable energy generation, critical mineral beneficiation, and advanced manufacturing. The Northern Cape is not simply talking about industrialization; we are practicing it.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Earlier this year, we hosted a successful jobs and investment conference. We secured investment commitments exceeding R105 billion. These commitments span renewable energy, mining, logistics, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, and infrastructure. Importantly, they include investment in a beneficiation facility, smelted plant developments that move us beyond the historic model of exporting raw materials and importing finished products. And hon Sibiya puts it well when he says this also demonstrates the confidence investors have in both the country and our provinces. This is what industrialization looks like. It is about processing minerals closer to where they are extracted. It is about creating factories instead of exporting opportunities; it is about building value chains and creating sustainable jobs. And it is about ensuring that the economic value generated from natural resources remains within the borders of this country.

Projects such as the Namakwa Special Economic Zone, SEZ, are designed to drive mineral beneficiation, renewable energy, and agro processing, which serve as a central catalyst for industrialization. The Upington Solar Park is a massive multifacility renewable energy hub, which is situated in one of the world’s highest solar radiation zones, and the solar park generates hundreds of megawatts through a mix of

UNREVISED HANSARD

photovoltaic and concentrated solar power technologies. These developments demonstrate that the Northern Cape is actively building industries for the future. And the positioning of the Labour Activation Programme around demand-led skills is therefore both decisive and necessary. The Northern Cape has long argued that training for its own does not create employment. Training must be linked to economic demand, actual investment, and actual jobs. The green economy is creating new opportunities that require future skills for future jobs. The renewable energy sector requires electricians, technicians, welders, and artisans. Industrialization requires machine operators, logistics specialists, digital technicians, and manufacturing professions. The economy we are building tomorrow requires skills that we must begin developing today. Our industrial corridor represents an opportunity pipeline that will require thousands of workers with specialized skills. The Labour Activation Programme's investment of R10 billion, which is allocated to the Northern Cape and has a placement of 20 000 TVET students into work-integrated learning represents an important opportunity for the province. However, hon members, we must also be honest about our challenges. Many young people continue to complete training programmes without securing employment. There are often delays between training and placement, and there remains a mismatch

UNREVISED HANSARD

between some training opportunities and actual labour market demand.

Rural provinces continue to face accessibility challenges. Many young people remain disconnected from information about available opportunities, and the measure of success cannot simply be how many people are trained. The measure of success must be how many people are employed. Implementation must become our central focus. Every renewable energy project, every mining investment, industrial facility, and infrastructure programme must carry skills development, youth employment, and labour activation obligations. The Northern Cape is already translating the national call to put young South Africans to work into tangible economic opportunities. Through the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator partnership and National Pathway Management Network, we expect National Employment Services to actively connect young Northern Cape job seekers with these opportunities. We therefore await the deliberate allocation and distribution of 130 000 youth placements to ensure that the province, such as the Northern Cape, receive their fair share, hon Minister.

The national minimum wage increase of R30,00 per hour protects vulnerable workers. I do note, hon Chair, that my time is

UNREVISED HANSARD

coming to an end. So, as the province of the Northern Cape, in conclusion, we support the Budget Vote 31. And if you allow me, I want to close by borrowing words from the Pan-Africanist philosopher, Amilcar Cabral, who said:

> Always remember that the people are not fighting for ideas, nor for what is in men's minds. The people fight and accept the sacrifices demanded by the struggle in order to gain material advantages, to live better and in peace, to benefit from progress, and for the better future of their children.

Therefore, the success of this Budget Vote debate will not be measured by our ability to paint pictures of the future with words, but by the opportunities, dignity, and decent work that we deliver to the people of this country and whether we place future generations of South Africans on a path towards prosperity, economic security, and a better life for all. With those few words, the Northern Cape supports the Budget Vote. Thank you.

Ms A MATSHOBENI: Hon Chair, hon members, Minister, Deputy Minister, everyone in the House and those who are on virtual platform, greetings. The EFF do not support the proposed Budget Vote for the Department of Employment and Labour. The

UNREVISED HANSARD

Department of Employment and Labour has a clear mission to create jobs, protect workers and keep the economy stable and fair. But if you look at what is actually happening on the ground, it is obvious to see that their system is completely stuck. The proposed allocation is simply not enough to fix our massive problems with joblessness, people giving up on looking for work and the huge economic gap between different regions, by holding back the funding needed to expand job creation programmes, upgrade broken public services and fix the divide between wealthy cities and poor rural towns.

This budget completely ignores what every day struggling South Africans are actually going through. We know this to be true as according to the latest data from Statistics SA. The national unemployment rate increased to 32,7% in the first three months of 2026 compared to 31,4% at the end of last year. This means that in just one quarter, 345 000 people lost their jobs. This massive drop shows that the department is failing to balance protecting existing jobs with opening up new ones.

This year's data also highlights a total failure in the department's programmes meet for young people and women. Out of 42,2 million working age South Africans, young people aged

UNREVISED HANSARD

15 to 34 make up nearly half of the potential workforce. This will be a massive economic advantage. But youth unemployment has only gotten worse under the department's watch. As right now the youth unemployment rate sits at the staggering 45,8%, meaning 4,7 million young people want to work but are locked out of the economy.

For the youngest group, those between 15 and 24 years, it is even worse with a 60,9% unemployment rate. On top of that, 45,6% of people aged 15 to 34 are currently need, meaning they are not in employment, education or training. Essentially, this means that nearly half of our youth are completely disconnected from any path to be a better future.

It is also concerning to note how this structural breakdown is also deeply tied to gender inequality, as women are still far less likely to actually land a job compared to men, even when they are actively looking for work. Young women in this country get hit twice as hard. They face the typical roadblocks of being young and inexperienced, stacked on top of deep-rooted gender discrimination across formal industries.

From Alexandra to Kayelitsha, from Mthatha to Musina, our people are jobless. But let me be clear, while this crisis is

UNREVISED HANSARD

national the Eastern Cape bleeds the most. The Eastern Cape is one of the most economically isolated places in South Africa, and its young people are paying the highest price. In the first three months of 2026, the province economy took another massive hit losing 43 000 jobs, with local projects meant to fix this, like the ones in the Mbhashe Local Municipality have completely failed to grow or make a real dent in the crisis. Studies also show that these community programmes are falling apart because of weak leadership, family favouritism and serious lack of funding.

In the Free State province, the farming and community services sectors are steadily shrinking because of bad local management and crumbling infrastructure.

Even though the Western Cape is doing better than inland provinces at keeping jobseekers motivated, it still takes a massive hit from seasonal layoffs and widening gaps between city and rural economies. Every year during the first quarter, the farming and tourism season wrap up, leaving thousands of people suddenly out of work and this department job placement branch just hasn't built any reliable back-up plans or transition programmes for these workers. Because of this, regional jobs failed, like the ones held in Hermanus which end

UNREVISED HANSARD

up looking more like temporary public relation, PR, stance than actual long-term employment solutions. The insufficiency of this budget, therefore, becomes clear when one analyses its failure to address localised and seasonal vulnerabilities.

South Africans are not just unemployed. Those who work are exploited. Labour brokers are modern-day slave masters from Cape Town to Thohoyandou. They still half your wages before you touch it. With a retail worker anywhere in this country earns R4 000, while CEOs earn R4 million. This is why our youth are struggling.

The EFF, therefore, also rejects this Budget Vote as the national department has completely failed to step in with proper oversight or connect these local efforts to major national manufacturing networks. This leaves rural youth stranded with no way out of poverty. The track records of the Department of Employment and Labour in 2026 shows an institution completely overwhelmed by South Africa's worsening economic crisis. From the biggest factories in Gauteng to the most isolated town in the Northern Cape, this department is failing across the board, whether it is enforcing basic workplace rules, managing social safety funds or teaching people useful skills for today's job market.

UNREVISED HANSARD

In closing, as the EFF we reject this proposed Budget Vote also because of the information technology, IT, nightmare at the agencies overseen by the department. This department constantly experiences management failure, bad audit results, major computer system breakdowns and slow operation inside both the Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Compensation Fund. Even though everyone knows about these disasters, the new budget doesn't look down any specific funding to completely overhaul and fix these digital networks. The Unemployment Insurance Fund, UIF, constantly deals with huge application backlogs, system crashes and payout delays. This directly hurts everyday workers who have just lost their jobs and have absolutely no other money to survive on.

This department has failed to fix the unemployment crisis and its technology crisis. Until it fixes how institutions are run, update its ancient digital system and build real partnership with businesses to teach people the skills employers needed, we cannot support it. I thank you, Chairperson.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR (Ms J Nemadzinga-Shabalala): House Chairperson, I greet you, the chairperson of the Select Committee on Economic Development and Trade,

UNREVISED HANSARD

members of the portfolio committee, Minister, Nomakhosazana Meth, of Employment and Labour, the Deputy Minister, Jomo Sibiya, members of the public and members of the NCOP, I greet you. I want to say in taking from our hon member, Mabilo, when he was speaking and he said that "we stand today at a historic crossroads as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of our democratic Constitution and its Bill of Rights".

This milestone is not merely a date on a calendar; it is a reminder that our mandate as the Department of Employment and Labour, is to reduce unemployment, poverty, and inequality. It is a constitutional directive to ensure dignity and security of every worker. Budget Vote 31 serves as a financial and strategic commitment to the National Development Plan, NDP, Vision 2030, the Medium-Term Development Plan, MTDP, 2024-2029, and the pronouncement by the President, His Excellency, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, on his 2026 state of the nation address, Sona. For the 2026-27 financial year, the department is allocated a total expenditure estimated at R4,578 billion, representing the first year of a R13 billion medium-term investment in the South African workforce.

Our responsibility in government is to ensure that these funds drive economic transformation, inclusive growth, and the

UNREVISED HANSARD

protection of the vulnerable groups, women, youth, and persons with disabilities. On Productivity SA, PSA, I think the hon member from the DA who spoke about PSA, and I must say, you spoke very well, including the supported employment enterprises. The NDP Vision 2030 requires a globally competitive and reproductive economy. Our entity, PSA, focuses on workplace productivity and competitiveness, as well as the preservation of existing jobs. In 2026-27, we have allocated R66,6 million to PSA to drive this mission. The evident-base impact on this investment is a cornerstone of our strategy, the job preservation in this financial year.

The PSA aims to save 4 000 jobs in companies facing economic distress through its business turnaround and recovery strategies, and this is brought to you by the ANC. The small, medium and micro enterprises, SMMEs, sustainability, we have set a target to support 1,313 small, medium and micro enterprises, SMMEs, through its competitiveness to improve service this year, and this is a system that continues to work. For starting a culture of productivity, we aim to capacitate 2 500 entrepreneurs, workers, and managers to ensure that productivity becomes the heartbeat of our industrial strategy. Over the MTDP, Productivity SA is committed to supporting a total of 4 138 enterprises.

UNREVISED HANSARD

This is not just about members; it’s also about ensuring South African businesses remain sustainable. Then the point there is not just about the numbers. In a volatile global market, while the entity will undergo a spending review to improve its delivery model, its role in preventing job losses remains indispensable in social plan intervention as part of what another hon member spoke about, issues of retrenchment, so we are responding. The recognition of PSA as an Africa Kaizen Centre of Excellence signifies that the entity has reached a benchmark of international standard in implementing Kaizen, a Japanese philosophy of continuous improvement in productivity and quality.

This status confirms PSA as the continental hub for best practices, positioning South Africa as the primary leader in driving industrial efficiency across Africa. Expanding impact requires sustained funding, specialist skills and stronger partnerships with municipalities, industry, and international institutions. I hope we can recognise that not all is bad in South Africa. On supporting employment enterprises, it’s an essential instrument for the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities. Our hon Minister spoke to this: For the 2026-27 financial year, we have allocated R205,9 million to

UNREVISED HANSARD

support operation of our 13 factories that we have located across all eight provinces.

The work that this entity does, Supported Employment Enterprises, SEE, directly advances the MTDP 24-29 priority of providing specialised employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to them, and this is a system that continues to work. The department derives its authority to manage SEE, from Employment Services Act. The amendment bill that will also come, that seeks to modernise the framework under which SEE operates, ensuring it remains an effective tool for economic inclusion.

Furthermore, we are utilising the amendment bill to clarify the SEE's legal entity and the institutional credibility, while focusing on our strategic policy to modernise our production lines to leverage government procurement to ensure the state itself drives economic inclusion. This is when we are asking all the provinces, the premiers, the MECs that are here, and my hon MEC from Northern Cape, the Treasurer-General of the Young Lions, the five producing lands, want to say you need to also come closer to this entity because it needs to

UNREVISED HANSARD

get jobs. It does textile, it does furniture, and this is for persons with disabilities.

Now, government needs to procure from it because, currently, they're subjected to what we call Public Finance Management Act, PFMA and the tender system, and it takes away exactly what we're trying to do to ensure this inclusion is realised. On oversight and advocacy, in various provinces such as Eastern Cape, Gauteng and North West, we're intensifying our efforts to co-ordinate integrated services for ex-miners, ensuring that they receive the benefits and social protection due to them. We're conducting targeted stakeholder advocacy in high-risk sectors including hospitality, domestic work, and manufacturing.

These initiatives are designed to foster cultural self-regulation and compliance with the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and the Employment Equity Act, and moving forward, the workers from the margin of the informal economy into the security of formal employment. On the labour migration, we cannot ignore the rising social tensions and protests stemming from the presence of undocumented foreign nationals in our labour market and the perception that they

UNREVISED HANSARD

are displacing South African workers. These frustrations are direct call to enhance regulation and order in our workplaces.

The department developed the National Labour Migration Policy as a strategic framework to regulate the employment of foreign nationals, while co-ordinating government efforts towards economic transformation and job creation, and my Deputy Minister, Sibiya, spoke to this. I cannot complete this debate without a reflection on the future of work. The department is cognisant on the scaling work base, learning through apprenticeship, learnership, and workplace exposure, and this will be expanded in ways that are accessible to young people from poorer communities. Having graduates that hold formal qualification but lack practical industry-relevant skills is also unhelpful.

This calls for the need for more practical education to employment pathways that align with the industry needs. Importantly, employers need to drive the growth for work-integrated learning opportunities. Government also provides a number of incentives for employers to scale up this, including the Youth Tax Incentive, the credits and rebates through the employment tax incentive, the wage subsidies for certain local governments, the Sector Education and Training Authorities,

UNREVISED HANSARD

SETAs, provide stipends for learners, the skills development levy rebates for employers, etc.

Community colleges also offer services to those that wish to improve the education and upgrade skills. We also all know that youth, particularly those in the poorer communities, face a number of barriers to entry to the labour market. Amongst these barriers are the cost of job search, the transport, the high data cost to access the internet. As I draw this debate to close, let us also reflect on the profound truth that the flower of peace cannot be sustained by unemployment, poverty and inequality. We must be honest, the frustration of South Africans, particularly our graduating youth, who hold qualification but have no opportunities, is both real and legitimate.

They represent our nation’s ambition and hope, yet they remain on the periphery of our economy. As a government, we cannot respond with being defensive. We must respond with the humility of service and the decisive action found in this budget vote debate. This vote is a factual evidence-based plan to move South Africa forward, whether it is the 312,995 inspection to protect workers, the 605 000 citizens who will help transition into employment through the Labour Activation

UNREVISED HANSARD

Programme, LAP, the 136 jobs created through the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative, PYEI, or the 4 000 jobs saved by Productivity SA, PSA.

Every rand in this vote is targeted towards building a more equitable society. It is unfortunate that the MK and EFF have just threw out a budget that is supposed to employ people who are unemployed; it is so unfortunate. This is one of the departments with which you put politics aside. It's time that you look at the South Africans and see what's happening in our streets, and you pull together. That's called being responsible. As indicated, we're not merely debating numbers; we're debating the dignity of South African workers. For the future of our youth, we are committed to an administration that is African worker, and for the future of our youth and we're committed to an administration that is accountable, efficient and unyielding in its pursuit for social justice.

As the executives who are united in purpose and inspired by the vision of the Freedom Charter that say, "to build South Africa, we want a South Africa that works, a South Africa that includes and a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it", and that was brought by the ANC. Since I still have time, I want to go closer to what we're talking about, strategic

UNREVISED HANSARD

intervention. You know better, that's where you are, where you're seated. You need to go out and give young people a chance. For strategic intervention, we will work with the private sector and labour to protect existing jobs and investment in vulnerable sectors.

You are keeping a job for young South African, interventions indicators, number of jobs created per year, the baseline of public employment services at 280 000 jobs. The 2026 annual target of public employment services is 75 000. Progress at a quarter three of 2026 public employment services, 82 507. The baseline for the National Pathway Management Network is 650 000. National Pathway for Management Network is 130 000. That's a system that continues to work. Our President spoke about the 10 000 inspectors that are to be employed in this financial year. We have a 20 000 project that the Minister introduced when she came into office to ensure that young South Africans don't find themselves out of work.

Now, we need to remember that the mandate of this department is not solely around issues of labour; it must also ensure that a private sector and public sector are working together to ensure that there is employment in this country. Now, you need to understand the context of this mandate. The labour

UNREVISED HANSARD

laws, we need to also adhere to. Now, to respond to you since you've been making noise next to me, the DA took government to court on employment equity, and shame on you, because that employment equity was meant to also make sure that it takes out the regression that we've had in the employment industry.

Wherein you're speaking about what you call quotas, because at the end of the day, you need to also adhere to the demographics of this country. It can't be that in our economy, we still have white persons at higher echelons of leadership, including at workplaces, whether with or without qualification. But when it comes to the black society, it's always subjected to the lower grounds on earth. So, we commend this department, as the Minister went on and challenged this employment equity, that we defended it and we're going to continue to defend it, and that is a system that continues to work.

So, we want to say as I close, we're in the Government of National Unity, GNU, we're together, there's no need to make noise at me because it's a reality. You forget that you're in government sometimes and behave like we're in a party when we're in government. You complain about the same government that you are part of. So, it's very important that you also

UNREVISED HANSARD

need to look at yourself. Thirty years is nothing over 40 decades of apartheid that displaced young people and this country.

Yes, apartheid happened, and it was a demon. It brought this country to a standstill and made sure that, as the population that grows, they have continued to have and have nots continue to go down. Those ones who are having ... [Interjections.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Deputy Minister, thank you. Your time has expired.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR (Ms J Nemadzinga-Shabalala): We support the budget vote.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you, Deputy Minister. Unfortunately, you're throwing us to some disarray. But we'll continue with the speakers list and it's the hon H J Van den Berg from the FF Plus.

Afrikaans:

Mnr H J VAN DEN BERG: Agb Voorsitter, Minister, lede van die Huis, en ons mede Suid-Affrikaners, kom ons kry maar eers weer daardie vertaalapparate uit, want vandag gaan ons bietjie

UNREVISED HANSARD

Afrikaans praat. Na so ’n hoë noot in vorige toespraak, gaan ons maar probeer.

Die VF Plus kan nie die konstraste wat ons in die jaarplan en begroting van die Departement van Indiensneming en Arbeid sien, ignoreer nie. Suid-Afrika staar ’n strukturele werkloosheidskrisis in die gesig, maar tog bly hierdie departement en sy entiteite voortgaan om burokrasie, eindelose dialoog, verstikkende regulatoriese uitbreiding, bo werklike werkskepping te prioritiseer.

Ons party, wat verbind is tot praktiese opolossings, ekonomiese vryheid en die beskerming van kwesbare gemeenskappe moet reguit hieroor praat. Die begroting van R4,58 miljard is ’n begroting wat op instandhouding gerig is, nie transformasioneel nie. dit is swaar op lopende uitgawes en oordragte, maar lig op kapitaalbelegging vir werklike groei.

Besteding op entiteite, soos die National Economic Development and Labour Council, Nedlac, staan uit as ’n besonderse bekommernis. Dit gebruik hulpbronne vir summits [berade], ontwikkel beleid en wetgewing, bedryf dialoë, klimaatkommissies en self ’n volkverdrag, terwyl die

UNREVISED HANSARD

departement se oog van die teiken van werklike indiensneming afgehaal word.

Die Minister beweeg blink en onberispelik deur Nedlac se G-20-kringe, maar slaag nie daarin om werklike werksgeleenthede te sien en te skep nie, al is dit op haar eie voorstoep, of sal ons sê, agterstoep.

Hul ander entiteit, naamlik Supported Employment Enterprises, See, ook bekend as die ou Service Products, oftewel Diensprodukteorganisasie wat spesialiseer om gestremde werkers in diens te neem, word intussen behandel soos ’n afgeskeepte stiefkind, wat maar in die agtererf moet oorleef en sukkel. Dit is gestig na die Tweede Wêreld Oorlog om persone met gestremdhede in diens te neem, maar ondervind nou massiewe tekorte, veral aan bestellings vir produkte soos meubels, beskermende klerasie, hospitaallinne. Die lys is en kan eindeloos wees vir produkte wat die staat vir eie verbruik kan produseer.

Hierdie produkte word eerder op tenders aan tenderpreneurs gegee. See het dringende regulatoriese ingryping nodig. ’n Duidelike handelsentiteit moet geskep word, gekoppel aan hervorming van die Voorkeurverkrygingsbeleid van die staat.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Die VF Plus vra vir ’n staatsregulasieverandering, wat See die eerste reg op verskaffing van staatsmeubels en ander produkte gee. As See dan nie kan verskaf nie, kan bestellings dan op tenders uitgaan. In Engels praat ons van ...

English:

... the first right of refusal of the procurement process.

Afrikaans:

Dit sal See beskerm en help om sy edele mandaat te volvoer. Dit is duidelik dat die departement hul fokus op werksgeleenthede moet verskerp en hul eerder daarmee besig moet hou.

Die VF Plus sien ’n moontlike styging in werksgeleenthede raak, as regulatoriese hindernisse vir klein besighede versag word, as meriete-gebaseerde geleenthede bevorder word, as werklike vaardigheidsbelyning ondersteun word, as ekonomiese groei wat waardige werk skep, geprioritiseer word, en as die politieke teater stop. Fokus op ’n omgeweing wat belegging aanmoedig, soos die departement se eie visie, en stel voor dat die departement elemente sal ondersteun wat werklik werkers en kwesbares beskerm. En eis aanspreeklikheid, doeltreffenheid en resultate.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Suid-Afrikaners van alle agtergronde verdien beter as herhaalde planne en groeiende tekorte, en as hulle dan nie kan nie, gee ons ’n kans. Dis ons tyd. Dankie.

English:

Mr P J SWART: Hon House Chairperson, hon Minister, hon Deputy Ministers, MECs, hon members, fellow South Africans, good afternoon.

Afrikaans:

Goeie middag.

English: Today, we debate the annual performance plan, APP, and budget of the Department of Employment and Labour. And let me say from the outset: South Africans are sick and tired of plans, strategies, summits and promises. They are demanding jobs. They are demanding permanent job opportunities

Hon Minister, every unemployment statistic is a hungry family, a frustrated graduate, a discouraged parent and a young person losing hope in the future of this country.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon Swart, can you please take a seat. There is a point of order.

UNREVISED HANSARD

On what are you rising the hon Mphephethwa? Hon Swart, can you please take your seat.

Mr E NZIMANDE: Hon House Chairperson, I was wondering whether the speaker is willing to take a question about somebody working in the garden whether he is willing to pay him a nice salary?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you. Hon Swart, are you willing to take a question?

Mr P J SWART: It really depends, hon House Chairperson.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): The hon Swart is not willing to take the question. He is unable to take your question.

Mr P J SWART: Hon House Chairperson, behind every unemployment statistic is a hungry family, a frustrated graduate, a discouraged parent and a young person losing hope in the future of this country. While unemployment remains above 30% and youth unemployment close to 60%, despite all the grandstanding speeches. In the Western Cape, economic growth

UNREVISED HANSARD

has outpaced national trends with an unemployment rate of 19,6%. Why?

The Western Cape cares about its citizens and makes it easier for them to succeed by cutting red tape and works to connect young job seekers with real job opportunities and ensure that growth translates into meaningful employment.

Hon House Chairperson, after more than three decades of an ANC-led government, South Africa has become one of the unemployment capital of the world.

The APP speaks about "inclusive growth", and "strategic priorities".

But unemployed South Africans are asking a far simple question:

IsiZulu:

... iphi imisebenzi?

Afrikaans:

Waar is die werksgeleenthede?

English:

UNREVISED HANSARD

Where are the jobs!

IsiZulu:

Iphi imisebenzi?

English:

The department correctly identifies many of the causes of unemployment: load shedding, infrastructure collapse, low economic growth, policy uncertainty and skills mismatches.

These problems are direct consequences, hon members, of ANC corruption, cadre deployment, state failure, lack of ANC political will and the destruction of institutional capacity.

The struggle credentials of yesterday cannot hide the corruption scandals of today.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon delegates!

Mr P J SWART: The gap!

You always want South Africans to keep looking backwards but we have reached this point in our country where the people want

UNREVISED HANSARD

answers about what happened during the last 30 years and the promises of a better life.

IsiZulu:

Iphi imisebenzi?

English:

Hon House Chairperson, the irony is painful. This department oversees labour laws, inspections, and employment services, yet unemployment continues to rise year-after-year.

Hon House Chairperson, the irony is painful. This Department oversees labour laws, inspections, and employment services, yet unemployment continues to rise year after year.

The APP proudly states that the department plans to register 1,05 million work seekers, create 125 000 job opportunities and facilitate 75 000 job placements. But registering a person on a database is not a job created.

Hon Minister, real job come from economic growth, investor confidence and policy certainty. Areas where government – the ANC continues to fall short.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The APP speaks extensively about inspections and enforcement. Compliance is important, and workers must absolutely be protected from exploitation. However, government must also understand the hard reality: you cannot regulate an economy into growth.

You cannot burden struggling businesses with endless bureaucracy while the state itself fails to provide reliable electricity, efficient ports, safe transport systems, functioning municipalities and economic stability.

Smaller businesses are not closing because government has made survival almost impossible. One of the most concerning aspects of this APP is the repeated emphasis on expanding the state machinery instead of fixing the economy itself. The department wants 20 000 inspector interns, but where is the same urgency for 20 000 new entrepreneurs, 20 000 new farmers, 20 000 artisans or 20 000 new small businesses receiving practical support?

Hon House Chairperson, the APP also refers to "digital transformation" and cybersecurity reforms. But ordinary South Africans still stand in long queues at labour centres.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Unemployment Insurance Fund, UIF, payments are delayed. Compensation Fund claims take months or even years. Businesses complain about administrative inefficiency while workers are left helpless. Government cannot continue announcing modernisation while basic service delivery remains broken.

In this respect, Minister Meth may want to confer with Minister Schreiber and the excellent digital transformation drive he has successfully implemented at home affairs.

Hon Minister, your department itself admits that vacancy rates, skills shortages, governance failures and information, communication and technology, ICT instability remain major risks.

In other words, even this APP acknowledges that the department lacks the institutional capacity required to achieve many of its own targets. And that is the real tragedy of South Africa today: government has become exceptionally skilled at producing plans, but dangerously weak at implementation.

The DA believes South Africa needs a fundamentally different approach. We need economic growth, energy security, professional public administration, zero-tolerance for corruption, labour

UNREVISED HANSARD

market reforms that encourage employment, support for Small Micro and Medium Enterprises, SMMEs. Because without economic growth, all these APP become nothing more than numbers on paper.

Until this government honestly confronts corruption, cadre deployment, collapsing infrastructure, and policy uncertainty, unemployment will remain South Africa's biggest national failure.

South Africans will not judge this government by what is written in an APP. They will judge government by whether they can find a job, put food on the table, and build a future for their children.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): On that note of putting food on the table, hon Swarts, you time has expired.

Mr P J SWART: I thank you, hon House Chairperson. [Time expired.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon delegates, the next speaker is on the virtual platform. It is the hon R Allen, the Deputy Speaker of the legislature of the Western Cape. Over to you. Hon Allen?

UNREVISED HANSARD

Mr R I ALLEN (Western Cape): Hon Chairperson, I trust that I am audible your side. Good afternoon to the Minister, the Deputy Ministers, as well as members of the National Council of Provinces.

Today, as we debate this particularly important Budget Vote, we are doing so when the nation is structurally suffocating. The numbers released in the first quarter of 2026 by Statistics South Africa represent a human tragedy unfolding across our towns, our villages, and our metropolitan centres. The official national unemployment rate stands at a staggering 32,7%. This means that more than 8,1 million adult South Africans wake up every single morning with nowhere to sell their labour, stripped of their dignity but also trying to earn and make a living, and trapped in a cycle of generational dependency. Yet, the Department of Employment and Labour presents us with the same tired, centralised, state-centric recipes that have caused this crisis in the first place.

The budget allocation of R4,5 billion for the 2026-2027 financial year behaves as if the state is the primary architect of economic growth. It assumes that, if we simply

UNREVISED HANSARD

hire more bureaucrats, implement more rigid sector quotas, and build larger databases, jobs will magically materialise.

We must speak the plain truth. This budget is designed to sustain a bloated bureaucracy, not to unlock the creative and productive power of the South African private sector. Let us look closely at the anatomy of this budget. A shocking 52% of its entire allocation is swallowed up by departmental internal salaries and day-to-day administrative operations. Let that sink in because more than half of the money meant to address the existing crisis of unemployment ... [Inaudible.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon Allen? Hon Allen?

Mr R I ALLEN (Western Cape): ... and not job creation. [Interjections.] Chairperson, may I continue?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Yes.

Mr R I ALLEN (Western Cape): Whilst small businesses are drowning in a sea of red tape, heavy compliance burdens, and rigid labour laws, the national department remains obsessed with enforcement and punishment rather than enablement where there is capital. We know that a massive R44 billion surplus

UNREVISED HANSARD

sits within the Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Compensation Fund. Instead of deploying these substantial reserves responsibly to de-risk hiring for small and medium enterprises, or to fix the broken information, communications and technology infrastructure that leaves vulnerable workers waiting months for their basic payouts, what do we see? We see workers' savings being mismanaged and invested in failing state ventures. We see notorious syndicates within the department's own ranks executing sophisticated fraud that saw R800 million in COVID-19 funding vanish into thin air. The issue is not a lack of money. The issue is an absolute failure of governance and an ideological refusal to let the market breathe.

However, the South African story does not have to be a narrative of perpetual economic decline. There is a clear alternative. Whilst the national government fails, the DA-led Western Cape government has constructed an open-source blueprint for structural economic recovery. According to the Quarter 1 2026 Quarterly Labour Force Survey, the data confirms that, whilst national unemployment sits at nearly 33%, the Western Cape unemployment rate stands at under 20% at 19,6%, the lowest in South Africa by a considerable margin.

UNREVISED HANSARD

This structural divergence is neither a historical accident, nor is it the result of geographical luck. It is a direct consequence of a deliberate, data-driven strategy known as the Growth for Jobs Strategy. The Western Cape administration operates on its core conviction that the national government has forgotten that governments do not create sustainable jobs. The private sector does. The true role of the state is to be an aggressive enabler of economic activity, not an obstacle.

Instead of sinking resources into bloated operational overheads, the Growth for Jobs Strategy systematically targets the actual binding constraints to private-sector investment.

Whilst other provinces wait helplessly for national entities to fix the collapsing grid, the Western Cape is aggressively building municipal energy resilience and investing heavily in water security to shield local businesses from structural shocks. We are slashing red tape, speeding up planning approvals, and building demand-driven pathways that directly connect young people with jobs in the private sector. The Western Cape Growth for Jobs model proves that when you build a predictable, safe, and infrastructure-secure environment, private capital rushes in, and sustainable employment follows

UNREVISED HANSARD

organically. The DA-led model understands that access is the ultimate key to promoting growth.

We are actively building structural frameworks to pull township economies directly into the mainstream. Look at what we have done in the area of Mossel Bay in the Western Cape, where the pioneering Township Action Plan is currently being piloted. This project is a structural framework designed to revolutionise future township development.

Look at our primary metropolitan city. Just last week, here in the City of Cape Town, on Wednesday, 27 May 2026, the City of Cape Town Council achieved a historic milestone for the informal economy. In a single, decisive council meeting, the City of Cape Town approved nine comprehensive informal trading plans, unlocking exactly 693 brand new, structured trading opportunities across the metro. From the high-footfall tourist centres of Greenmarket Square, St George’s Mall, and Bo-Kaap to the community heartlands of Hanover Park, Atlantis, and Eersterivier, nearly 700 local traders were granted formal, secure, and dignified economic lifelines in a single day. This is what real, inclusive economic development looks like. This is compassionate and functional compliance in practice, providing safe, regulated, and business-friendly spaces that

UNREVISED HANSARD

elevate informal traders from the margins of survival into structured paths of commercial prosperity.

The National Council of Provinces exists precisely to safeguard the interests of our regions and to ensure that provincial success informs national policy. The lesson of Budget Vote No 31: Employment and Labour is clear. We cannot continue to pour billions of rand in public money into a centralised national department that spends 52% of its allocation on its own comfort, whilst watching millions of our citizens fall deeper into poverty.

To my fellow delegates from Gauteng, a province that has shed tens of thousands of jobs in recent quarters to administrative decay, and to my colleagues in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, whose citizens are fleeing broken infrastructure and dry taps, I say to you today: Do not fight what we are doing in the Western Cape. Learn from those successes and copy them.

The Growth for Jobs Strategy is an open-source framework available to every single premier, every single MEC, and mayor in this country ...

Adv Inkosi M NONKONYANA: You are dreaming!

UNREVISED HANSARD

Mr R I ALLEN (Western Cape) ... that has the political will to reject the central state of planning.

Let us move people away from dependency on a state database and guide them to the freedom of a permanent private-sector job. The Western Cape has proven that the economic rule of failure can be broken, and it is time for the rest of South Africa to follow this blueprint and bring real, dignified employment to all our people. I thank you, Chairperson.

Mrs M B NDLANGISA-NODADA: Hon House Chairperson, hon Deputy Chairperson, Chief Whip of the Council, permanent and special delegates, Minister and Deputy Ministers, Members of Executive Councils, MECs, present and in the virtual platform, SA Local Government Association, Salga, representatives, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon, molweni, dumelang, sanibonani, goeie middag.

Hon House Chair, let me first state that the ANC supports the Budget Vote 31 as tabled by the Minister; lest I forget.

It gives me pleasure to stand before this House today to debate Budget Vote 31 on Employment and Labour. This is a department charged with the responsibility of changing

UNREVISED HANSARD

people’s lives by employing young citizens of this country, focusing on women and people with disabilities, who are at the receiving end of mass unemployment, poverty, hunger and more than any sector of our society.

This budget policy debate takes place at a pivotal moment in South Africa’s fiscal and economic trajectory, signalled by a transition from sustained fiscal strain towards one fiscal stabilisation and steady recovery, despite the external shocks occasioned by the changing geopolitics and ongoing conflicts in the Middle East.

The outline in Programme 1 of the Budget Review shows that government has succeeded in stabilising public debt, restoring a primary budget surplus and improving macroeconomic fundamentals such as inflation and borrowing costs, which is much more commendable.

Hon members, we stand here as the ANC with a firm belief that this is not a coincidence of history, but a function of visionary leadership of the ANC underscored by deliberate policy shift aimed at rebuilding fiscal credibility while maintaining the provision of essential public service.

UNREVISED HANSARD

At the same time, the economic outlook remains modest, with real Gross Domestic Product, GDP, growth projected to rise gradually from 1,4% in 2025 to approximately 2% by 2028, underscoring the persistence of structural constraints that continue to limit inclusive growth and job creation.

Within the macroeconomic context, the labour markets remain under significant pressure, characterised by persistently high unemployment and limited absorption of new entrants into the economy. This creates uncertainty about the capacity of the economies to sustain the employment of those who are employed, as some companies resort to retrenchment, including closures in response to these pressures.

While some companies are gradually facing unsustainable pressures, which makes it difficult to continue business operations, some opt for retrenchments simply for maximisation of profit at the expense of the workers and the working class.

This department though, House Chair, through its 2026-27 annual performance plan, APP, and associated budget allocations, is positioned as a new institutional actor in addressing these challenges.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The department needs to facilitate employment services, enforce labour standards and promote equitable labour relations.

The stark reality we must live with is that the current estimates of the national expenditure is not commensurate with the scale and magnitude of unemployment.

Hon House Chair, this raises critical questions regarding the effectiveness, coordination and impact of labour market policies within a broader environment where economic growth, infrastructure development and state capability are the primary determinants of employment outcomes.

There is no doubt that South Africa remains one of the leading countries among the developing countries of the world that invest massively in infrastructure development as one of the key drivers of sustainable economic growth and employment creation.

The persistence of stagnant growth and unemployment makes a compelling case for a critical review of the alignment between the budget allocation, policy priorities and labour market

UNREVISED HANSARD

outcomes in the planning architecture of the department in collaboration with other sectors in the economic cluster.

For Parliament, as an elected tribune of the people in the battle of ideas for building a national democratic society, this should be the strategic focus for oversight on the performance of the department. In doing so, hon members, ensures robust policy conversation in oversight work about the impact of the labour market interventions and macroeconomic structural reforms on productive investment, inclusive growth and eradication of unemployment.

Fellow South Africans, a caesarean analysis of this budget brings into the fore structurally constrained budget framework, and this can have far-reaching implications for operational efficiency, developmental outcomes and capacity challenges in the medium and long term.

At an aggregate level, the total allocation of R4,58 billion confirms that the department is operating with fiscal envelope, with no meaningful real expansion.

UNREVISED HANSARD

In practical terms, this limits the department's ability to scale up interventions, especially in response to persistently high unemployment.

Hon Minister, through the House Chair, this calls for innovative leadership that seeks to maximise impactful developmental outcomes within the limited budget.

Among critical policy choices, is the reprioritisation that seeks to focus more on high impact priorities for the acceleration of inclusive growth and employment creation. In doing this, there should be an ongoing strategic review of the overall impact of other key programmes as priorities on the fundamental strategic objectives of inclusive growth and of employment creation.

Hon House Chair, one of the strategic challenges that continue to face the labour market stability in South Africa is the poor enforcement of existing policies. Many employers continue to undermine the labour laws of the country with impunity, and it is my humble submission that this is not only because of the shortage of labour inspectors.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Thirty years into our democracy we still have employers who deduct pension funds and other statutory deductions from employees without transferring these funds to the relevant agencies, at great cost to the workers.

Hon Minister, 30 years into democracy we still have workers, including our public service, who are dismissed and suffer unreasonable long delays as the Labour Courts delay to adjudicate their appeals. Some even die whilst awaiting their cases to be heard by the Labour Court.

These are among the critical issues that affect workers in this country.

We need all in this House to assist each other for an urgent decisive turnaround in relation to these issues, including the monitoring and oversight of the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration, CCMA, commissioners in the performance of their duties. The workers of this country deserve better.

Hon House Chair, we are confident that, through you, the Minister and the Deputy Ministers can restore the people’s hopes, today not in the distant future.

UNREVISED HANSARD

I again echo that the ANC supports the vote, and I thank you.

Mr B J FARMER: Hon Chairperson, hon Minister and Deputy Ministers, hon members, I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Today I rise on behalf of the PA to participate in this important debate. Employment is not just about statistics; it's about dignity; it's about the father who wakes up every morning looking for work and comes back home with nothing; the young graduate who has a qualification but no opportunity.

It is also about the mother who wants to provide for her children that is trapped in poverty because the economy has no space for her; it is about millions of South Africans who do not want handouts, they just want a fair chance. That is why this budget vote is so important. The PA supports Budget Vote 31 because the work of this department is directly linked to the dignity, survival and future of our people. But our support come with clear message.

This budget must not only manage unemployment; it must fight unemployment. South Africa is facing a job crisis that can no longer be softened with polite language. The latest labour force figures show that unemployment remains painfully high,

UNREVISED HANSARD

with young people carrying the heaviest burden. When youth unemployment sits at crisis levels, we are not only losing jobs, but we are also losing hope, skills, confidence and social stability.

Let us be honest, unemployment breaks homes and fuels crime. It fuels addiction, weakens families and it turns communities against one another. We note the department's allocation for 2026-27 and the commitments to the Labour Activation Programme, LAP, the youth employment initiatives, labour centres, ICT systems and workplace inspections. These are important interventions, but the question is not whether the programmes exist. The question is, are they reaching the person who needs them?

The PA believes that labour centres must become engines of opportunity, not what we have seen in Matlosana. It's disheartening to see how a democratic elected government can mistreat our people at the time when they need us most. Every labour centre must be able to connect people to real jobs, real training, real apprenticeships and real workplace experience, and be open for at least five days a week. It is not enough to register people on a system if that system does not open doors.

UNREVISED HANSARD

We must ensure labour centres that are user-friendly, provide privacy and at the very least, it delivers a humane service to our people. A person that needs a labour centre is someone who is in need and thus must be treated with dignity. They must leave with guidance, not frustrated. They must leave with the pathway, not another call to come next week. Not knowing if there will be service, but they should come next week.

We welcome investment in youth employment, but youth employment cannot be reduced to short term placements that disappear after a few months. A young person needs more than temporary relief; they need a breach into the economy. That breach must include skills, work readiness, mentorship, entrepreneurship support and placement into sectors where jobs can grow. We need more effective labour inspections, especially in the sectors where abuse is common, farms, factories, domestic work, construction, security, hospitality and informal workplaces.

This inspection must protect people. For the employers that exploit workers, there must be consequences. Unsafe workplaces endanger lives; there must be enforcement and may illegal labour practices be undercut for the South African workers and exploited foreign nationals. The state must act formally and

UNREVISED HANSARD

lawfully. We must also speak honestly about undocumented labour. The PA is clear. South Africans must be prioritising their own labour market. This does not mean hatred, but it means order. Employers must not be allowed to use undocumented workers as cheap labour while the South African sit at home unemployed. In closing, and the PA support Budget Vote 31, Employment and Labour. We support it because our people need work. Hon Minister ...

Afrikaans:

... moenie baiza [huiwer] nie.

English:

Salute!

IsiXhosa:

Mnu. M M PETER: Sihlalo weNdlu, mandibulise le Ndlu, amalungu ahloniphekileyo athe nqwadalala apha namhlanje, uMphathiswa, uSekela Mphathiswa nakuMzantsi Afrika wonke uphela jikelele. Ndivumele Sihlalo weNdlu, ndithethe noMphathiswa ngesebe lakhe. Eli sebe lijamelene nowona mcelimngeni umandla ingakumbi kweli xesha loqoqosho lunkenenkene. Makhe ndirhabule apha eNgilani.

UNREVISED HANSARD

English:

Hon Chairperson, South Africa continues to face one of the highest unemployment rates in the world, with 32,7% as of the first quarter of 2026, marking 1,3 increase from the previous quarter, with millions of citizens, particularly young people, who are unable to find a meaningful and sustainable job opportunities, yet the Department of Employment and Labour speaks of strengthening employment services and labour market regularly, despite receiving R4,58 billion for 2026 and 2027. This budget does little to address the unemployment crisis among the youth who remains locked out of economic opportunities.

It illustrates the department's constraints by limited resources, weak job placement outcomes, inadequate labour inspection, which in return raises serious concerns about its ability to deliver on its mandate of creating pathways to widen economic inclusion. The 24th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report 2023-2024 reveals that there is still misrepresentation of certain racial groups and lack of diversity and equality in the labour space. According to the Workforce Profile for all employers in 2023, white males are still dominating in top management positions with 48,9%

UNREVISED HANSARD

compared to only 10,5 African males. Let alone the huge misrepresentation of women.

This confirms that 31 years into democracy, and since the inception of the Employment Equity Act, the South African labour market continues in the same trajectory of being racialised and gendered. The slower transformation of labour laws is attributed to the department’s reliance on reports, and insufficient enforcement mechanism leading to persistent inequalities in the workplace.

IsiXhosa:

Masibuyele ekhaya Mphathiswa. Sihlalo weNdlu ...

English:

... Addo Elephant National Park is one of the most hub ...

IsiXhosa:

... eqesha abantu apha eMzantsi Afrika kodwa asazi nokuba iziseko zophuhliso zesebe lakho ziyahlola kusini na phaya eAddo Elephant National Park. Abantu baphaya kula ndawo yaseAddo nePaterson bakhalaza ngabantu abasuka kumazwe angaphandle abeza ngathi bathululeka eselweni. Xa unokufika phaya uya kufumanisa ukuba abasebenzi ngamakhoboka abaqeshi.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Eyona nto ibuhlungu kukuba bonke abanikazi bala mashishini ale ndawo ngabantu abangeyonzalelwana apha eMzantsi Afrika. Iindawo ezininzi zoshishino zezabantu bangaphandle kweli lizwe. Uye ufumanise ukuba uninzi lwabantu bangaphandle baqeshwa kwizithuba zokuphatha kuba bexhatshazwa ngokuhlawulwa imivuzo ephantsi.

Siyakucela Mphathiswa ukuba isebe lakho lisebenzisane nathi ukuze sikwazi ukuncedisa kwezi ngxaki zokuxhatshazwa kwabantu bethu. Xa ndigqibezela Mphathiswa, kuyafuneka ukuba siyiqwalasele imithetho esetyenziswa apha eMzanti Afrika. Kuyafuneka ukuba sibajonge noomasipala ukuba abangoonobangela kusini na bokuba iinkampani ezinkulu eziliqela zilishiye eli lizwe. Ngoku sishiyeke nemithetho emihle, iinkampani zona azikho. Siyaphi ke ngoku Mphathiswa? Makhe sijonge iirhafu ezihlawulwa zezi nkampani. Ingaba ezi rhafu ayizizo ezenza ukuba ezi nkampani zibaleke?

Le mibutho yabasebenzi, efana nooCosatu inamalungelo angaphaya kokuqonda. Kaloku siyayazi ukuba iCosatu le inobudlelwane nani ningurhulumente. Makhe siqwalasele ukuba la malungelo abasebenzi awanangxaki kusini na nomqeshi. Kaloku umqeshi uza kusuke azikhwebule yena kwimbambano anayo namalungelo abasebenzi. Makhe siqwalasele ukuba ayingawo kusini na la

UNREVISED HANSARD

malungelo angaka abangela ukuba ezi nkampani zihambe. Ngaloo mazwi ambalwa, Mphathiswa, siyaluxhasa olu hlahlomali kuba xa singaluxhasi sithi abantu mabaswele imisebenzi. Enkosi.

Mr N H PIENAAR: Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, hon Deputy Ministers, my fellow Members of Parliament, but most importantly, citizens at home, good day ...

Afrikaans:

... goeie dag ...

Sepedi:

... thobela.

English:

Before I start, I must thank the Deputy Minister, Sibiya, for dragging the Minister to the House today. I believe in the last two years she maybe attended one select committee meeting. However, when it comes to money, some ANC members are quick to spend. Well, it might be that she’s getting a subsistence and travel allowance, S and T, payment, for attendance, but with that being said, today’s debate on the Department of Employment and Labour budget affects millions of her Africans and speaks specifically to the unemployed.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Hon members, eight million people; Chairperson, eight million people in this country are unemployed. That is not a mere statistic, it represents millions of fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, who wake up every morning wondering how they will survive. It represents people whose dreams are fading with every rejected job opportunity. These are the people looking at us for the answers. Minister, I was quite concerned when you spoke today in your opening address.

The majority of your time was spent on you coaching the labour inspectors, figures, and about empowering unions, and worse, about more laws discouraging employers from employing people. I want to remind you of something. Your department is called the Department of Employment and Labour, not the department of unions and labour laws. Minister, you should be having sleepless nights. There are eight million people who are without work, and your department has a budget of almost R4,6 billion to develop solutions that will improve their lives and create opportunities.

Enough of the empty promises, enough of the programmes that sound impressive in annual reports, but leave the unemployed sitting at home, desperately waiting for a phone call that never comes. We are told that 1,3 million people are

UNREVISED HANSARD

registered on the unemployment database, but that means absolutely nothing if the phone never rings and there are no jobs that materialises. The Minister is simply not doing enough. Deputy Minister, Mr Sibiya, when you spoke today, I was quite surprised about your threatening tone to the employment and the private sectors, specifically.

Just two weeks ago, we sat in this leg committee meeting, me and you, and we both agreed that the only way we can escape this unemployment crisis, is by taking hands with the private sector. But maybe you did not write your speech and that's the reason for your threatening tone. Let us also consider the Unemployment Insurance Fund, UIF, that falls under this department. To this day, South Africans continue to stand in long queues, often outdoors, in the scorching sun and pouring rain or freezing cold.

Every year we hear promises about utilisation and modernisation, yet much of the works is still burdened by outdated processes and paper, which are causing endless frustration for the people, trying to access money that rightfully belongs to them. I want to make this very clear. This is not the government's money; this is the people's money. It is the money that has been deducted from their

UNREVISED HANSARD

salaries and entrusted to the state for the day they become unemployed.

Yet many are forced to wait months for payments while they struggle to put food on the table. Perhaps maybe we should delay the Minister’s salary for a few months to see how she feels waiting for a few months for her salary. I must also step aside from this point, but the EFF came up here today and spoke at length about how they reject the budget. But I just want to make it very clear in the select committee, when we adopted the budget report, the EFF did not object, and the EFF did not abstain. Those minutes are freely available.

In closing, I must share with the House an experience from the North West during the Parliament’s so-called Taking Parliament to the People, TPTTP, programme, which cost the taxpayers R15 million. Amid the chaos of poor planning and meetings that failed to start on time, one resident made a statement that has stayed with me ever since. He said, and I quote, “Keep your R350 grant, and rather give me the opportunity to work”. This is the reality. The people of this country do not want handouts; they want dignity; they want the opportunity to provide for themselves and their families through job opportunities and honest work.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Fathers are sitting at home without employment, losing hope, and in many cases, turning to alcohol because they feel ashamed of their circumstances. Young people are giving up on the future because they see no opportunities ahead of them. That is what keeps me awake at night, and that this should also keep the department awake at night. I thank you.

Sesotho: 16:50

Ke a leboha.

Sesotho:

Mof M G DHLAMINI: Ke dumedisa motsamaisi wa dipuisano, Ntate Radebe; ke dumedise Letona Mme Meth le Batlatsatona ba hae ba babedi bao a tsamayang le bona; ke dumedise bahlomphehi, Maloko a Palamente a NCOP; ke dumedise baeti ba rona ba teng kwano, le setjhaba sa Afrika Borwa ka kakaretso. Dumelang Maafrika Borwa!

English:

Hon Chair, the ANC declared unwavering support for the Appropriation Bill on Employment and Labour Policy Budget Vote 31. The APP outcomes of the department demonstrate strong policy alignment with national priorities articulated in the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MDTP and Sona, particularly around job creation, state capability and institutional reform.

The analysis reveals a consistent gap between strategic intent and practical impact, largely driven by structural economic constraints and internal resources. We get comfort, as the ANC, that the Minister and the two Deputy Ministers had really outlined interventions with regard to addressing this particular issue.

We implore the Ministry and the department to leverage social protection funds, including the Unemployment Insurance Fund and other public social security mechanisms, as strategic tools for economic development, by aligning fund resources with skills development, entrepreneurship, supporting labour-intensive infrastructure programmes and workforce reintegration. These institutions can move beyond income support to actively promote employment creation, economic inclusion and sustainable growth while preserving their core social protection.

It is important to remind the hon members here of the mandate of the Department. The mandate of the Department of Employment and Labour is to regulate the labour market through policies

UNREVISED HANSARD

and programmes developed in consultation with social partners, which are aimed at improved economic efficiency and productivity.

Sesotho:

Ha se nnete hore ke mosebetsi wa Lefapha la Khiro le Mesebetsi ho theha mesebetsi ka hare ho naha ya Afrika Borwa. Ke boikarabelo ba mafapha ohle a Mmuso wa Afrika Borwa, diprofensi le bomasepala ho theha mesebetsi; empa ka sehlohlolong, mesebetsi e lokela ho thehwa ke bahwebi ba ikemetseng.

Puso e lokela ho tla ka maano a thusang kapa a etsang hore bahwebi ba ikemetseng ba thehe mesebetsi ka hare ho naha ya rona. Ha setjhaba sa habo rona se seke sa thetswa, yaba ebile ho etswa boipiletso ba hore Letona le robale le sa ja hore a thehe mesebetsi. Ke boikarabelo ba rona kaofela re le Maloko a Palamente; re ronngwe kwano ke setjhaba ho robala re sa ja, hoba setjhaba sa rona ha se sebetse.

English:

Hon Chair, whilst we welcome and appreciate the participation and the role that the private sector is playing in job creation in our country, led by the following top three

UNREVISED HANSARD

private companies: *Vodacom*, *Sanlam Ltd* and *Daimler Truck Southern Africa*. In the process, we have observed the *Shoprite Group* coming in handy and improving in terms of job creation.

However, we want to implore the private sector to work closely with government in ensuring that the policies that are in place will really be implemented to ensure that we create jobs in the country.

Sesotho:

Ha re se re bua nnete, mmuso ha e le ona fela, o lokela ho hira dimilione tsa Maafrika Borwa. Ke diposo tse kae tseo mmuso o nang le tsona ka hara mafapha? Matona kaofela a na le maikarabelo ha eba Lefapha la Khiro le Mesebetsi ke yona fela e lokelang ho theha mesebetsi. Ka mantswe a mang, kaofela ha Matona a tswhanetse ho theha dimilione tsa mesebetsi. E kae mesebetsi eo? Matona a rona ha a tswe ho ANC fela; a mang a tswa mekgahlong e meng kaofela, jwaloka DA, FF-Plus le e meng. Ntate Kobus ...

English:

... where are the jobs within the departments that are led by Ministers from other political parties? Is it the responsibility of the Ministers who are coming from the ANC?

UNREVISED HANSARD

That is why it is important, hon members, that we don't mislead society by attaching issue of unemployment in the country to the ANC rather than to us, collectively as government, because we are leading together and we have been voted by the people of this South Africa to lead them - all of us.

Sesotho:

Ha re seke ra balehela maikarabelo a rona!

English:

We are together, hon members. Thirty years is equal to decades of apartheid that led to where we are today. [Interjections.] Keep on blaming 30 years when we have to work together and ensure that our people do receive jobs. It is so painful that we stand here, as hon members, pointing fingers at each other when we have to come here to account to the people who voted for us to be here.

We ought to say, 'I, as this hon member from this political party, representing my constituency, this is what I have made as input in terms of building the Employment and Labour Department or to build any Ministry or any department to create jobs or to build the very same government that I am

UNREVISED HANSARD

working for.’ I am earning a salary, hon Badenhorst, on monthly basis to represent our people, not to come here and do a blame game, point fingers and sleep on duty when you have to create jobs. [Interjections.]

Is it too early to ensure that the people of this country must align their social protection and APPs to job creation through the Department of Employment and Labour and other departments? Each and every department must stand here to tell us how many jobs they created in their own departments. This is what we must do, all of us.

We cannot come here and brag that a certain department has implemented ICT. We must say to the people of South Africa, this is what the Parliament of South Africa and all departments are expected to do in terms of the policy because this is the responsibility for everyone - the very same Department of Employment and Labour that we are blaming today.

Many departments have much bigger budgets, way higher than the one of the Department of Employment and Labour, because the understanding is that the responsibility of creating jobs is the responsibility of all of us. Indeed, the Department of Employment and Labour was the only department that was

UNREVISED HANSARD

supposed to create jobs. The chunk of the budget of South Africa in terms of the National Treasury will definitely go to the Department of Employment and Labour. All the departments will have absolutely nothing because they have nothing to do. So let us not mislead the country and tell the truth - only the truth.

The department's outcome, aimed at reducing poverty and improving livelihoods, focuses on strengthening compliance with labour standards, while this contributes to protecting workers and improving working conditions. We still need to see more, hon Minister, and under your leadership, we will work together with you as the select committee to ensure that, indeed, this will be realised.

As you will be putting the interventions that are good in terms of your departments, we call upon that there must be synergy in working together with other departments, such as DTIC, Small Business Development, Mineral and Petroleum Resources ...

Sesotho:

... hore batho ba bo rona, dibakeng tse hlophehileng jwaloka Qwaqwa, difeme tsane di bulwe; esitana le Botshabelo le Thaba

UNREVISED HANSARD

Nchu. Kwana Kapa Bochabela, difeme tse teng mono, mapolasi le tsohle, di lokela ho bulwa. Mane Gauteng, matlharathlara ane a tsamaisang thepa a ilo ntlafatswa. Mane Bokone Bophirima, ho batho ba Matlosana ba ntseng ba ema meleng e melelele, maphelo a bona a ilo fetolwa ke dimaene tse moo.

Sena ke seo re ratang hore re se behe ho lona Matona a rona, re le ANC. Re tlo sebetsa le lona ho etsa bo nnete ba hore tsohle tseo e bang di lokela ho etsuwa hore batho ba bo rona ba fumane mesebetsi, di a etsahala, ba fumane mesebetsi. Bokgoni boo re nang le bona ...

English:

... are not only aligned to the government, but they also align mainly with the private sector.

Sesotho:

Re lokela ho sebetsa mmoho ho aha Afrika Borwa ya rona. Re le ANC, re tshehetsa Kgetho ya Ditjhelete ena, re re pele-ya-pele bana beso. Ha re sebeletseng setjhaba sa rona. Re le ANC, ha re na nako ya ho kgesa batho, empa re na le nako ya ho itekola, re tle re lokise, re kgone ho fetola maphelo a batho ba bo rona.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Ke seo re se emetseng re le ANC. Haesale re se emetse, re tlo dula re se emetse. Le ha ba ntse ba re supa ka menwana, rona re keke ra ba supa. Re tlo nka ditshupo tseo tsa bona le dinyefolo re ahe Afrika Borwa e betere bakeng sa batho ba bo rona, hore ba kgone ho phela jwaloka batho ba dinaha tse ding tse tswetseng pele. Ke a o leboha, Motsamaisi wa dipuisano.

Tshivenda:

MINISITA WA MISHUMO NA U THOLA: Ndi masiari, Mudzulatshidulo.

English:

Welcome the Select Committee on Employment and Labour, well-balanced and objective analysis of budget vote 31. We acknowledge also the fact that you were also acknowledging both progress and you raised concerns in particular on the issue of the Department of Employment and Labour, UIFCF's governance issues and negative audit outcomes. We are working very hard. The real thing that is making us to have the sleepless nights is ensuring that we turn around the governance of those entities so that we get good audit outcomes.

Again, on the issue of outdated URF online system and its effect on payment of claims, we want to say we have migrated

UNREVISED HANSARD

from the old system and with the new system, which was successfully started in April 2025, we saw simple and accelerated claims processing, enabling direct client submissions, real-time claim tracking and automated communication throughout the claim life cycle.

With that, the fund successfully processed and paid 4 558 971 claims in 2026, an improvement from 4 157 639 claims in 2025 and the 3 547 006 claims in 2024. Hon Nqata, we are happy that you are saying you are accepting our call. It is a real call to place young South Africans, and it is a call to action. We agree with you to say it calls everybody.

Hon Makgakge, we are ready to partner with Northern Cape. Hon Mabilo, yes, this budget is about descent work for all. It is about job creation and is about ensuring that there is improvement in terms of enterprises. Hon Breedt, it cannot be judged on how it spends, how many programmes and how many reports. Now, I am confused as to what the budget vote speech is about. I thought it is about the money; it is about the programmes in terms of the APP that must be funded by that money; and the reports about accountability that must be held by both the select committee and Parliament. So, this is all what this is about.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Thank you for confirming the position as chair of the IMC for job skills and small and medium enterprises in the private sector because that is exactly what the President has appointed the Minister to do: To co-ordinate that IMC and also co-chair the business committee on job skills and small and medium enterprises.

The EFF and MKP are rejecting the budget that is putting young South Africans to work. I think you will regret that come 4 November 2026. Young people are listening to you. We also appreciate the interventions that are done by the President. We have seen the stabilisation of the economy. Yes, it is not enough to absorb the labour force. The labour market is not performing as we expected.

However, the reality is that if, in the fourth quarter of 2025, we were at 31,4%, the lowest unemployment since Covid-19, we are turning the corner, but not at a speed that is necessary to ensure that our young people are employed.

The work that is done by the President with the economic cluster Ministers, in particular the ANC Ministers of Electricity, of Transport, of Trade, Industry and Competition, where we are seeing stabilisation in the international trade,

UNREVISED HANSARD

in electricity - no load shedding, and also in ensuring that at the ports where able to transport the goods from South Africa to the international market, and the pronouncement of the R1 trillion for infrastructure for the three years and the investor confidence, are as a result of the continued investment conferences that the President is calling.

It is showing that South Africa is really in the right direction. We just need to ensure that we enhance inspections because the issue of jobs and the issue that we find non-South Africans there who are illegal is a matter that can create a space for South Africans, in particular the young people. We appreciate all the insights, and we shall continue coming to this select committee. The hon member is missing me; I am here. He says that he is spending sleepless nights.

So, maybe I will come over so that we share those sleepless nights. Thank you so much, hon Chair.

Debate concluded.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon Sotobe, the House is still in session. All right, hon delegates, we have come to the end of the debate on Budget Vote 31: Employment and

UNREVISED HANSARD

Labour. I would like to thank the Minister, the Deputy Ministers and the MECs for participating in the debate.

APPROPRIATION BILL

(Policy debate)

Vote No 29 — Agriculture:

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: Good afternoon, Chairperson, hon members of the National Council of Provinces, hon MECs present, chairperson of the select committee, leaders of organised agriculture, distinguished guests, and fellow South Africans.

The National Council of Provinces occupies an incredibly important and unique place within our democratic system because it really sits at the intersection between national policy and provincial reality. It is where implementation matters. It is where communities expect delivery, not theory, and it is where the impact of government policies and decisions are ultimately felt in farming towns, rural districts, and local economies across the length and breadth of South Africa.

UNREVISED HANSARD

That is precisely why agriculture matters so much and so profoundly in this House. Agriculture is not an abstract sector measured only in export figures or commodity prices. It is the very heartbeat of many of our provinces. It sustains rural towns, anchors local employment, drives logistics and agro-processing, supports municipal economies, and underpins food security across South Africa. When agriculture grows, provincial economies grow. When agriculture struggles, our rural towns feel it first and hardest. That is why this budget is ultimately about building a more resilient, a more competitive, and a more inclusive agricultural economy that works not just for one part of the country, or one sector of the agricultural community, but for all provinces and all producers across the value chain.

The Department of Agriculture has been allocated R7,84 billion for the 2026-2027 financial year. As we discussed this morning in the portfolio committee, the portfolio committee — or the select committee — would be very happy for any assistance in getting that number increased. So, any assistance this House can give us in that regard would be great.

Of this amount, the largest allocation, R3,28 billion, goes towards food security and farmer support programmes,

UNREVISED HANSARD

reflecting our department’s continued focus on supporting production, extension services, and provincial implementation. Programme 2, which includes agricultural production, biosecurity and natural resource management receives R2,59 billion, whilst Programme 4: Economic Development, Trade and Marketing receives R924 million.

Importantly, and perhaps germane to this House, more than 30% of the department’s overall budget flows directly into provincial and local government through conditional grants and implementation support mechanisms. This reflects the reality that agriculture is fundamentally delivered on the ground through co-operative governance between national government, our provinces, municipalities, commodity organisations, and the private sector.

Nowhere is this more important than in our war against Food and Mouth Disease, FMD. South Africa’s battle against Food and Mouth Disease is not simply a veterinary issue; it is an economic issue, it is a provincial issue, and it is a food security issue. The impact of the outbreak is felt directly in provincial economies through movement restrictions, export disruptions, production losses, and pressure on our farming communities. Provinces remain on the frontline of this

UNREVISED HANSARD

response through veterinary services, animal movement control, vaccination campaigns, and surveillance systems. That is why we have moved so aggressively to strengthen and secure South Africa’s vaccine pipeline and expand our vaccination programme on an unprecedented scale.

As members of this House will be aware, last year, government decided to change its policy on how we deal with Food and Mouth Disease. For the last 20-odd years, we have chased the disease around the country, dealing with outbreaks as and when they occurred. We have now had a 180-degree change in that policy where we have embarked upon a risk-based mass vaccination strategy. Since February this year, South Africa has procured 13,5 million doses of FMD vaccine internationally. As of 28 May, we have vaccinated just over 4,4 million animals across the country. Last week, 3,5 million doses of Biogenesis-Bagó vaccine from Argentina arrived in the country.

I am also pleased to announce that the SA Health Products Regulatory Authority, SAHPRA, has approved the section 21 application for Dunevax to import 14 million doses of the Dollvet vaccine from Türkiye. We have confirmation from Dunevax that over 2 million doses will arrive this month, with

UNREVISED HANSARD

the rest of the consignments to follow. This will ensure that the second-round vaccinations can be administered within the required timelines to establish durable immunity across the national cattle population. This is very important. The national cattle population stands at roughly 14 million head. In order to vaccinate twice a year, at least 28 million vaccine doses will be procured.

Along with the Dollvet vaccine that I have already announced here, I can also indicate that, following a trip to Argentina and Brazil, undertaken by the department, myself, and industry players in organised agriculture, we have secured a vaccine supply from Biogenesis-Bagó into South Africa of at least 7 million doses per month going forward. What this means is that we now have the vaccines. We now need to vaccinate at scale. This will now form part of the department’s wider strategy to achieve and maintain an FMD-free-with-vaccination status. This will open up South Africa’s red meat sector to over 94 countries around the world for export, markets that had been closed for 20 to 30 years. [Applause.] Applause is allowed. Thank you.

Let us look at how vaccination is being rolled out in the provinces. KwaZulu-Natal remains at the centre of the

UNREVISED HANSARD

vaccination effort, with more than 1,1 million animals having been vaccinated; the Free State, more than 600 000 animals; the Eastern Cape, more than 720 000; Mpumalanga, more than 430 000; Limpopo, more than 350 000; Gauteng, more than 270 000; the North West, more than 430 000; the Western Cape, more than 260 000; and the Northern Cape, more than 87 000.

Last week, I wrote to all MECs, whom I continue to meet with every two weeks, to encourage them to continue accelerating the deployment of vaccines. To support our accelerated vaccination campaign, more than 150 animal health technicians have been deployed across the affected provinces to strengthen frontline operations and expand vaccination capacity.

What has become fundamentally clear during the course of this drive is that defeating Food and Mouth Disease cannot be achieved by national government alone. It requires a truly co-ordinated effort from national government, provincial governments, organised agriculture, veterinary services, industry bodies, and farming communities. I want to acknowledge the outstanding leadership being shown in many provinces where provincial governments have worked tirelessly alongside the private sector to roll out vaccination campaigns, strengthen disease-control measures, and support

UNREVISED HANSARD

farmers on the ground. The level of co-operation and stakeholder mobilisation we have seen across the provinces demonstrates what is possible when governments across all spheres and industry pull together with a common purpose.

I also urge all provincial departments, now that we have the vaccines required to win this war, to speed up and urgently scale up frontline vaccination efforts and make sure that we hit our target of vaccinating at least 80% of the national cattle population by December this year with two vaccinations. This will restore South Africa's animal health status. It will get the current outbreak under control and will, if successful, ensure that this is the last major outbreak of Food and Mouth Disease that South Africa will ever face. That will bring certainty and stability to the red meat sector, allow greater economic progress and inclusion, and ensure that South Africa is able to position itself as one of the premier red meat-exporting destinations in the world.

However, the work of rebuilding South Africa's biosecurity systems extends beyond vaccination alone. It has to go hand in hand with diagnostic capacity, and we are doing that through the accreditation of private laboratories in KwaZulu-Natal and

UNREVISED HANSARD

the Western Cape to help reduce pressure on the state system and, of course, improve turnaround times.

At the same time, as we rebuild our biosecurity ecosystem in South Africa, the Agricultural Research Council, ARC, remains absolutely central to rebuilding domestic capability. The ARC now receives the largest allocation in Programme 2: Risk Management, with R1,24 billion allocated towards research, diagnostics, and biosecurity capacity. I noticed that some social media keyboard warrior was trying to convince everybody that the department has put only R100 000 aside for biosecurity. I hope they are listening today and understanding that, in one Vote alone, more than R1 billion is going towards biosecurity capacity.

The recently installed vaccine production system is already producing vaccines locally, with a new 1 000-litre fermenter expected to become operational later this year. This will dramatically increase local production, the goal being that we want to become a vaccine-sovereign nation with our own locally produced vaccines. For the last 20 years, we have been reliant on imported vaccines from a single supplier in Botswana, and we saw the devastating consequences of what happened when they were unable to meet the orders we had placed for vaccines.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Hon members, we must never ever, ever again in this country be at the mercy of international supply. We have to build our local vaccine banks and ensure that we can take care of ourselves. I am incredibly confident that the ARC, which has also produced now one of the most effective oil-based FMD vaccines, is going to be able to ramp up production and, in the medium to long term, provide South Africa with all the vaccines we need to maintain two doses per head of cattle population per year.

The realities facing producers are deeply provincial in character. In the Western Cape, the focus is heavily export orientated, linked to ports, packhouses, and international markets. In the Free State, grain production remains central to both provincial and national food security. In Limpopo, citrus, horticulture, and cross-border trade continue to drive growth and employment. In KwaZulu-Natal, livestock production and biosecurity challenges dominate current concerns. In the Eastern Cape, the challenge remains unlocking the enormous potential of smallholder agriculture, irrigation schemes, and livestock production, whilst strengthening infrastructure and market access. In provinces like the Northern Cape, irrigation infrastructure and value-chain development remain critical.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Our policies must therefore recognise these different provincial realities whilst maintaining a coherent national strategy. That is why Casp, the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, remains so central and one of the most important tools available to provinces. The merger of Casp and Ilima/Letsema into a single grant framework is designed to reduce administrative duplication, improve co-ordination, and accelerate delivery. Through Casp infrastructure funding alone, more than R1,14 billion has been allocated across provinces for infrastructure, irrigation rehabilitation, production support, and mechanisation.

Agriculture also cannot modernise if information remains inaccessible to farmers on the ground. That is why, following the President’s announcement, we are working hard to continue to strengthen extension services. Already, 370 assistant agricultural practitioners have been employed through provincial collaboration, whilst more than 7 000 farmers have benefitted from the Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion approach developed with the Japan International Co-operation Agency.

If we are serious about inclusive growth, we must move beyond slogans and focus on practical pathways into the agricultural

UNREVISED HANSARD

economy. That is why the blended finance scheme remains so important. These are not symbolic interventions. They are practical investments in productive farming enterprises across the provinces.

Hon members, from climate change to weather patterns, there are a number of risks, but the underlying message of this budget is simply this: Agriculture is not a peripheral sector in the South African economy. It is central to economic growth, food security, rural stability, and employment across our provinces. Thank you very much.

Mr M G MODISE: Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, hon Minister Steenhuisen, Deputy Minister Capa, forever available MEC Masipa, esteemed Members of Parliament, special delegates, and the people of South Africa, good afternoon.

On behalf of this House, I rise to dedicate today’s Budget Vote debate to Mr Pitsi Matlou. In football, we celebrate the goal scorers, the coaches, administrators, and supporters. But behind every player who makes it out of the dusty amateur fields, some eyes saw the talent before everyone else. Mr Pitsi Matlou is one of those eyes. For many years, Mr Pitsi

UNREVISED HANSARD

Matlou, better known as Vino Snap, has stood on the sidelines, not just to capture a match, but to capture the potential. With a camera lens guided by an instinct many call "the gift," he spots the run before it happens, the touch that sets the player apart, and the hunger in a teenager's eyes. He does not just take pictures, he frames futures. Through that lens, Vino Snap has introduced South Africa to players who were known on Saturday morning and were professionals by the next season. Amongst many players that he has helped to lift from amateur ranks into the Premier Soccer League, PSL, stars are Thapelo Maseko, Mfundo Vilakazi, Evidence Makgopa, Mpho Chabatsane, Masindi Nemtanzhela, Boitumelo Radiopani, Mdu Shabalala, Tsepang Moremi, Siyabonga Ndebele, Bennett Mokoena, and the biggest name of them all, Relebohile Mofokeng, also known as the president of ama2000.

Names may change, but the pattern is the same. Vino sees it, Vino shares it, and the big teams come running. That is a rare service in a country rich with talent but short on scouts and resources. Vino Snap has become a bridge between the township pitch and the professional stage. He works without fanfare. Still, his archive is a catalogue of dreams realized. Today, we salute you, Vino Snap, the soccer photographer who does not just document the game but discovers it. May your lens stay

UNREVISED HANSARD

sharp, your eyes stay God-given, and may you keep finding the next stars before everyone else.

Provincial and local economic development and transformation are not optional pursuits; they are the very foundation upon which microeconomic development is built. When provinces and municipalities are empowered to drive inclusive growth, they create ecosystems where small enterprises, co-operatives, and community-based initiatives can thrive. Transformation at these levels ensures that resources are equitably distributed, opportunities are brought in, and historically marginalized communities are brought into the mainstream of economic activity. Agriculture, infrastructure, energy, and local industries must be developed in all nine provinces, not only to balance national progress but to stimulate grassroots prosperity. By strengthening provincial and local economies, we enable microeconomic actors who are small farmers, township businesses, and rural co-operatives to become engines of innovation and resilience. This is how transformation translates into tangible livelihoods, how local development becomes national strength, and how democracy delivers not just rights but real economic empowerment.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The agricultural sector remains one of the most critical pillars of our nation’s economic development. And the growth must be advanced across all nine provinces. Agriculture is not merely about food production; it is about sustaining livelihoods, creating jobs, and ensuring that rural communities become engines of prosperity rather than pockets of poverty. Each province carries unique strengths ... [Inaudible.] ... crop cultivation, livestock, fisheries, or agro-processing. It is our duty to harness this strength in a co-ordinated and inclusive manner. The agricultural sector has always relied on the state and its entities for support, and this reliance is not unique to South Africa; it is a global phenomenon. Across the world, governments play a pivotal role in stabilizing agricultural markets, providing subsidies, ensuring access to finance, and safeguarding food security. From Europe’s Common Agricultural Policy, CAP, to the United States’ farm support programmes, the state has consistently intervened to protect producers and consumers alike. In our own context, this reliance underscores the importance of blended finance, infrastructure investment, and a policy framework that empowers farmers while reducing systemic risks.

The principle of fiscal stewardship demands that every allocation of public resources be treated as both a

UNREVISED HANSARD

responsibility and a strategic lever for transformation. The R7,8 billion allocation to provincial growth, though reflecting a 1,9% reduction in real terms, remains a powerful instrument to drive inclusive development. What matters is not only the quantum of funds, but the precision with which they are deployed, targeting agriculture, infrastructure, energy, and local industries that stimulate grass growth prosperity. This allocation must be understood as a strategic tool that empowers provinces to strengthen microeconomic activity, small enterprises, and unlock the potential of rural communities. Even with fiscal constraints, disciplined stewardship ensures that every rand contributed to sustainable growth, equitable transformation, and resilience against economic shocks. The measure of our stewardship is not in the size of the budget alone, but the impact it delivers to the people of South Africa. The agricultural sector requires stronger funding because it is not merely a social investment; it is a revenue-generating engine for the fiscus. Every rand directed towards agriculture multiplies into broader economic returns through job creation, export earnings, rural industrialization, and tax contribution that strengthens the state’s capacity to deliver services. Historically, the sector relied on state support, and globally this pattern is mirrored in subsidies and strategic intervention that sustain food systems and

UNREVISED HANSARD

stabilize economies. Yet, in our context, better funding is not about dependency; it is about unlocking transformation. By adequately resourcing agriculture, we empower commercial producers, small-scale farmers, and co-operatives to become drivers of our inclusive growth. This ensures that the sector not only feeds the nation but also contributes meaningfully to the fiscal resilience, provincial development, and national transformation. To underfund agriculture is to undercut our own economic future. To invest in it is to secure prosperity for generations to come.

The Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan stands as a primary policy vehicle for building inclusive provincial economies. It is through this master plan that we align provincial priorities with provincial strength, ensuring that agriculture is not only a source of food security but also a driver of industrialization, employment, and transformation. By integrating farming with agro-processing, we create value chains that extend beyond the farm gate, stimulating industries, empowering small and commercial producers, and opening pathways for black-owned enterprises to thrive. This master plan is not merely a policy document. It is a strategic framework that binds together the aspirations of all nine provinces into a unified vision of inclusive growth. It

UNREVISED HANSARD

recognizes that transformation in agriculture must be coupled with industrial development, infrastructure investment, and market access so that rural communities become engines of prosperity.

By advancing this master plan, we affirm that agriculture is the heartbeat of provincial economies and the cornerstone of South Africa's journey towards equality and resilience. What is critical - the Minister has spoken to it - the recent allocation of R1,8 billion in blended finance to support 370 black commercial producers is a decisive step towards transformation. It signals our commitment to dismantling historical barriers in enabling black farmers to thrive as full participants in the agricultural economy. By combining public investment with private capital, we reduce risk, unlock potential and opportunities, and ensure that these producers are not only beneficiaries of reforms but leaders of sustainable growth. If agriculture flourishes in all provinces, then South Africa flourishes. Let us therefore commit to building a sector that is resilient, equitable, and capable of feeding our people and our economy. In doing so, we affirm that agriculture is not a provincial matter alone. It is a national imperative, a cornerstone of our democracy, and a promise for future generations.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The task of building a capable and developmental state begins with strengthening its institutional backbone. At the heart of this effort lies the urgent need, Minister, to fill the 147 technical vacancies across the department and its entities. These positions are not mere numbers; they represent the expertise required to translate national policy into provincial benefit, ensuring that our strategic allocations, such as the R7,8 billion for provincial growth and the R1,8 billion in blended finance for black commercial producers, are implemented with precision and impact. Without technical capacity, policy remains aspirational. We need this policy to become transformative. By filling these vacancies, we secure engineers, economists, agricultural specialists, and planners who will drive inclusive development in all nine provinces. This is fiscal stewardship in action, ensuring that every rand allocated is matched by the skills and the systems necessary to deliver tangible change. A capable state is not built in theory; it is built in practice through people, expertise, and accountability.

The Budget Vote and the programmes of the department are central to advancing the economic development of the agricultural sector across all nine provinces. This budget is not merely an allocation of funds; it is a strategic

UNREVISED HANSARD

investment in transformation, food security, and inclusive growth. Through targeted programmes, such as the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan, blended finance initiatives, and infrastructure support, we ensure that national policy translates into tangible provincial benefits. In Gauteng, the focus is on agro-processing and market access. In Limpopo and North West, livestock and rural development are prioritized. In Mpumalanga and Free State, co-production and irrigation systems are strengthened, while the Western Cape advances fisheries and export-driven agriculture. Each province's unique strengths are harnessed to build a diversified economy while ensuring that black commercial producers and small-scale farmers are empowered to participate fully in these value chains.

The R7,8 billion allocation, despite the R1,9 billion reduction in real terms, remains a powerful tool for provincial growth when coupled with fiscal stewardship and technical capacity. By filling the 147 technical vacancies, we guarantee that these programmes are implemented with precision and ensure that agriculture becomes not only a provincial driver but a national engine of transformation.

UNREVISED HANSARD

In conclusion, the principle of efficient and qualitative spending is the cornerstone of responsible governance. Allocation, whether the R7,8 billion provincial growth or the R1,8 billion in blended finance for black commercial producers, must not be judged by the size alone, but by the tangible outcomes they deliver. These outcomes improve food security, expanded rural employment, thriving black-owned agribusinesses, and strengthen provincial economies as a true measure of fiscal stewardship. Such results must be visible, measurable, and capable of becoming the subject of oversight. Oversight is not an adversarial exercise; it is a democratic mechanism that ensures accountability, transparency, and impact. When Parliament can point to concrete achievements, such as new jobs created, infrastructure built, and producers empowered, it affirms that every rand spent has indeed transformed and strengthened the economy. Efficient spending is not only about discipline. It is about delivering hope, equity, and prosperity to the people of South Africa. And with that, I thank you for your attention to these issues. Thank you, Chair.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Thank you, hon Modise. I am sure the Minister and the Deputy Minister

UNREVISED HANSARD

were waiting to hear how you are going to motivate for more funds.

Mr N H PIENAAR: Hon Deputy Chairperson, hon Minister, hon Deputy Minister, fellow Members of Parliament, and, most importantly, the people at home, good day ...

Afrikaans:

... goeiedag ...

Sepedi:

... thobela.

English:

Today’s Budget Vote debate on Agriculture is one I am proud to open for the DA in this House of lawmakers. Agriculture represents the heartland of this country. The majority of South Africans can trace their roots back to rural communities where dependence on the land was and, indeed, remains essential for the survival and prosperity of so many.

Agriculture must and will remain a priority for this Government of National Unity, GNU. To emphasise this point, close to 6% of South Africa’s workforce, equating to nearly

UNREVISED HANSARD

1 million jobs, comes directly from the agriculture sector. Treasury therefore saw it fit to allocate a budget, like the Minister indicated, of R7,8 billion. I had a discussion, Minister, with the chairperson, and it looks like we will be able to assist you with your budget. The majority of the budget, as the Minister said, R3,2 billion, is directed toward food security and farmer support. This clearly shows that the department is investing in the next generation of farmers to ensure that South Africa can continue feeding itself without relying on unstable international markets and global conditions.

Agriculture is not just another sector of the economy; it is a strategic national asset. Being a farmer is undoubtedly one of the most difficult professions in this country. Whether you are a small-scale, subsistence farmer or one of our major commercial producers exporting products across the globe, the reality remains the same: Farmers operate far from services and support structures. They are expected to be veterinarians, mechanics, butchers, business managers, security officers, and, at times, even political analysts. Yet despite all these pressures, South Africa’s farming community remains resilient.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Whilst serious challenges remain in agriculture, including rural safety concerns, rural infrastructure collapse such as roads, rising input costs, and the continued political threats around expropriation without compensation from extremists within politics, confidence is slowly returning to the sector. That confidence comes from leadership grounded in practicality, engagement, and science-based decision-making from the Department of Agriculture. We now have a Minister of Agriculture that is consistently on the ground, engaging directly with farmers and industry stakeholders to understand their lived realities firsthand.

This is what matters, Chairperson. Policies from Pretoria will never replace practical engagement on farms and in rural communities. Gone are the days when new tractors are dropped off at struggling farmers whilst government falsely claims empowerment and success. Real empowerment is sustainable production, market access, skills development, and long-term stability.

Afrikaans:

Die Departement van Landbou was vir jare lank die siek kind van die regering onder die Zuma ANC met Pieter Mulder as Adjunkminister van Landbou, maar vandag kan ons sê die

UNREVISED HANSARD

departement was nog nooit in ’n beter posisie as wat dit vandag is nie.

English:

Minister, your ambitious target of vaccinating 80% of the national herd by December is steadily becoming a reality, with a total of 13,5 million vaccines being imported already. Vaccines are arriving weekly by the millions because of the diversified supply chain established by the Minister and the department. What many dismissed as impossible only months ago is now rapidly taking shape. We are finally beginning to turn the tide against Foot and Mouth Disease, FMD, but let us be clear: This battle is not only just about animal health. Every successful vaccination brings us one step closer to reopening export markets that South Africa has either lost or struggled to gain access to for decades. This GNU has committed itself to economic growth and job creation, and controlling FMD is directly linked to both.

The health of any industry can often be measured by employment growth and investment confidence. Agriculture remains one of the very few sectors that actually added jobs this year, with new data revealing a 3% year-on-year increase in jobs. This is not an accident. It is a sign that growth, stability, and

UNREVISED HANSARD

confidence are returning to the sector despite the noise and uncertainty created elsewhere within government.

In closing, we welcome the pressure and challenges from industry stakeholders. It keeps us on our toes, and we remain committed to the sector and those that represent them. Even if we disagree on the approach, our end goal remains the same ...

Afrikaans:

... en dit is die vooruitgang van landbou.

English:

At the end of the day, we must remind ourselves where we were only a few years ago. Regardless of political differences, it is undeniable that meaningful progress has been made in agriculture in this seventh administration, often under immense pressure, and this has resulted in a far stronger Department of Agriculture. We approve this budget. I thank you.

Mr M K MONTWEDI: Hon Chairperson, hon members, fellow South Africans, ...

Setswana:

UNREVISED HANSARD

... ke le dumedisa lotlhe mo leineng la ...

English:

... economic freedom in our lifetime. Hon Pienaar, there is no threat talking about expropriation of land without compensation. Who did the 1652 arrivals compensate when they stole our land? Land ownership purchase in South Africa must reflect the demographics of the Republic of South Africa, and we will continue to fight for the return of South Africa's stolen land as the EFF.

The agricultural sector serves as the backbone of rural economies, food security, and employment generation in this country. It puts food on the table and creates jobs when people need it the most. However, the state's primary vehicle for rural transformation, this Department of Agriculture, which is supposed to be driving this rural growth, is falling apart from the inside.

Minister, under your leadership, South Africa's agricultural sector enters the 2026-27 financial year under immense strain. Instead of strengthening the frontline of food production, biosecurity and farmer support, the Department of Agriculture presents an Annual Performance Plan, APP, and budget that

UNREVISED HANSARD

strains real resources, expand unfunded mandates and abandon critical commitments made to this House and the people of South Africa.

Let us now confront facts. Presented today is a budget that punishes the poor and rewards administration. The department's total allocation declines from R7,96 billion to R7,84 billion, a real cut of 4,56%. Yet, instead of protecting frontline services, the department increases Programme 1 which is administration by 7,6%. How does a department justify growing bureaucracy while cutting food security and support by 11,82%, R232,9 million to be exact, and cutting sector capacity by 36%, the very same programme meant to fight hunger. The APP itself admits that food security in South Africa is impeded by household financial strain, high debt and sluggish income growth. Yet, the department responds by cutting a programme that feeds the poor.

Let's talk about Programme 2 which is plant production and health. It is cut by 18,2% at the time where climate shocks, pest and disease are rising. This threatens our compliance with international phytosanitary standards and risk shutting South Africa out of the export market. We cannot claim to

UNREVISED HANSARD

support farmers while dismantling the very same system that keeps their products at market ready.

Minister, the real fight against foot-and-mouth disease, FMD, requires building internal capacity, which is one of the key components of the EFF. How do you put up a fight when there is no improvement in veterinary service vacancies which previously set at 45%? Farmers, we remind you, this FMD outbreak is a man-made crisis. This DA Minister who just addressed us now has caused the mess we find ourselves in today. South Africa maintained an FMD-free status without vaccine until the arrival of John Steenhuisen as a Minister of Agriculture and the crisis worsened. We all know that the current Speaker of Parliament, Ms Thoko Didiza, while serving as the Minister of Agriculture in the sixth Parliament, established a multi-disciplinary task team that successfully contained ...

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Hon Montwedi, could you please take your seat? There's a point of order.

Mr M K MONTWEDI: I'm seated. Which seat now? No, can people stop disrupting me? No, stop this thing.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Just remain silent. There's a point of order. Hon Badenhorst, what point of order are you raising on?

Mr F J BADENHORST: On 61B, Chair.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): 61B? Yes, go ahead.

Mr F J BADENHORST: Chair, it's a matter of fact that foot-and-mouth disease existed before Minister Steenhuisen became the Minister. So that hon member must retract that statement that it only became into being when hon Steenhuisen arrived.

Mr M K MONTWEDI: No, you did not hear me. Stop that thing.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Hon Montwedi, please hold on until hon Badenhorst has completed what he's saying. Hon Badenhorst, are you done?

Mr F J BADENHORST: Yes, he's misleading the House, Chair. So please make a ruling on that.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): All right, thank you very much. We will listen to that again and then we will make a ruling on it. Hon Montwedi, could you please continue?

Mr M K MONTWEDI: I said FMD was better contained under Thoko Didiza. I never said it was not there. House Chair, we must also confront ...

Setswana:

... a peinelwa maBuru ...

English:

... the emerging vaccine apartheid. The first batch of the 650 000 vaccines bought with state funds was diverted to big industry players such as Karan beef and others. Another 77 000 doses meant for smallholder farmers were also diverted to big business. The big question is why procure vaccines with public funds and only store and distribute that to privately-owned big farmers and leaving our black farmers to struggle and only give them vaccines a few months later after the spread of FMD?

Setswana:

UNREVISED HANSARD

Modulasetilo, maaka a mangwe a matala ke gore leruo la baruakgomo le tlhabelwa bolwetsi jwa tlhako-le-molomo, FMD, mahala. Maabane ko kopanong ya rona Rre Mokhwai le Rre Olebogeng Lehihi ba motse wa ko Longaneng, le Rre Shopi Lucas le Mme Sesinyi Dinkwetse ba motse wa Mokasa 1 ko Taung, ba o ba neng ba tsenetse kopano ya EFF go ntsha matshwenyego a bona ka thebolelo ya ditirelo, ba ile ba ntse ba patela madi a kana ka R6 ka sehutshane ka nako ya ento wa FMD. Gape ba patelediwa go reka dikheke kana ga nkitla ba kgona go thusiwa go enta leruo la bone.

Ga nkitla re tshegetsa APP e go fitlha lefapha le tlhama letlole la go thusa bao ba swetsweng ke leruo la bone ka ntlha ya FMD. Bogodu jwa leruo bo tswelela go nna tlhobaboroko e e kgolo thata mo bathong ba rona mme re bona lefapha le palelwa ke go tlisa maano a go thusa ka go tlisa botegeniki jwa go lwantsha bogodu jwa leruo ka ...

English:

... livestock identification and traceability system, ...

Setswana:

... mmogo le mafapha a sepodisi le la bosiamisi. Rre Oratile Segosapelo, Tebogo Mokgatlhe le Matlolokwe Lekhidi ba

UNREVISED HANSARD

latlhegetswe ke leruo le feta lekgolo mo dingwageng tse tlhano, mme ga ese ba bone thuso epe ka ba nale tumelo ya gore bogodu bo eteletswe pele ke bangwe ba sepodisi ka jalo ga ba bone thuso epe e e leng gore ba e tlhoka.

English:

We must recall that on the 24 February 2021, may his soul rest in peace, the former Minister of Finance, Tito Mboweni, announced funding of 10 000 extension officers following the President's state of the nation address commitment. And this was repeated again in 2026 state of the nation address. Yet, this APP is silent, it is not telling us where are the 10 000 extension officers that were promised. In our select committee meeting the department admitted that announcement to appoint 10 000 extension officers was made out of excitement, and that it is not possible for that to happen.

Setswana:

Ditshepiso tseo tsotlhe di diriwa ka nako ya ditlhopo, ele leano la go ngoka batlhopi ke lekoko leo le busang. Mme morago ga ditlhopo ga gona sepe se se diragalang. Re gakolola batho ba rona ba ele tlhoko maaka a ANC go fitlha ga jaana. Tlhokomelang maaka ao ka gonne ditlhopo di atimetse a tlile go boa.

UNREVISED HANSARD

English:

House chair, the APP claims that the department will institutionalize the biosecurity hub that the Minister also spoke about. Yet, the same hub was launched in 2022. It means that for four years we have had a non-functional biosecurity hub leaving the country exposed.

In May 2025, Minister John, you met with Association of Students of Agricultural Training Institute, Asati, an association of principals of agricultural colleges. Among commitments you made was that by June 2025, the migration of agricultural colleges to a status of higher education will happen. You refer to that as a low hanging fruit. We don't know how far is that low hanging fruit and that it will be finalized. A year later, that has not been finalized.

Students and principal raised issues that remain unresolved. Colleges need trading accounts to buy feed, seed, fertilizer, irrigation item. There is no integrated learning system between colleges and universities. Job title remains unaligned. Some colleges cannot offer short courses to farmers. Infrastructure has been collapsing for more than 10 years. Accreditation at risk and staff shortages.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Despite these challenges that you set in a meeting with principals and association of students, funds meant for agricultural colleges were taken away from agricultural colleges to fund FMD response. With the many challenges faced by agricultural colleges, you still see fit to take away budget from agricultural colleges to collapse them. In reality, this can only mean one thing, that this Government of National Unity, GNU, government does not take the future of this country serious. Meaning those young people that are attending in agricultural colleges must just suffer. Hence you are strategically destroying agricultural colleges.

The Agricultural Research Council, ARC, remains a strategic institution for diagnostics, surveillance and vaccine research. Yet governments continue to underfund it. ARC received 0,69%, which is a nominal increase, which is 2,62% in real cut. The Minister said something different now. Good initiatives are failing because ARC is failing to conduct trials because they are not fully funded, forcing farmers to carry the cost and compromise research integrity. A program ...

Setswana:

... ya kaonofatso ya dikgomo, ...

UNREVISED HANSARD

English:

... which improves the genetics of black farmers' livestock has collapsed. A very good program whose aim was to improve genetics of our smallholder farmers.

We want to welcome the appointment of the former Deputy Minister, Mcebisi Skwatsha, as the chairperson of the Land Bank board. He takes over the Land Bank at a time when the Land Bank is failing to support the sector and failing to implement the blended finance. Farmers face delays in farm acquisition, long turnaround times, failure to fund production before planting season. Sellers are reluctant to enter into agreements because of Land Bank delay. We are hoping that the appointment of Skwatsha ... What's happening?

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Hon Montwedi, there is a point of order. Just hold on. Remain calm. Hon Badenhorst?

Mr F J BADENHORST: Will the hon member take a question?

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Hon Montwedi, would you take a question from hon Badenhorst?

Setswana:

UNREVISED HANSARD

Rre M K MONTWEDI: Ke tla fetsa le wena. Ke tla mo fa tšhono.

English:

He must relax. I have a speech to deliver. I don’t have time to play.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Thank you. No, he won’t take a question.

Mr M K MONTWEDI: We are hoping that the appointment of Mcedisi Skwatsha as the chairperson of the Land Bank board will ensure that farmer flexible reforms are put in place to ensure that the bank remains as a developmental funding institution.

Since the start of this administration, Co-operative Enterprise Development has been stuck between Agriculture and Rural Development. Over 200 workers are demoralized and uncertain about their future. More than R500 million allocated to this program has not been utilized since the start of the seventh Parliament.

Minister, why do you release employees of the Co-operative Enterprise Development, CED, back to the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform and want to keep the budget that

UNREVISED HANSARD

has been allocated to CED? House Chair, as the NCOP, we need to urgently have a joint meeting with both departments' organized labour and put this matter to rest.

It is also concerning to see how provinces like the Eastern Cape are struggling. The region has massive potential for both livestock and crop production, but the provincial department has completely failed to unlock it. Rural roads, dipping tents and fencing in the province is also heavily degraded, preventing small holders from accessing commercial markets.

Furthermore, it is deeply concerning that the Free State, primary grain producing region, vital to our national food security, is riddled with financial mismanagement. Local municipalities like Maluti-a-Phofung and Machabeng have practically collapsed financially because these municipalities are swimming in debt. The electric supply is constantly disrupted. This directly shuts down electric irrigation pivots, destroying entire season of maize yields. The province also faced regular droughts, yet the department has failed to maintain public irrigation system.

Agricultural schemes are facing existential crisis because of failure to maintain underground pipes. With farmers in Taung

UNREVISED HANSARD

at Rethuseng under 1057 hectares struggling for more than 10 years with leaking pipes affecting irrigation in their farms. A program to revitalize the Taung Irrigation Scheme was approved in 2014 and until now nothing has happened.

Setswana:

Mme Maheho Sylvia ke molemi yo o nang le dingwaga di le lesome a sa dirisi masimo a gagwe ka ntlha ya ditshenyego tsa ...

English:

... underground pipes.

Setswana:

Tseo puso e palelwang ke go di baakanya go fitlhelela ga jaana.

English:

In Limpopo, a province famous as an export powerhouse for citrus, avocados, and tomatoes, the provincial department is failing to protect and support the diverse farming base. The APP and the budget reflect a department disconnected from reality, unprepared for sector risk and unable to meet its commitment.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Setswana:

O ipaakanye monna yole wa leBuru yo o batlang go botsa potso.

English:

South Africa deserves a Department of Agriculture that protects farmers, supports research, strengthen biosecurity and fights hunger, not the one that hides administrative growth while frontline services collapse.

We want to take this opportunity to remind our people to go out in their numbers and register to vote the EFF on the 4 November 2026 and remove this failed GNU from the Union Building.

Minister, it is clear that you have failed to advocate for funding in the GNU Cabinet to allocate to agriculture.

Setswana:

Jaanong rona ba re ko ntle ga GNU re tsena kae?

English:

The EFF rejects this APP and demands a complete overhaul of priorities, funding allocation and implementation plans. We truly do not understand why your boss, Geordin Hill-Lewis,

UNREVISED HANSARD

continues to keep a liability of a Minister like you after these failures under your leadership. Next, ...

Setswana:

... a re utlwe. Monna yole wa leBuru yo o batlang go botsa potso, ...

English:

... I am listening.

Setswana:

E kae potso?

English:

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Hon Badenhorst, do you have a question?

Mr F J BADENHORST: Yeah! Wonderful! Thank you very much, hon Chair. I would like to ask the member if he's ever considered letting evidence actually interfere with his opinions.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Hon Montwedi, did you get the question?

UNREVISED HANSARD

Mr M K MONTWEDI: No! Can he quickly repeat?

Mr F J BADENHORST: Has the member ever considered letting evidence interfere with his opinions?

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Did you get it this time, hon Montwedi?

Mr M K MONTWEDI: I don't know what type of a question this is because I said FMD has been there since the Minister came. That's evidence that FMD was there before the Minister, but I said it remained contained better then than now. Therefore, it's evidence that I'm putting here. I'm not making a public opinion like you making an opinion. So it's not an opinion. The issue of the stolen land; you stole South Africa's land. We want our land. You come here and cry and say all sorts of things. Thank you, Chairperson. [Time expired.]

Mr N NKONTSIWE (Eastern Cape): Good afternoon, hon Deputy Chair. I hope I am audible enough ...

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: You are audible, but we need to see your face. Can you please switch your video on? Could you put your camera on?

UNREVISED HANSARD

Mr N NKONTSIWE (Eastern Cape): Do you see me now?

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: We saw you for a moment, but please continue. We did see your face. Thank you.

Mr N NKONTSIWE (Eastern Cape): My face has now appeared. Hon Deputy Chair, good evening to you, the Ministers, Deputy Ministers and the hon members in this House. I would like to speak about agriculture and present to this House. Despite the advancement made in recent years, our country and province still grapple with ongoing challenges of unemployment, inequality and food insecurity, which underscore the urgent need for accelerated and more inclusive development.

In this context, the situation is characterised by food insecurity, child malnutrition and stunting, which undermines the human dignity and developmental prospects of our children. The seventh administration has set three strategic priorities, namely, inclusive growth and job creation to reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living and building a capable, ethical and developmental state.

The ministry of Agriculture’s budget for the 2026-27 financial year aligns with the provincial plans. It has reiterated that

UNREVISED HANSARD

Agriculture and Agroprocessing Master Plan, AAMP, remains central to our approach as it is not as an abstract framework but a mechanism for co-ordination for aligning government, the industry and labour behind a shared objective.

The share of value produced by black participants in commercial value chains has increased from 11% to 13%, with much of that progress driven by gains in horticulture. The Programme of Action Lekgotla 2026 reaffirmed that unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, remains the most urgent socioeconomic challenges confronting South Africa. The Lekgotla expressed deep concern that youth unemployment remains structurally high, reflecting historical underdeveloped and limited economic diversification.

In the Eastern Cape, however, we are encouraged by the growing commitment of young people who pursue opportunities in agriculture. Their enthusiasm and participation demonstrate the sector’s potential as a catalyst for job creation, economic inclusion and rural development.

The Integrated Youth Development Strategy serves as South Africa’s official framework for co-ordinating youth development initiatives across government, the private sector

UNREVISED HANSARD

and civil society. More than just a programme, The Integrated Youth Development Strategy is a strategic tool for mainstreaming youth development and ensuring a co-ordinated, integrated approach to empowering young people.

To strengthen youth participation in the economy, we must continue to lobby all spheres of government to create a more youth-friendly and supportive regulatory environment that enables entrepreneurship, skills development, employment creation and access to job opportunities. We have invested significantly in young people who form a core part of the implementation strategy for the commercialisation of 100 farms. We want them to be part and at the forefront of driving this commercialisation agenda.

This AAMP is the sector’s response to inclusive growth and job creation, and it seeks to address the challenges of low levels of investment and the sluggish and noninclusive agricultural growth. Key to this is the need to create coexistence in commercial emerging farmers in order to put the agriculture and food sector on the new growth trajectory.

In the province we have entered into a formal agreement with the National Agricultural Marketing Council to implement this

UNREVISED HANSARD

AAMP and ensure that all value chain commitments are province specific, and farmer support is aligned to the national production scheme agenda. The collaboration aims to enhance value chain development, the commercialisation of agriculture production and improve market access, particularly for small-scale producers in the province.

The implementation seeks to improve the black share output from the current 13% to 19% by 2030. Hence the commitment to commercialise 100 farms this financial year. We have adopted a commodity-based declustering approach to enable production and product aggregation to achieve economies of scale and strengthen value chain development across districts in the Eastern Cape.

Furthermore, to ensure that the commercialisation programme gains momentum, we have partnered with development funding institutions through the entity Eastern Cape Rural Development Agency, ECRDA. To date, these partnerships have raised in excess of R365 million in blended finance funds.

We are driving the commercialisation route with the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development who, through their land development support grant, are supporting 26 farms to

UNREVISED HANSARD

strengthen infrastructure, production systems and value chain integration. Through the commercialisation of 100 farms, we are vigorously pursuing commodity value chain development, and I may mention a few interventions on this direction. For instance, on red meat, the low base of production in the province is as a result of finishing the processing within the Eastern Cape being far lower than other provinces with four cattle feedlots and nine high throughput abattoirs.

To address this anomaly, the department is aggressively embarking on developing systems and infrastructure that will enable the export of red meat — because we are known as the province that produces the best red meat ever. This includes partnerships with Ngqushwa local municipality in building Ngqushwa beef complex, construction of stock water systems, dipping facilities, animal handling facilities, fencing and animal disease control.

On wool and mohair, we have signed agreements with the Eastern Cape Communal Wool Growers Association, the National Wool Growers Association and Wool Empowerment Trust to ensure partnerships that will benefit all producers from the sector transformation programmes. We are investing in the

UNREVISED HANSARD

construction of sheering sheds as well as stock water provision across the province.

Grains and oil seeds are critical to South Africa’s agricultural economy in food security as staple food and as primary feeder to the livestock industry. In our province, yellow maize remains the dominant crop and has grown over the past five years. There has been a 12% increase in the planted area and 13% rise in production. Farmers in the province are diversifying their crops by including oil seeds like soybeans and canola. These grains are critical in the development of red meat and poultry sectors. Aggressive maize commercialisation is the foundation for sustainable protein production.

On citrus, the hon Minister Steenhuisen announced that, for the first time South Africa overtook Spain as the world’s largest exporter of citrus by a volume of 2,9 million tons exported in 2025. I am certain that the Eastern Cape province contributed immensely to that growth because we are the home of 26% of the area under citrus that can contribute 31% to citrus export. Our producers in Sundays River Valley and Peterson exceeded the industry average number of export cartons per full bearing hectare of 2025. This industry is

UNREVISED HANSARD

equally dependent on robust biosecurity and phytosanitary compliance systems.

To improve the competitiveness of this citrus industry, the department is partnering with Citrus Growers Association and the national Western Cape government to implement the cost-effective method of controlling the false codling moth, using the sterile insect technique in more than 4 500 hectares of citrus in the province.

Let me deal with the matter that is at the bottom of my heart, that of reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living. The Eastern Cape continues to face persistent challenges of food insecurity, with 73% of households facing some form of food insecurity. The main challenge faced by communities when it comes to food security is access to nutritious and adequate food at household level. Approximately 65% of households in the province rely on social grants as their main ... [Time expired.] ... Thank you, Deputy Chair.

Ms L P MHLONGO: Hon Chairperson, hon Minister and Deputy Minister, hon members and our fellow South Africans, the MK Party rises to participate in the debate on Budget Vote 29: Agriculture. This House is asked to approve R7,8 billion for

UNREVISED HANSARD

agriculture in the 2026-27 financial year. The government presents this budget as a budget for food security, transformation, growth, and rural development. But the lived reality in rural South Africa tells a different story.

The department's own annual performance plan, APP, admits that corruption, weak partnerships, overreliance on consultants, slow digitalisation, climate disasters and biosecurity failures are major threats to the sector. The government itself is admitting that the system is failing, yet the budget does not fundamentally change the reality.

IsiZulu:
Umnyango ukhuluma ngokukhula nokubandakanya kwawo wonke umuntu kudalwa amathuba omsebenzi, kodwa kuphi lokho kukhula? Ezolimo zifaka cishe u-2,5% kuphela kwi-GDP, kanti ukucutshungulwa kwezolimo nakho kwehlile. Ukuntuleka kwemisebenzi ezindaweni zasemakhaya kuphezulu ezifundazweni lapho ezolimo engabe ziphakeme khona

English:
The department says it wants to support farmers. Let us look at the numbers. Programme 3: Food Security and Support received R3,2 billion, nearly 42% of the department's

UNREVISED HANSARD

allocation. Yet, despite this, the department only targets to support 100 producers through the Blended Finance Scheme this year.

IsiZulu:

Kunjalo, uHulumeni uyavuma ukuthi kukhona abalimi abancane abangaphezu kuka-300 000 eNingizimu Afrika. Ukhuluma kanjani ngoguquko lapho kuyingxenye encane kuphela yabalimi abamnyama abakwazi ukuthola uxhaso lwezimali oluphusile.

English:

The select committee review itself warns that most smallholder farmers do not qualify for blended finance because they cannot satisfy private banking requirements. So, what happens in practice? The government transfers land without tractors, fencing, irrigation, market access, proper roads, or working working extension support.

IsiZulu:

Bese uHulumeni ekubiza ukuguquka lokho. Sihlalo, lokho akukhona ukuguquka, ...

English:

UNREVISED HANSARD

... it’s the relocation of poverty. The APP itself admits that the department still has no proper system tracking where farmers supported through the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, Casp, ever graduate into sustainable farming commercially. Billions are spent every year, but the government still cannot tell Parliament how many black farmers become financially independent through the programmes. This is a serious indictment on this department.

IsiZulu:

Sihlalo, ukuwa kwezempilo yezilwane nezitshalo kungenye inkinga enkulu. Iningizimu Afrika ibhekene nokunye ukuqhubuka okubi kakhulu kwesifo samatele emlandweni wanamuhla.

English:

Entire herds have been quarantined, export markets have been threatened, farmers have suffered devastating losses, yet the APP contains almost no measurable new targets responding to the national crisis. The committee review correctly points out that despite the government promising 80% vaccination coverage, 70% reduction of outbreaks and measurable herd immunity targets, there are no proper APP indicators showing how many outcomes will be achieved. How do you declare a national disaster but table a budget that behaves as if

UNREVISED HANSARD

nothing has changed? Inspection and quarantine services increased by 41%, yet biosecurity itself receives only R10 million, just 0,1% of the department's total budget.

IsiZulu:

Abasebenzi basemapulazini nabo bashiywe ngapandle kulesi sabelomali. Kulo lonke kwelaseNtshonalanga Koloni, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, nakwezinye izifundazwe, abasebenzi basaqhubeka nokuphila ezimweni zobumpofu ngenxa yokuntuleka kwezindlu, ezendle, nezokuthutha ezingafinyeleli kubona. Abasebenzi basemapulazini besifazane bayaqhubeka nokubhekana nokungaxhaswa nokuhlukunyezwa nokuxhashazwa. Kuyo yonke imiphakathi nasemapulazini iyaqhubeka nokungatholi usizo, ...

English:

... yet the budget says very little about improving the living conditions of these workers. The government speaks about transformation while workers remain trapped in the conditions that resemble the old labour system. Transformation without dignity for workers is exploitation in a new language. The collapse of rural infrastructure is now directly undermining food production. The select committee report identifies collapsing roads, weak electricity supply, failing

UNREVISED HANSARD

irrigation systems, and poor fencing and dysfunctional municipalities as a major obstacle for agricultural growth.

IsiZulu:

I-KwaZulu-Natal kuphela lapho izibalo sezingqalasizinda ze-Casp sehlile, sehliswe ngo-27%, kusukela ku-R198 million kuya ku-R145 million. Zincishiswa kanjani izingqalasizinda esifundazweni esikhulu kwezolimo kuleli, ngenkathi ukhuluma wathi uzosivikela? Abalimi ezindaweni eziningi zasemakhaya ayikwazi nokuya emakethe imikhiqizo yabo ngoba imigwaqo iyawohloka. Imikhiqiso iyabola ngaphambi kokuthi ifike kubathengi. Ukuhamba akuhambeki kahle, nokukhululeka kwezilwane zabo kuyaphazamiseka. Izinhlelo zokunisela izitshalo ziyahlukumezeka.

English:

The department must explain why the extension service is still in recovery.

IsiZulu:

Sihlalo, iqembu le-MK Party likholelwa ukuthi ezolimo kumele zibe isikhungo sokuvuselela umnotho wasemakhaya. Ezolimo kumele zidale imisebenzi. Ezolimo kumele zondle abantu bakithi. Ezolimo kumele zenze imiphakathi yasemakhaya ibe

UNREVISED HANSARD

nezimboni. Ezolimo kumele ziseke abakhiqhizi abamnyama ngezingqalasizinda zangempela, imishini, ukwesekeka kwezilwane ukufinyelela emanzini ezindaweni zokucutshungulwa kanye nokufikelela ezimakethe la bezodayisa khona.

English:

Not endless pilot projects, not endless consultant reports, not programmes that look good on presentation, while rural communities remain trapped in poverty. The people of South Africa cannot eat APP representations; they cannot survive on policy slogans, and they cannot build productive farms through paperwork and unimplemented plans.

The country needs decisive agricultural leadership that prioritises production, biosecurity, infrastructure, and food. Until public money produces real farming outputs, real jobs, functioning infrastructure, effective farmer supports and genuine transformation for black producers and farm workers, these budgets cannot claim to serve the people of South Africa. And for these reasons, the MK Party rejects.

Ms E C ROCKMAN (Free State): Hon Deputy Chairperson, good evening. Hon Minister, hon Deputy Ministers, and hon members, we appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this Budget

UNREVISED HANSARD

Vote debate. Agriculture in South Africa is mor than just an economic activity. It is a lifeline. It feeds our nation; it supports millions of jobs and sustains rural communities. It is intrinsically woven into the social, economic and moral fabric of our rural communities and economies.

The late Thomas Sankara once said and I quote, "He who feeds you, controls you."

We must depend on our own agriculture for our sustenance and sovereignty. A nation that can feed itself from a broad inclusive commercial agricultural base is a nation that can determine its own future. Strengthening agriculture and opening that agriculture to black farmers who have been waiting for generations for their turn is how we strengthen south Africa's sovereignty.

Agriculture in the Free State, matters to the entire nation. In 2025 South African agriculture did something remarkable. Whilst manufacturing contracted and construction marked its ninth consecutive year of decline, agriculture grew by 17,4% and added R134 billion into our national gross domestic product, GDP, that s according to Statistics SA in March this year.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Agriculture has indeed become one of the strongest job creators in our economy. The Free State was the decanter of that performance. We grew 41% of the nation’s maize 47,6% of its sunflower, 49,1% of its soya beans, 45,1% of its ground nuts and 31,4% of its commercial sorghum. Eighteen percent of the national cattle of head graces our veld and 20% of the nation’s sheep flock produce 8,2 million kilograms of raw wool.

When the Free State performs food prices stabilise, supply chain strengthens and the households across South Africa benefit. We commend the hon Minister and the national department for the dedication to ensure that our export diversification strategy is working.

This is evident from the evidence of 31% to Brazil, Russia, India, China and SA, Brics, plus countries, 21% to the United Kingdom, 9% to the European Union, EU, and 8% Southern African Development Communities, SADC. Global geopolitical tensions, the war in Ukraine and Iran, shifting tariff regime, supply chain disruptions in fertilizers, fuel and shipping have raised input costs for our farmers. Rising costs of fertilisers, fuel and animal feed, seed and agrochemicals have

UNREVISED HANSARD

forced producers to scale back delay investment or take on debt to maintain operations.

However, these challenges are also an opportunity. It is an opportunity to adopt precision farming, artificial intelligence, AI, and mechanisation that can transform efficiency. It is an opportunity to advance climate smart and regenerative practices that advance sustainability and unlock green financing. It is an opportunity to diversify into high-value crops, plant-based proteins and agroprocessing industries.

It is an opportunity to build the policy support, targeted subsidies and risk management tools that stabilise the sector and empower farmers. An opportunity to expand our sustainable use of natural resources and the green economy. Every constraint is an opportunity to an innovated or Development Finance Institutions, DFI, to contribute meaningfully to our broader sector.

Hon House Chairperson, with regards to Foot and Mouth Disease, FMD, during the Budget Vote debate in July last year, the Fre State had not recorded the positive FMD case. We highlighted the vulnerability of our province to FMD and other diseases

UNREVISED HANSARD

outbreak as a result of the central locality of the province. Soon after the first outbreak was indeed recorded. The scale of the FMD is contextualised by the projection that we will have to vaccinate approximately three million cattle around 18% of the national heard.

The current state of our responsiveness to the FMD in the Free State reflect the following: As of the 1st of June, there were a total number of 604 outbreaks in 19 of our local municipalities, the Fezile Dabi and Thabo Mufutsanyana Districts Municipalities remain the epicentre of the disease outbreak in the Free State. I think the hon Minister already mentioned that in the Free State as of the 1st of June, we have vaccinated 609 915 cattle. We fully support the investment in the Agricultural Research Council, ARC, and re-establishing our capacity to produce our own vaccines.

Our progress is made possible by a small team of veterinarians and animal health technicians assisted by veterinarians from the private sector. Various commodity organisations, the private sector, and organised agriculture has come on board to assist us with various veterinarian logistic requirements. We must appreciate the extraordinary dedication and commitment of

UNREVISED HANSARD

these officials and individuals who carry the frontline burden of the fight against FMD.

We have implemented a range of control measures including quarantining enforcement control movement within a designated 10 km zone, targeted vaccination campaigns, intensified surveillance and monitoring as well as biosecurity initiatives. We are in the process of establishing mobile quarantine handling facilities at four key points along our 485 km Lesotho Border. The facilities will fall under the control of our state veterinary services. The identified points include Manautsa which will cover the area up to Caledonspoort pickup bridge which will cover from Caledonspoort to Ficksburg, Maseru which will cover up to Ladybrand that ... [Inaudible.] ... Van Rooyen Saad and Seppuku and Magaling which will cover where there are disasters.

We are collaborating with multiple stakeholders similar to Monocle borders and the University of the Free State, the SA National Defence Force, SANDF, SA Police Service, SAPS, and the National Prosecuting Authority, NPA, the Border Management Authority, and SA Revenue Service, Sars, organised agriculture, some of our provincial departments as well as the

UNREVISED HANSARD

six borders municipalities, and we plan to further expand these mobile quarantine facilities prioritising districts at the epicentre of the outbreak.

The first of these facilities will be opened at Ladybrand within the foreseeable future. We re confident that our comprehensive and innovative approach has laid a solid foundation for our FMD response, but we are not complacent. Although we intend to support safe economic activity within the livestock sector it is significantly constraint by biosecurity requirements. We fully understand that our statistics do not reflect the enormity of the economical and psychological impact that MFD has caused our livestock farmers feedlots dairies in the broader sector.

Our only way forward is to continue to work together, ensure compliance through biosecurity measures and regulations and accelerate on the vaccination campaign. In doing so we will fast-track the return to positive trade conditions.

We reiterate the call that we made last year that there is a dire need for a specific financial injection into veterinary services in the public agricultural sector. It must be additional funding into the veterinary service not a

UNREVISED HANSARD

restructuring and the reshuffling of money within the existing grants.

When it comes to driving inclusive growth and job creation in 2025-26, we developed and implemented a comprehensive Provincial Farmer Register on which 8 094 farmers are now registered Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, Casp, supported 63 projects where at the Ilima/Letsema supported 19 projects. Our combined funding supported 25 woman-led projects and 24 youth-led projects across grains for the hoity culture, sunflowers, soya beans, red meat and geoprocessing. Forty-six individual farmers in grapes, oil seeds and hoity culture received comprehensive producer support and a further 2 218 farmers received extension advisory services.

Our support of small-scale producers is restrained by municipal lease agreements that do not meet the minimum requirements of Casp. This is an are where we have requested our local government sector to urgently address. We should equally not underestimate the outcry for access to land particularly by our young male and female farmers.

In addition, we need an urgent review of established farmer producer support units with and without the links to

UNREVISED HANSARD

agriparks. There is a continuous outcry for mechanisation and access to mechanisation whilst the so functionality of Financial Service Providers, FSP, use vary from completely dysfunctional and vandalised whilst others are of limited benefit to emerging farmers who cannot afford the rates and whose governance structures lack transparency and accountability. The link to agriparks remains a theory not translated to reality in many instances. In the Free State we have the Stringfontein, Sediba and Odendaalsrus, agriparks that remain dysfunctional. We request the hon Minister's urgent attention to this matter. Two hundred and two job opportunities were created through our Land Care Programmes. Conservation agriculture was successfully implemented at the Seotlong and Unicon Agricultural Schools. In 2026-27 we will continue to focus on agricultural land rehabilitation, the promotion of the conservation and agriculture practices, climate resilient agriculture production and green jobs. We will rehabilitate 10 and halve thousand hectares and employ 700 people in the green jobs. We will contribute to the reduction in soil erosion and in improve soil health by ensuring that 2002 hectares of cultivated land. Thank you very much. [Time expired.]

UNREVISED HANSARD

Ms S L SITHOLE: Hon Deputy Chairperson, let me give my greetings to your good self, the Chief Whip of the NCOP, hon House Chairpersons, hon Minister and Deputy Minister, MECs that are on the virtual platform, hon delegates that are here in the House, ...

Setswana:

... baagi ba Matlosana, baagi ba Aforikaborwa, dumelang.

English:

There's an African proverb that says: "A farm neglected in the rainy season yield hunger in the dry season". This proverb reminds us that if we waste opportunities to prepare and work early, we will suffer later when we need the results. In his speech at the Zimbabwe Agricultural Show in 1999, President Nelson Mandela said:

> It is our responsibility to ensure that food is attainable for all our people, poor and rich. This requires a will to transform relationships to land and agriculture, to broaden access to land and empower farming communities previously dispossessed by apartheid.

UNREVISED HANSARD

After the fall of apartheid in 1994, South Africa made agriculture a pillar of food security and economic growth. Today, agriculture remains one of the most important pillars of our nation's development. It is not only essential for food production and food security, but it also has immense potential to create jobs, stimulate rural development and grow our economy.

At a time when unemployment, poverty and inequality continue to confront many of our people, the expansion of the agricultural sector offers a meaningful opportunity to restore dignity and livelihood to millions of South Africans. Yet, this sector, despite its potential, continues to face serious headwinds, including the slow response to the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak, rising input and fuel costs, inadequate support for small-scale and emerging farmers, and the poor state of agricultural colleges.

Without practical solution, we risk neglecting our farmers in the rainy season and facing hunger in the dry season. This moment requires deliberate focus and targeted intervention that empowers emerging farmers, support rural communities, and ensure that the benefits of agricultural growth are shared by all, not only big businesses, but every South African.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The future of South Africa's agriculture sector must anchor in the continuous production of skilled farmers and ensuring support for emerging farmers, especially the masses of our people who were excluded from benefiting from this critical sector because of the colour of their skin and as designed by the architects of apartheid because of where they were located. It is therefore unacceptable that the country's 11 agricultural colleges continue to face severe underfunding, inadequate infrastructure, and poor training conditions. Hon Minister, while we have noted your assurance to the principals and students at this institution, what they need now is decisive action, not mere reassurance.

The foot-and-mouth disease outbreak has had a devastating impact on a small scale and communal farmers across the country. From income losses to the constant fear of an uncertain future, the burden of these farmers has been immersed. The slow rollout of vaccination program has only worsened an already desperate situation. Small-scale farmers in Tsetse village outside Mahikeng have reportedly resorted to using Dettol in attempt to control the disease. This demonstrates the level of desperation among affected communities. We welcome the department's effort to produce

UNREVISED HANSARD

4 million vaccines from international suppliers. However, this vaccine must reach farmers without delay.

The transformation of the agricultural sector remains a critical pillar of democratic South Africa. The Freedom Charter declared that the land shall be shared amongst those who work on it; a principle that directly addresses the need for effective state support for farmers. A key driver of transformation within the department is the provision of conditional grants to support small-scale farmers. In this regard, we welcome the allocation of R3,288 billion, representing 41,9% of the appropriate budget to food security and farmer support programs. Despite this, we remain concerned about the absence of measurable targets for conditional grant and sector transformation, as well as the insufficient fund for biosecurity and food initiatives.

Hon Deputy Chairperson, you must agree that leaving small-scale farmers behind will only weaken the agricultural sector as a whole. We therefore welcome the measure of the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme and Ilima-Lizema/Letsema grant to reduce administrative burdens and duplication. Similarly, we support the introduction of the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Program grant pillar, which

UNREVISED HANSARD

aims to improve access to production input and mechanization. However, strong monitoring and oversight are required to ensure that these grants genuinely reach smallholder farmers.

Setswana:

Re kopa balemirui ba ba potlana go ikopanya le lefapha gore ba kgone go unya dithuso tse puso e di beileng kwa thoko

English:

A country that cannot manufacture its own agricultural input remains vulnerable to external shocks that drives up production costs. The ongoing war in Ukraine has underscored the urgent need for South Africa to develop local capacity to produce cultural input, thereby shielding farmers and consumers from global disruptions.

Fertilizer prices in South Africa increased by up to 59% following geopolitical disruptions in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East. Overall, agricultural input costs rose by 30% to 50%. These rising costs place immense pressure on producers, with a burden ultimately passed on to consumers. It is therefore necessary for South Africa to revive Foskor to strengthen domestic fertilizer production and reduce reliance on expensive imports.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Small Scale Farmers in Ga-Maja in Limpopo, Dinokwana in the North West, and Manguzu in KwaZulu-Natal depends heavily on extension services from department to access climate and market information that enables them to compete in an increasingly demanding agricultural sector. We therefore welcome adoption of the digital extension services which will introduce a hybrid support model to modernize extension services. If implemented effectively and on time, this intervention could reach more than 180 000 farmers with real-time climate and market data. This is precisely the type of support envisaged in the Freedom Charter.

South Africa cannot build a prosperous nation while rural communities remain trapped in poverty and farmers are left without support. Agriculture is more than an economic sector. It is a source of dignity, employment, food security, and national stability. The decision we make today will determine whether the future generation inherit a thriving agricultural economy or a weakened sector unable to feed and sustain our people.

As I conclude, this is our rainy season. It is time to invest boldly, support emerging farmers, strengthen biosecurity, modernize agricultural training, and ensure no farmer is left

UNREVISED HANSARD

behind. If we act with urgency and purpose, agriculture can become a powerful engine for inclusive growth and a shared prosperity. As the ANC, we support Budget Vote 29.

Xitsonga:

Ndzi khensile.

English:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you very much, hon Sithole. Hon delegates, before I call the next speaker, it appears that the person that controls the air conditioning has now got hold of the sound. So if I can ask the person who controls the volume in the Chamber, please, you've taken it from too loud to too soft. If you can find a happy medium, then we can follow the debate a lot more closely.

Ms N G KEKANA (Limpopo): Hon Chairperson of the NCOP, Ms Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane, the hon Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen, the hon chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Ms Dina Pule, and all hon members of the NCOP, I stand before this august House today on behalf of Limpopo, a province whose heartbeat is intrinsically tied to the soil.

UNREVISED HANSARD

We welcome the progressive budget speech presented by the Minister. We consistently maintain that a budget is not merely a collection of figures, but a definite plan to realise our vision of a prosperous and sustainable agricultural sector.

As Limpopo, we echo the sentiment that agriculture sits at the absolute centre of our economic strategy. As we mark the beginning of Youth Month today, this budget must aggressively confront the increase in youth unemployment in terms of Statistics SA's first quarter survey.

When the national sector exports 2,9 million tons of citrus, overtaking Spain as the world's largest exporter by volume, it is the orchards of Greater Letaba, Tzaneen, Makhado and the values of Limpopo that are feeding that global demand, contributing 40% of the national citrus output. We are not a marginal player. We are the engine room of South Africa's horticultural success, contributing 7,5% of national GDP.

Minister, you correctly assert that growth without inclusion is unsustainable. While we celebrate that the share of value produced by black participants in commercial value chains has risen to 13%, we must aggressively push this frontier further. In Limpopo, growing the pie means ensuring that the

UNREVISED HANSARD

smallholder farmer in Sekhukhune, Vhembe or Mopane is not just a primary producer, but a shareholder in the value chain. After all, land is not simply an economic asset, but also an identity and dignity. It is the foundation upon which people and communities prosper and build their future.

We welcome the R924 million allocation to programme four for economic development, trade and marketing. Limpopo will strategically align its provincial programmes to ensure this fund directly helps our local co-operatives to overcome the rigid tariff and nontariff barriers that lock them out of international markets.

Our packhouses must be upgraded to meet three global phytosanitary standards so that the benefits of expanded citrus and avocado protocols to China flow directly into the pockets of our rural communities.

However, in the Limpopo province there is a high need for functional agro-hubs and fresh produce markets per agro-ecological zones in Sekhukhune, specialising in grain, while in Vhembe and Mopane, specialising in fruits and vegetables and the potato belt of Capricorn.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Furthermore, the R9,8 billion unlocked through the Blended Finance Scheme is a lifeline. We will work closely with the Land Bank and the Industrial Development Corporation, IDC, to ensure that emerging farmers in our province who historically struggle with collateral can access these funds seamlessly to transition into robust commercial entities, because when a farmer cannot use their land as collateral, they cannot access production credit. With programme three receiving the lion's share of R3,2 billion, Limpopo stands ready to absorb and implement these resources where they matter most.

Access to real-time information is the modern divider between success and failure in farming. We give our full support to the national initiative to introduce a hybrid extension model backed by digital platforms. In our vast, predominantly rural province, our extension officers are often stretched thin across massive distances. Equipping them with digital, real-time data on weather patterns, pest movements and market prices will turn every extension office into a high-tech advisory hub. This is how we modernise without leaving our workers behind.

We also embrace the pluralistic extension model integrating government support with commodity organisations like organised

UNREVISED HANSARD

agriculture and agribusinesses as the only way to build a resilient ecosystem. We commend the Minister’s budget which will absorb 85 internship learners in our province for animal health technician positions.

However, hon Minister, there is a need to maximise capacity for agricultural extension officers in order to bridge the gap between smallholder farmers, particularly in rural villages, and established commercial farmers in order to enhance production.

Biosecurity is not a theoretical debate for Limpopo. It is a frontline battle. As a border province, we are the gateway to the continent and consequently the first line of defence against transboundary animal diseases. We highly appreciate the allocation of R2,5 billion to programme two, and specifically the R120 million from the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme dedicated to the war against foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks ... severely restricts our livestock farmers from accessing lucrative commercial markets. Hence, the need for cross-border security, including fences along the SA National Parks, SANParks, and most importantly, the need for abattoirs in the red line zone for market access.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The news that the Agricultural Research Council is expanding local vaccine production with a new 1 000 litre fermenter gives us immense hope. The Limpopo province continues to prioritise vaccination surveillance, traceability, movement control and outbreak response in affected and high-risk areas, thus ... vaccinating 357 000 animals and committing to achieve 80% vaccination by December 2026.

We note with high concern the scientific warnings regarding a potential El Niño event developing in mid-2026. Limpopo is a water-scarce province and our summer crops are highly vulnerable to prolonged dry spells. We commit to utilising early warning systems and directing our provincial resources towards climate-smart agriculture, drought-resistant crop varieties and efficient water management technologies.

The Limpopo province is leveraging on biofuels, not simply as an energy intervention, but ... represents one of the few policy levers that simultaneously drives rural employment, agro-processing and industrial development.

The Limpopo province will contribute immensely on the two per cent blending target with the potential to create approximately 25 000 jobs largely in rural areas. For grain

UNREVISED HANSARD

farmers facing low prices, high stockpiles and constrained export markets, biofuels introduce a structural demand mechanism that can absorb surplus production and stabilise prices.

However, international experience is instructive. The Minister has highlighted the pivotal role of Brics in countries like Brazil and India, where the industry has evolved into a market-responsive system and mills are able to switch between sugar and ethanol production, while on the other hand actively managing food security risks through policy controls and pricing mechanisms. However, the evolving global political landscape, including ongoing discussions around the African Growth and Opportunity Act, Agoa, reminds us that we cannot afford to be solely dependent on international trade agreements for survival.

While we remain hopeful that diplomatic negotiations will yield positive outcomes, this should serve as a wake-up call and must leverage on diversifying our markets, thus strengthening intra-African trade and focussing on self-sufficiency.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Our state entities are central to delivering on this agenda and they must be fit for purpose. Entities like Eskom, through the National Energy Regulator of SA, Nersa, must come in handy in reducing energy tariffs to the already burdened farmers who are paying the price in terms of their escalating fuel prices due to global instability.

Agriculture has always been a sector of quiet resilience, but in the years ahead it must become a sector of deliberate growth; growth that is inclusive, growth that is export-orientated, and growth that translates into jobs, investment and opportunity.

In the province, we are driving inclusive growth by investing in infrastructure through Revitalisation of Agriculture and Agro-processing Value Chain, RAAVC, projects like Majeje Citrus, Makgoba *a*vocados, a youth-led agro-processor producing yoghurt with sweet potatoes and the resuscitation of Zebediela Citrus as part of a public-private partnership.

The President has set a clear target to increase a value-add in the sector by 30% and to unlock 300 000 jobs across the value chain. This budget is directed towards this objective,

UNREVISED HANSARD

not through rhetoric, but through the steady work of building markets, strengthening institutions, supporting farmers and deepening value chains. Limpopo will ensure that the land is shared among those who till it, fully realising the enduring process of our Freedom Charter. Limpopo therefore supports this Budget Vote. I thank you.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: Hon House Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, all committees, hon members who come directly from the provinces of our country, we are honoured to have an opportunity to present this budget amongst the people who are not just telling a story about the province but are directly coming from those provinces. It is our hope and desire that those people whom we are talking to here, hon members, are going directly back to those villages, those regions of our government and our people so that they know that while we deal with a lot of issues, there are opportunities to stop and think about their sufferings. These sufferings are tabled through by various eloquent people who say in my village or in my municipality this budget is dedicated to the people of my village and wards.

We are hoping that next time we will be in a position to go around telling people of what we actually pledged and said,

UNREVISED HANSARD

through the leadership of the Department of Agriculture, led by our Minister John Steenhuisen that this is what has been done. The question we must ask ourselves is, will this happen? That is all I am about to say. I also want to say that agriculture is as old as the people in the whole world. There have never been human beings without agriculture because agriculture ...

Afrikaans:

... is die padkos.

English:

One would say, as long as you are taking a journey there is a need to refill and reenergise that body that is walking. It is therefore imperative for us to stop and think, all of us ... I want to accept all the criticisms that this is not well, and the information was shared with us. This is done but it is not really serving our goal and our people where we come from. My understanding is that, these matters are raised with the leadership of the Department of Agriculture as Members of Parliament and as the executive including our director-general who is present here. This means that we do not have to be resistant when we are supposed to correct. As we are all here, we will take your advice.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Initially, I said we are coming from the levels of our land. So, we cannot say there is water when there is no water. If you say there is no water, you must sit down and ask where did you get water before. We got it from the streams and you got it from anywhere. But where do you think we should go? This debate is a very healthy one for me. We need say that some things went wrong in our country. The face of the rural farmers in the traditional land will always be that of the poor. It has become now not their nicknames but their real church names. My church name is Rosemary but their name is poor rural farmer. Others are Agribusiness who are well-developed farmers.

This is real and we should accept these realities, hon members, through you Chair because you acknowledge these different categories of farmers by comparing others having wonderful produce. You do not need to be a genius to see that this land is well taken cared for. This is a great product you are proud to send abroad to sell. This is a very big land that you see however when you talk about rural poor farmers you notice the size of their land from which they are trying to produce. The land that is no longer productive no matter how much you work on it.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The pain goes down to my heart when I say the whole of the other week, we were distributing small hoes, picks and shovels to smaller farmers. They would be so excited that they cried for giving them a hoe, a fork spade or small things and a packet of seeds. But when we walked around where they stay ... I was in the Western Cape, hon Minister, in that area they literally staying. This cannot be our South Africa. Those people are ours, or everyone, we are actually brothers and sisters as in our own country. No one will be chased or is going away except that we are going to find means of developing transformative policies that will reduce the hunger and starvation from others. We will pull them out using our own ability to develop the transformative policies that seek to address what the whole world is worried about. What they are worried about in the world is our inequality. This can no longer be afforded.

Time is now that, whatever we do, we do need to change the pattern of funding farmers. The problem is when we also say the haves must continue to have. Have-nots must continue to have nothing. Why do I say so? I am making an introspection to what I am implementing as part of this government. The issue of calling those who are producing to form a co-operative in the same vicinity, in the same area where others have nothing

UNREVISED HANSARD

and aspire and desire to join, but they do not have what it takes. That talks to the Development Financial Institutions, DFIs of the world, where the Land Bank will not give you anything if you are not bankable. Do not even go that route to smell what is good because you will become hungry and hungrier. You will see the queues, you will see everything being signed and when you come to the same teller, you will be told that only those who can afford and those who are bankable.

Why do we allow that evil type of arrangement? Can we say others must go out while we are about to dish? All of us in this House, we are able to choose what we are going to eat today or tomorrow but others have no choice. They will eat what is available. I am calling for a situation where we know that the funds have been allocated ...

IsiXhosa:

... ngumthetho ...

English:

... it is law today, even the MECs, we do share these feelings when we walk amongst our own people we are sent to serve them, but there is something called law. This is a

UNREVISED HANSARD

country of law. You cannot decide because of your own consciousness, knowing that these women I saw in the Western Cape, I am not going to identify their area for dignity purposes. They are not farm workers anymore. It is their grandparents that were working in the farms. That they are no longer working in the farms, they are out of the farms.

So, by working in a farm you contribute to yourself having accommodation and something like a home. They are not in the municipal land; they are just somewhere out there.

As we walked along visiting their homes, we found very good breeds of pigs, some with piglets and so on. We asked where these are being kept? They said they keep them in the shacks next to where they stay so that they are not stolen. I walked around and I asked how many pigs are here? They said 20. Each one having a smaller number. Why can’t we build on that? Martin Luther is actually clear when he said:

> Now that you are free, go to the people, learn from them and build on what you have?

UNREVISED HANSARD

Chairperson, there is nothing to argue. I am honest, it is on this table that we must agree that in one way or another, rural farmers, people who are disadvantaged are actually ...

IsiXhosa:

... ekutshixizeni kwamazinyo kodwa sikhona ngabakuthi. Ayikho le nto ethi umhlaba awukho.

English:

I once conducted research, many years ago, that showed that land that was not commercial land, only in the Eastern Cape, was 1,5 million. Even today, it lies fallow and we are still accused of being lazy.

IsiXhosa:

Hayi bayonqena aba.

English:

What was brought to their doorsteps? Principles of learning are very clear. You can learn only when that particular programme is going to change your life tomorrow. That is adult learning. If you would say at my age, which is above 70, I must go and study to be a doctor, I will tell you, when I finish that study I will be dead. Why should I start to do

UNREVISED HANSARD

that? But if you are giving me pig feed and a pig stye, I will have funds from the next market and I will continue to grow. I will attend that particular school and not the one that gives more time in school and less time of practical work. This is what is happening to our people.

Even at the end of the term, I am not intending to go to study, because that will be too late. I think so. For me, is to agree. All we need is to learn also from indigent knowledge. Our people were having cows and all those animals ...

IsiXhosa:

... babesenga.

English:

They had milk. [Time expired.]

Ms H S BOSHOFF: Hon House Chair, hon Minister, hon Deputy Minister, hon members, fellow South Africans, good day. Agriculture remains one of the most critical pillars of our economy, food security and rural stability. It is not merely about production on farms; it is about jobs, exports,

UNREVISED HANSARD

livelihoods, and the sustainability of entire rural communities.

This Budget Vote comes at a time when the sector continues to face immense pressure from rising input costs, infrastructure failures and market uncertainty. Yet despite these challenges, we are also seeing determined interventions from the department and the Minister to stabilise and protect the sector.

The acceleration of the national Foot and Mouth Disease vaccination programme is welcomed. As of today, South Africa has secured and imported approximately 13,5 million vaccine doses within just four months, and last week 3,5 million vaccine doses of the Biogénesis Bagó vaccine from Argentina arrived in the country. Additionally, the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority, SAHPRA, has approved the section 21 application for Dunevax to import 14 million doses of Dollvet vaccine, with 4 million arriving this month. This intervention is aimed at protecting our national herd of approximately 14 million cattle, stabilising the livestock industry, and restoring confidence in the agricultural sector.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The Minister has correctly indicated that provinces must move with urgency to vaccinate as many animals as possible and is encouraged that provinces are increasingly coming to the table and working collaboratively with the Minister to curb the outbreak. However, vaccines alone will not solve the problem if provincial veterinary services, animal health technicians, and implementation systems fail to respond effectively on the ground.

To date, government has spent approximately R494 million on vaccine procurement and deployment, vaccinating nearly 4,4 million animals which makes effective implementation and rapid vaccination rollouts absolutely critical. Hon members, you will agree that this is a major step in protecting livestock, farmers and agricultural growth.

The recent court processes surrounding private vaccine procurement must also be viewed within the broader context of government attempting to ensure that South Africa’s biosecurity response remains co-ordinated, traceable, and aligned with international standards. While the legal process highlighted areas requiring faster implementation and flexibility, it also reinforced the importance of maintaining

UNREVISED HANSARD

a regulated national framework that protects export credibility and animal health compliance systems.

Despite difficult global conditions, South African agriculture continues to demonstrate remarkable resilience and export strength. South Africa’s agricultural exports increased by 11% during the first quarter of 2026, reaching approximately $3,7 billion despite continued logistics and port challenges.

Within this growth, South Africa has now surpassed Spain as the world’s leading citrus exporter. This demonstrates what becomes possible when farmers, exporters, and government work together with a focused growth agenda.

Agriculture continues to position itself as one of the few sectors capable of generating export earnings, sustaining rural economies and contributing meaningfully toward economic growth and employment.

The Annual Performance Plan, APP, for 2026-27 also places important emphasis on improving market access, strengthening agroprocessing, modernising extension services and building climate resilient agriculture. These are important interventions because the future sustainability of agriculture

UNREVISED HANSARD

will depend not only on production, but also on innovation, competitiveness and the ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

The department’s growing focus on climate smart agriculture, research partnerships, and improved farmer support systems is therefore welcomed. The modernisation of extension support, including the exploration of digital platforms to improve farmer access to information and support services, has the potential to significantly improve productivity, particularly for small scale and emerging farmers.

Continued investment into agricultural research and scientific capability through institutions such as the Agricultural Research Council, ARC, also remains critical. Food security and agricultural sustainability will increasingly depend on innovation, vaccine development, and stronger disease management systems.

However, serious concerns remain. Farmers continue to battle deteriorating rural roads, rail and port inefficiencies, escalating electricity and fuel costs, water insecurity and weak municipal service delivery. These challenges directly

UNREVISED HANSARD

affect competitiveness, profitability, and ultimately food prices for ordinary South Africans.

Government cannot create jobs on its own. Government must create an environment that enables economic growth, investment and agricultural expansion. That means functional infrastructure, efficient logistics systems, reduced red tape, reliable veterinary services and policy certainty.

Food security cannot be separated from farmer sustainability. If farmers collapse under rising costs and failing infrastructure, food prices rise, exports decline and rural economies suffer. For this reason, this Budget Vote is supported because agriculture remains central to economic recovery, export growth, food security and rural employment.

The committee therefore encourages continued co-ordination between national government, provinces and municipalities to ensure that programmes move beyond planning and are translated into practical delivery on the ground. I thank you.

Mr N P MASIPA (Western Cape): Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, Deputy Minister, Mme Capa, hon members and Director-General, we debate this budget vote when the Western Cape agricultural

UNREVISED HANSARD

sector has been battered by weather conditions, beyond anything many farmers have experienced in their lifetimes. Floods and storms have devastated farms, disrupted production and placed immense pressure on farming communities. This is not merely an agricultural challenge; it is a humanitarian and economic crisis. The weather has once again reminded us that climate change is real. We can debate the causes, but we cannot deny the consequences.

As former United States of America, President Barack Obama, once said, "We are the first generation to feel the effects of climate change and the last generation that can do something about it". We therefore debate this budget against a backdrop of enormous challenges, extreme weather, shrinking profit margins and struggling farmers. As chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Agriculture, my journey through the valleys, farming districts and rural communities of this province delivered one consistent message, we need help.

Farmers are not standing with folded arms waiting for government; they are adapting and innovating. They understand that their livelihoods, their workers and entire rural economies is dependent on the success of this sector. But they also have a message for Parliament, support us. Despite

UNREVISED HANSARD

immense pressures, South African agriculture has demonstrated extraordinary resilience. The sector has survived geopolitical instability, volatile markets and increasing trade barriers. In reality, our farmers have been fighting two wars simultaneously.

The first is the geopolitical conflict that has driven up fuel, fertiliser and agricultural input costs across the globe. The second is the growing burden of phytosanitary barriers imposed by some of our trading partners, particularly the European Union’s phytosanitary requirements. These compliance measures have become increasingly costly and place significant pressure on citrus producers who are already operating under difficult economic conditions. Let us place this challenge into perspective.

While shipping agricultural products to China is often cheaper than exporting to Europe or the United States of America, freight costs are only one component of the export equation. Exporters to the United States face higher logistic costs due to the longer transit times, port charges and regulatory requirements. China often remains the most cost-effective destination for many bulk commodities and citrus export.

UNREVISED HANSARD

However, South Africa should be extremely cautious about imposing additional costs beyond freight.

The Western Cape farmers are already carrying the burden of rising input costs, unreliable logistics, deteriorating infrastructure, electricity constraints, water challenges, biosecurity compliance requirements and port inefficiencies. Government’s priority should not be to shift more costs onto producers; government’s priority should be to reduce the cost of doing business. Every rent lost through inefficiencies at our ports is a rent taken away from investment, expansion and job creation and food production as well.

If South Africa is serious about growing exports, strengthening rural economies and creating jobs, then the focus must be on improving logistics and lowering the overall cost of trade. Our farmers should compete on the quality of their products, not be handicapped by the failures of logistics system that is increasingly becoming the biggest threat to our exporters ambitions. South African agriculture has potential to feed more people and more revenue from export and create thousands of jobs.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The question before us is simple. Will Transnet remove obstacles to growth, or will it continue allowing inefficiency to erode our competitive advantage? We welcome the opening of new export opportunities and the expansion of access to international market. In particular, we welcome the continued growth of citrus export to the People's Republic of China following the successful amendment of cold treatment protocols, and we thank the Minister and the department for that. Hon Minister, we also commend you and your team. South Africa has for the first time overtaken Spain as the world's largest citrus exporter by volume, exporting approximately 2,9 million tonnes of citrus in 2025.

That achievement is a testament to the determination of our farmers, workers, exporters and agricultural institution and government that works with farmers. But opening markets is only half the battle. The real question is whether the benefits of the market access flow through the entire value chain from the peghouse worker to the emerging farmer, from the exporter to the smallholder, seeking an opportunity to participate in global markets? This brings me to one of the greatest threats facing agricultural growth, which is logistics.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The port of Cape Town has once again demonstrated that it is struggling to cope. Let us be honest, the problem is not the wind; the problem is that the port is struggling to keep up with the pace on the economic output of the Western Cape. That is fundamentally different problem. The Western Cape continues to outperform every province in agricultural production and export. The Western Cape is number one in governance, the agricultural export, deciduous fruit production, in wine production and in the table grape production. Through decisive action, the Western Cape has demonstrated, once again, leadership in responding to biosecurity threats, which brings me to Programme 2.

Programme 2, which is covering biosecurity research and natural resource management, has been allocated R2,5 billion. A substantial portion of this funding is directed towards strengthening diagnostics, research, export compliance, and disease control management. We commend Minister for spending R494 million while still making additional allocation to expand vaccination programmes. I hope that hon Montwedi is listening. This reflects both the scale of the challenge and the seriousness with which we are protecting South Africa’s livestock.

UNREVISED HANSARD

In addition, R120 million from the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, CASP, has been ring-fenced to fight Foot-and-Mouth Disease, FMD. It is important that hon Montwedi understand the distinction between national and provincial responsibilities. Unlike other failing provinces that are effectively in intensive care when it comes to disease control and agricultural governance, the DA-led Western Cape government understands its legal responsibilities.

Hon Montwedi, the Animal Disease Act 35 of 1984, places clear obligations on provinces. It does not merely grant powers. It imposes a duty to prevent the spread of disease, manage outbreaks, implement quarantines, and protect agricultural production. That is exactly what the Western Cape government did. We acted decisively; we enforced movement control; we implemented roadblocks and inspection; we intensified surveillance and monitoring; we traced outbreaks; we enforced quarantine; we co-ordinated municipalities, veterinarians, law enforcement agencies and disaster management structures.

When the threat emerged, joint operation centres were activated immediately, ensuring that farmers and stakeholders received accurate, reliable, and timely information. This is what capable provincial and local government looks like; this

UNREVISED HANSARD

is what accountability looks like, and this is what happens when the government understands that protecting agriculture means protecting jobs, food security and economic growth. The DA, therefore, welcomes the Department of Agriculture's suggested allocation of R7,8 billion for the 2026-27 financial year.

This budget reflects strategic investment in agricultural growth, food security, biosecurity, and expansion of exports. The allocation includes R3,2 billion for food security and support services to strengthen extension services, farmer support, and community food security; R2,5 billion for production, biosecurity, natural resources, including disease control, diagnostics, and export compliance; R924 million was allocated for economic development, trade, and marketing to expand market access and overcome trade barriers. The DA supports this budget because it recognises the fundamental truth that agriculture is not merely a sector, but it is a job creator, a poverty fighter, a rural development strategy and food security as well.

Agriculture remains one of Western Cape's greatest opportunities for economic growth. The task before us is now very simple. Protect our farmers, strengthen biosecurity,

UNREVISED HANSARD

which Minister Steenhuizen is embarking on that, fix logistics and unleash the full potential of South African agriculture. That is how we grow jobs, exports, economy and how we build a prosperous South Africa. With that said, the DA and the Western Cape Provincial Parliament support this budget. Thank you, Minister.

Mr H J VAN DEN BERG: Hon Chairperson, Ministers, permanent and other delegates, and the citizens of South Africa, I rise on behalf of the FF Plus to address Vote 29, Agriculture. As a political party that stands for productive farmers, rural communities and food security for all South Africans, we view this budget with deep concern. South Africa's agricultural sector remains one of the few pillars that is still supporting our economy, yet this budget treats agriculture as a mere afterthought. The national allocation for Vote 29 is less than 0,3% of the total national budget. When we include money from elsewhere, such as provincial equitable share and conditional grants, overall consolidated spending on agriculture is still less than 1% of the total government budget.

This is a clear sign of the lack of importance this government attaches to this economic sector. To make it worse, 57% of the funds allocated to the Department of Agriculture is then

UNREVISED HANSARD

transferred to entities such as the Land Bank, the Agricultural Research Council, and provinces through the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, Casp. However, these funds and grants follow with weak targets and even weaker monitoring. This budget is misaligned with agriculture’s critical role in driving inclusive growth, job creation, and lowering the cost of living. However, we believe that more can and must be done with the funds available. The FF Plus is particularly alarmed by the chronic underfunding of biosecurity in the past and even now.

Despite the repeated and devastating foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks that have crippled the livestock industry and export earnings, the biosecurity subprogram received a mere 0,1% of the total South African budget for the year 2026-27. Programme 3 on food security and support has also seen its budget decline. True food sovereignty will also not be achieved through endless funding of failing Communal Property Association, CPA, farming projects. Successful farming requires secure property rights, reduced red tape, access to modern technology, and government support for all productive farmers, regardless of race. Mother tongue extended services and practical training are far more valuable than ideological targets and should be prioritised.

UNREVISED HANSARD

We further note slow progress on digitalisation in the department. This is essential to prevent programme and grant double-dipping, ghost workers, and poor oversight of provincial administrations. The industry highlights the lack of digital systems and helpful staff, leading, for example, to poor implementation of Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act 36 due to backlogs. Oversight visits repeatedly show a stark contrast in the economic sector. On the one hand, well-functioning commercial farms, and on the other hand, many struggling state-funded projects on the other particularly, the projects on the other particularly communal property associations, where internal conflicts stifle individual motivation, personal initiative, and productivity. These characteristics are crucial to agricultural excellence.

In the NCOP, our duty is to ensure that national budgets translate into real provincial outcomes. We therefore call for stronger monitoring of all transfers to provinces and the Land Bank, with clear enforceable targets and measurable milestones and consequences. The FF Plus supports genuine efforts to strengthen biosecurity, improve food security, and promote sustainable production. We urge the department to deliver

UNREVISED HANSARD

detailed implementation plans, greater transparency, and tangible results in the coming year. I thank you.

Mr B J FARMER: Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, and hon members, I greet you in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. What the hon Masipa chose not to mention as the Western Cape province in protecting farmers means protecting white dominance in the agricultural sector. He also fails to mention that the Western Cape is not first in taking care of subsistence farmers. They are actually last. Today, Chairperson, agriculture is not only about farms; it is about food on the table, jobs in rural towns, and dignity for our farm workers.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon Farmer, can you take your seat, please? Hon Masipa, on what are you rising?

Mr N P MASIPA (Western Cape): House Chair, I am rising to ask for your protection. Hon members must speak through you, not directly to each other.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Indeed, I don’t think he directed a comment to you. He referenced you in his comments. But please, hon Farmer, if you can continue.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Mr B J FARMER: Hon Chair, ears are made for a reason. It is about the small farmer trying to survive, the commercial farmer trying to keep production going, and the mother in the shop asking why basic food is becoming more expensive. Agriculture is one of the most important sectors in South Africa because when agriculture suffers, every household feels it.

We note the allocation of R7,8 billion to the Department of Agriculture for the 2026-27 financial year. The money must not disappear into administration alone. It must become visible support in communities. It must become vaccines for livestock, support for emerging farmers, and become working laboratories, stronger biosecurity, improved market access, and practical help for farmers who are carrying this country's food system. Hon Members, we must speak honestly about food and milk disease. This is not a small issue. It is a national agricultural emergency that affects livestock farmers, dairy farmers, beef exports, rural jobs, and food prices. When cattle cannot move, farmers lose income, exports are blocked, the economy loses value, and when disease spreads, rural communities suffer. When production costs rise, consumers pay more at the till.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The PA welcomes the move toward mass vaccination and local vaccine production, but we must be honest. This response must be faster, better co-ordinated, and properly monitored. Farmers cannot be left confused. Provinces cannot act in isolation. Small farmers cannot be placed at the back of the line. Biosecurity must become a national priority, not an afterthought.

We also call for stronger support to small-scale and emerging farmers. Too often government speaks about transformation in agriculture, but the support does not match the words. If we are serious about transformation, then we must vote for farmers who can compete, produce, and grow. We must not create dependency; we must create capacity. The PA believe that agriculture must be used to rebuild rural communities and economies. Too many rural towns are dying because production, processing, and markets are disconnected. When small farmers produce vegetables, let schools, hospitals, and correctional facilities buy from them where possible. Government procurement must support local producers.

We must also speak about farm workers. Farm workers are the backbone of the agricultural economy. They work in difficult conditions. Many live far from services. Many struggle with

UNREVISED HANSARD

low wages, seasonal insecurity, poor housing, and limited opportunities for their children. The PA believes in fairness. We support farmers, but we also support the dignity of workers.

Agriculture must not become a place where people work hard but remain trapped in poverty. Give their lives, and after retirement the farmers can put their belongings on the street without a place to go, as we have seen in the Western Cape. We need better enforcement of labour rights, better living conditions, and stronger skills development for farm workers and their families. A strong agricultural sector must benefit everyone in the chain.

Climate change is another reality we cannot ignore. Droughts, floods, heat waves, and extreme weather are no longer future warnings. They are already affecting production. Farmers need practical climate support, water infrastructure, drought-resistant crops, disaster relief that reaches people on time, and early warning systems that are easy to understand and act on. When disasters hit agriculture, the impact does not stay on the farm. It reaches the shelves of the household budget and the national economy.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The PA supports this Budget Vote because we cannot oppose funding meant to protect food security, support farmers, fight animal disease, strengthen exports, and grow rural economies. We support it with the expectation that every rand must help build a stronger, fairer, and more secure agricultural future for South Africa. Salute!

Ms T P MADLOPHA-MTHETHWA (KwaZulu-Natal): Hon Chairperson of the House, hon Minister of Agriculture, hon Deputy Minister, the hon chairperson of the select committee, hon members, it is a great honour for me to address this august House during the policy debate on Budget Vote 29. Let me affirm from the onset that we appreciate and support the hon Minister's Budget Vote. We do so, not just for the sake of doing it but because it is anchored in service delivery pillars, particularly the farmer.

However, allow me to address the elephant in the room first - the agricultural support policies that continue to disproportionately disadvantage the most vulnerable, indigent and communal farmers. The Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, Casp, has become a hot potato that necessitate thorough digestion and dissection.

UNREVISED HANSARD

While Casp is a critical instrument for agricultural development, its current framework does not adequately address the needs of communal farmers. If it is not changed to target their needs, it will keep leaving them out. That will hurt South Africa’s goals for fairness, transformation and food security.

With your permission, let me draw a picture of the situation on the ground, more particularly regarding the unintended exclusivity caused by Casp in its current form. With 2,8 million hectares of land under the capable hands of Ingonyama Trust, led by His Majesty the King as its sole trustee in KwaZulu-Natal, communal farmers are left out of this well-meaning programme due to compliance requirements for support and funding.

Let me take you through a few Casp barriers that somehow disadvantage communal over commercial farmers, thereby exacerbating inequality in the sector. First, Casp requires proof of secure land tenure, such as a title deed, lease, or 5-year permission to occupy, PTO. However, communal land is shared and does not give individuals ownership. Second, applicants need a valid water use license, and obtaining one

UNREVISED HANSARD

is expensive, slow, and complicated. Many communal farmers use shared water sources and cannot meet this requirement.

Meanwhile, commercial farmers usually have land titles, collateral, business plans and money, which puts them in a much better position to meet Casp's criteria and receive funding. Because of these rules, many rural farmers are automatically disqualified. To make Casp more inclusive and effective, reforms should accept traditional authority letters as proof of land, allow group ownership of assets, and simplify water licence rules for small communal farmers.

Urgent policy adjustments are required to ensure that Casp fulfils its intended mandate of supporting all farmers, particularly those in communal and previously disadvantaged contexts.

Apart from the above, as KwaZulu-Natal, we have also identified a critical gap in the current Casp framework, that is the exclusion of research as a funded pillar. This omission has significant implications for farmer support and sector development. The absence of dedicated research support limits the generation and dissemination of locally relevant agricultural knowledge.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Provincial departments operate research farms that produce valuable innovations, data, and best practices. However, without integration into Casp, this information does not effectively reach farmers. As a result, farmers are deprived of access to evidence-based solutions, including improved crop varieties, livestock practices, climate adaptation strategies and production technologies.

Weak linkage between research, extension services and farmer implementation, reduced capacity to respond to emerging challenges such as climate change and pests, inefficiencies in public investment, as research outputs remain underutilised.

As KwaZulu-Natal, our recommendations are that Casp should be restructured to include research as a core pillar, with strong integration between research farms, extension services, and beneficiary farmers; mechanisms for knowledge transfer, farmer training, and innovation uptake, ringfenced funding to ensure continuous applied research is aligned to farmer needs.

As a balanced reviewer, let me also acknowledge the Minister’s speech with the praise it deserves. For example, with “a farmer sowing seeds for the future” hon Steenhuisen not only implemented measures to tackle the devastating effects of

UNREVISED HANSARD

foot-and-mouth disease, FMD, by sourcing and distributing vaccines, but also presented a national mass FMD 10-year plan for all provincial agricultural departments to ensure long-term resilience against future outbreaks.

We firmly believe that this will bring back stability, not only in the livestock sector, but also in the whole agricultural industry and ensure South Africa's international FMD-free status is restored, so that our animals and their products can hit global markets and shelves again.

The support that my department in KwaZulu-Natal is receiving from the national department in this fight against FMD, is paying off, as we have administered 1,30 million vaccine doses. Our veterinarian team has covered over 40% of the vaccinated animals of the province's 2,4 million cattle population. The programme started steadily on February 26 and is still in full motion. Just last week, we commenced in the uMgungundlovu District and today we are completing in that district, which is the fifth to have been vaccinated. And we are happy that we have already vaccinated dairy farmers in the province and they are happy and they are now waiting for the second round.

UNREVISED HANSARD

I am proud to announce that all ... Regarding global challenges affecting the agricultural industry, the Minister's speech addressed the key issues confronting the entire value chain, including the Ukraine-Russia conflict, US tariffs, the tit-for-tat war in the Gulf region, and the battle for control of the Strait of Hormuz, all of which have a significant impact on the agricultural supply chain.

The biggest impact is on fuel prices, which have skyrocketed and been passed on to consumers of our goods and services. Before the US-Iran conflict and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a litre of diesel in coastal provinces was R25,07, but it surged sharply to record highs of R31,33. As the Minister would agree, this has had a devastating effect on our agricultural value chain.

Again, the Minister has hit the nail on the head regarding the participation of black commercial farmers in the entire agricultural value chain. While noting a slight increase in their participation from 11 to 13%, it is encouraging to see this increase. However, you are correct in saying it remains uneven across various commodities. Despite this modest increase, sustained efforts are required to creating a more

UNREVISED HANSARD

equitable environment, so that more black commercial farmers can be part of the sector’s growth.

We believe that a blueprint sector policy framework such as the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan, aimed at boosting the country’s agricultural sector, continues to provide comprehensive farmer assistance and alongside the Blended Finance Scheme, we can build a more inclusive agricultural economy to further level the playing field for previously disadvantaged farmers as well.

Closer to home, my department in KwaZulu-Natal received a clean audit in the previous financial year, having progressed from an unqualified audit opinion from the Auditor-General. Our goal now is to ensure that we consolidate strong fiscal discipline and financial controls while delivering services to the general public. This is achievable because we have a strong support system and a hardworking team of officials.

Regarding unused land in KwaZulu-Natal, we are making strides by requesting our traditional leaders to help give people access to land, especially young people and women. About 2,8 million hectares of land in KwaZulu-Natal are managed by the Ingonyama Trust.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): MEC, the song indicates that the time is up. I am not sure why the song is there, but your time is indeed up, MEC. Thank you.

IsiXhosa:

Mnu M M PETER: Sihlalo weNdlu, amalungu ahloniphekileyo, uMphathiswa, noSekela Mphathiswa nabantu bonke abathe nqwadalala apha, mandinibulise, ndithi molweni.

English:

Chairperson, Budget Vote No 29: Agriculture comes at a crucial time when agriculture is expected to be the saviour of South Africans as a central pillar of economic stability and rural development. We acknowledge that, over the years, the department has made significant changes in ensuring measurable implementation across production, trade, and food security systems to achieve and improve its social impact and strengthening domestic and international trade.

When Minister John Steenhuisen presented this Budget Vote, he highlighted some of the important government intentions such as addressing long-standing challenges like tightening profit margins, climate pressures, and uneven access to markets to strengthen the sector. However, there are other overlooked

UNREVISED HANSARD

challenges such as agricultural extension services, adequate funding for small farmers in rural areas, and stock theft.

It is very concerning that the department has not yet addressed the lack of extension services, despite its important role in bridging the gap between scientific research and practical farming. Extension services remain underfunded, undervalued, and misunderstood. During the 2026 state of the nation address, a commitment to create 10 000 new extension officer positions was made, highlighting a renewed awareness of the crucial need for hands-on support in a farming sector grappling with deep inequalities, climate challenges, and rapid technology changes. However, the select committee reports reveal that the department admitted their farmer support budget was not increased to employ 10 000 extension officers.

Minister ...

IsiXhosa:

... umbuzo we-UDM kolu hlahlomali lwakho uthi ...

English:

UNREVISED HANSARD

... have you ever visited Salem close to Grahamstown? Minister, have you ever visited Uitenhage, the new name Kariega?

IsiXhosa:

ISalem ibisakuba ivelisa itshikori. Ingaba basayivelisa nanamhlanje lo tshikori? ISalem ibisakuba ivelisa amapayina. Ingaba namhlanje basawavelisa kusini na loo mapayina? ESalem kwakuveliswa ibhatata. Ingaba basayivelisa kusini na loo bhatata? ISalem ibisakuba ivelisa umbona. Ingaba loo mbona usaveliswa kusini na, kuquka neetapile?

Xa ndigqibezela, ubusela bemfuyo emakhaya bugqithisile. Ayibiwa nje impahla emakhaya koko ziyathathwa. Mphathiswa, kungenwa ngaphakathi uhleli, ukhutshelwe esibayeni uhambe uziqhube ngokwakho ukuya elorini kuba kaloku ukhonjwe ngompu. Ingaba ubukhe wazityelela ezi ndawo uzivayo ukuba kuyathethwa ngazo?

Amafama asakhasayo adinga inkxaso yakho. Ingaba ujongene nala mafama sele ephume izandla kuphela okanye nala ndiwachaphazelayo nawo uwajongile? Mphathiswa, sinemibutho ekhokela kwizinto zamafama ezifana nooAgriSA, National African Farmers Union, Nafu, no-African Farmers Association of South

UNREVISED HANSARD

Africa, Afasa. Ingaba ikhona kusini na inkxaso abayifumanayo kwisebe lakho jikelele? Sakukhumbula ukuba u-AgriSA ngamakhwenkwe amakhulu asele ekhulile. Incanca kowuphi umbele le mibutho mincinci ifana nooNafu noAfasa?

Mphathiswa, amafama antsundu kwiilokishi zethu ayabulawa athathelwe imfuyo. Azibiwa Mphathiswa, koko uyanikezela ngazo kuba ukhonjwe ngompu. Sicela usisebenzise nathi Mphathiswa sikukhaphe xa usiya kwezi ndawo xa kucaca ukuba uyoyika. Enkosi, Mphathiswa. Siyaluxhasa olu hlahlomali lwakho, Mphathiswa.

English:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you very much, indeed, hon Peter. Hon delegates, please join me in welcoming once again to the gallery the DA’s parliamentary leader, the hon Michalakis. You are most welcome. We continue with the debate. We now go back online to the North West MEC for agriculture and rural development, the hon Sambatha. Hon Sambatha, you have 10 minutes. Hon Sambatha? Hon delegates, let’s then move to the next speaker. On behalf of the DA, it is the hon Swart.

Afrikaans:

UNREVISED HANSARD

Mnr P J SWART: Voorsitter, Agb Minister, Adjunkminister, agb lede, en mede Suid-Afrikaners, goeienaand. Landbou gaan oor meer as net boerdery. Dit gaan oor voedsel op ons almal se tafel. Dit gaan oor werk vir ons jongmense. Dit gaan oor ons plattelandse dorpe wat moet oorleef, en dit gaan oor die ekonomiese groei vir ons land, Suid-Afrika.

Byna 1 miljoen Suid-Afrikaners is direk afhanklik van landbou vir werk en ekonomiese aktiwiteit, maar vir 30 jaar het die landbousektor gebuk gegaan onder swak implementering, vervalle infrastruktuur, beleidsonsekerheid, en swak ondersteuningstelsels. Te veel staatsgesteunde landbouprojekte het misluk omdat mense grond ontvang het sonder finansiering, sonder mentorskap, sonder marktoegang, sonder watersekerheid, en sonder tegniese ondersteuning.

English:
To the hon Mhlongo and the hon Sithole, that is why so many farms remain underutilised, distressed, or unproductive, not because people do not want to be on the farm but because the previous ANC-led government too often failed to support them properly.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Chairperson, we seem to be following the same debate rhetoric — emotional speeches, slogans, and ideological attacks from opposition parties, but South Africans need and deserve honesty. Transformation without production does not create prosperity. It creates dependency, collapse, and wasted opportunity. The reality is that many rural communities today still struggle with collapsing roads, weak municipal services, rising input costs, livestock theft, water insecurity, and poor infrastructure. Whilst ordinary emerging farmers are often left exposed, it is the politically connected elites that continue prospering on their own Phala Phalas and on their own Nkandlas. That is not empowerment for ordinary rural people. That is why the DA believes agricultural empowerment must benefit the people on the ground and not politically connected networks.

Hon Modise and Chairperson, please be reminded that plans and presentations do not feed the nation and the communities. Implementation does. If Johannesburg were a commercial farm under the current standards of ANC and PA governance, the fences would have been stolen, the tractors would have been broken, the farmhouse stripped bare, and all the workers abandoned. That is the reality of governance when slogans

UNREVISED HANSARD

become more important than service delivery, and that is the South African reality of today.

Afrikaans:

Agb Van den Berg, Minister Steenhuisen word vandag geoordeel aan dit wat hy vandag doen en wat hy geërf het. Daar is gepraat van nege verlore jare waarvan jy vir vyf jaar deel was. Die vraag is: Wat word nou ...

English:

... and who is responsible for fixing what happened during those nine lost years, five years of which you were part of?

Hon Mhlongo and hon Montwedi, you personally spoke about landownership, but South Africans also need to hear about production, jobs, and food security. South Africa does not need more failed state farms. We want to see more successful farmers.

Hon Farmer, in my constituency of Beaufort West, I visited an area where a certain Minister, the Minister of Promises, makes claims as the cameras arrive, and that day speeches were made. Then, when the cameras left, the promises of Dubai disappeared

UNREVISED HANSARD

with them. Can you really stop the ... [Inaudible.] ... and the ... [Inaudible.] ... in this Chamber? [Inaudible.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon delegates! Hon delegates, please don’t drown out the speaker.

Mr P J SWART: The loudest noise, when the cameras are present, but leadership is not measured by the volume of your ... [Inaudible.] It is measured by the results that you leave behind.

Mr B J FARMER: Hon Chairperson ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon Swart! Hon Swart! Can you take your seat? On what are you rising?

Mr B J FARMER: Chair, I am just checking whether the member is prepared to take a question about the day he ran out of Beaufort West.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, Farmer. Hon Swart, are you prepared to take a question?

Mr P J SWART: No, hon Chair.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): He is not in agreement.

Mr P J SWART: Minister Steenhuisen inherited a Foot and Mouth Disease crisis years in the making because biosecurity systems and veterinary capacity were weakened over 30 years, especially during those nine lost years and the five years of the Deputy Minister in that department. Instead of excuses, we are now seeing vaccination programmes, stronger industry co-ordination, practical interventions, and renewed efforts to protect export markets. That is what practical leadership looks like.

Rural communities like Beaufort West need development, not political stunts. The real issue, hon Farmer, is who is fixing the neglect of 30 years.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): On that note of the neglect of 30 years, your time has expired.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon delegates, we are going back a little bit. Hon Capa, we are going back a little bit. Hon Sambatha was kicked out of the platform. I don’t know whether he has been admitted on the platform. Hon Sambatha?

UNREVISED HANSARD

Mr M SAMBATHA (North West): Hon House Chair, I am admitted. One of the reasons might be that my recent number was not named. My apologies to the hon members and the hon debate. Thank you very much, hon Chair. Whilst we stand like other provinces ... [Inaudible.] ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon Modise, will you please not harass the delegates here? Hon Sambatha, will you please switch off your camera?

Mr M SAMBATHA (North West): Thank you, hon Chairperson. We stand as the province to support. [Interjections.] Can I proceed, Chair?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Yes.

Mr M SAMBATHA (North West): Can I proceed?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon MEC, please proceed. [Interjections.] Hon Sambatha, you are not audible.

Mr M SAMBATHA (North West): And the presentation done by the Minister, we also stand for that. We also want ... [Inaudible.] ... am I not audible?

UNREVISED HANSARD

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): You are audible now, continue.

Mr M SAMBATHA (North West): We stand to appreciate and support the budget speech delivered by the Minister of Agriculture. As a province, we are one of those provinces that appreciate the interventions done by the national department. On the matter of blended finance, whilst we also support the view by the chairperson of the standing committee, we also want to raise the fact that blended finance on 600 farmers means it's a lesser number nationally because this is the only element where you could be guaranteed that a farmer is supported. It is a farmer that is a guarantee of a permanent job to be created because the scheme, on its way, defines the support and employment creation of South Africans. This is one element that we are arguing as a province that the national department and the funding institutions that are participating in blended finance must increase the target because once the target is increased, guaranteed employment for South Africans, as it's part of the funding, will be realised. In relation to the provincial interventions, we've always been involved, and hon members would understand that yesterday, the Potchefstroom College of Agriculture students went on a wildcat strike, though it was peaceful, and one of their central demands was

UNREVISED HANSARD

the element of being included in the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, as they argued, the Minister met with them yesterday, agreed with them that the MEC would then speak with the Minister of Higher Education.

As I speak with you, I have already spoken with the Minister of Higher Education and the chairperson of the portfolio committee that whilst they are not covered by NSFAS, they should be kept funded by the National Skills Fund, NSF, because the NSF is still a grant administered by the same Minister. As we speak, we also have had bilateral agreements with some of the funding institutions. As I speak, we now have an agreement with the Land Bank and hon Montwedi would be happy that there's going to be a package of aggregated development for lucerne farmers in the Taung Irrigation Scheme, and our first target is 72 farmers, and we are jointly funding the programme with the Land Bank.

Hon Montwedi would be happy because he has been leading the programme of revitalisation of the Taung Irrigation Scheme. As one of the provinces that is dominant in beef, we are also doing interventions in beef aggregation. As a province, we have a number of cattle that are alive, and we're number four in the number of cattle. We want to turn this into one of the

UNREVISED HANSARD

dominant areas we are going to be dominating in the agriculture value chain. And in that instance, we're working on ensuring that we're doing value chain in cattle farming, but also that will end up with beef beneficiation in the province.

As we speak, we've already agreed and signed an agreement with WIPHOLD and Grain SA on the basis of revitalisation of agricultural development in communal land, which has collapsed and land-restricted farms throughout the province. This is meant to ensure that land redistribution and communal land are revamped for agricultural development so that we do not have areas where land is available, and available land is not utilised in the province. And this revitalisation is going to help us contest later on the maize triangle between ourselves, the Free State and Mpumalanga, and the province is ready to do that because we are the only province that has silos still under the ownership of the provincial government.

We have also finalised the recruitment of internship graduates. And this year, we've got an allocation of 140. From the 140, 40 of them are recruited under animal health. And this recruitment of animal health graduates is meant to strengthen our performance and interventions on the

UNREVISED HANSARD

vaccination programme of Foot-and-Mouth Disease, FMD. The only call we should make from our side is that the national department must fast-track the process of job evaluations for both veterinary services and agricultural colleges because the reasons we now are unable to fill vacant posts, is because we're waiting for job evaluations to be finalised so that when we advertise, we advertise on the basis of the job evaluation and approvals with the national Department of Agriculture.

As a province, we are now introducing jointly with the Land Bank and ABSA a programme that is going to help farmers with non-financial services. This programme is critical because the administrative component of farmers has not been attended to. And each time they apply for the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, Casp, which is a grant, they are unable to get it because administrative readiness is not there. And through this programme, they are going to be developed free of charge. And then each of them exiting the programme of non-financial services is going to be exiting with funding ready, with all documents expected in the Casp. What we want to do, as a province, is ensure that Casp, as a grant, is made free support for people who can afford loans, so that those farmers whose capacity allows them to afford loans are then funded through blended finance. When you are from Casp, it must be

UNREVISED HANSARD

guaranteed that you are going to exit to blended finance. When you are in blended finance, it must be guaranteed that you are en route to commercialisation so that we don't have a situation of a person helped through blended finance who later collapses back and comes back to the same queue.

This is the programme that we're developing as a province, and we want to welcome the presentation of the budget and want to ensure that the issue of development of land is not compromised on grounds that support and readiness of farmers is not guaranteed. Thank you very much, hon Chair.

Mr S P MABILO: Chair, greetings to the Minister, greetings to the Deputy Minister and all the members present ...

Setswana:

... dumelang bagaetsho ko gae.

English:

The ANC rises in support of Budget Vote 29 because agriculture remains central to food security, rural development, industrialisation and inclusive economic transformation in the country.

UNREVISED HANSARD

As the ANC we understand that agriculture is not merely about production on farms, it is about national food sovereignty, economic inclusion, export competitiveness, job creation and the development of rural communities across all nine provinces.

This budget recognises that the future of agriculture depends on strengthening biosecurity, investing in science and innovation, expanding market access and building resilient agricultural value chains.

House Chair, the ANC's policy position on agriculture has always been guided by the principles of transformation, state support, food security and inclusive growth.

The approach is reflected in key ANC policy frameworks such as the Agriculture and Agro-Processing Master Plan, AAMP, the District Development Model, DDM, and government's commitment to land reform and rural development.

House Chair, the ANC rejects the outdated notion that agriculture should only benefit large commercial interests while emerging black farmers remain excluded from markets, infrastructure and financing opportunities. Our position is

UNREVISED HANSARD

crystal clear, agriculture must become a driver of broad-based economic participation and provincial developments.

Agriculture contributes significantly to South Africa's trade surplus and remains one of the sectors with the greatest potential for labour absorption and rural industrialisation. However, our agricultural economy continues to face serious pressures arising from climate change, rising food costs, logistics challenges, animal disease outbreaks and global geopolitical instability, especially in the Middle East.

The ongoing effects of the Russia-Ukraine war, instability, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, have disrupted global value chain, have disrupted grain, fertilizer, fuel, placing enormous pressure on food production costs globally.

Hon Chair, these global developments remind us why the ANC continues to advocate for food sovereignty, local production capacity and stronger state support for the agricultural sector.

One of the most critical issues confronting agriculture today is biosecurity. The outbreak of food and mouth disease, FMD, has had severe consequences for provincial livestock

UNREVISED HANSARD

economies, particularly in provinces dependent on cattle production and meat exports.

Hon House Chair, this is why the ANC strongly supports the R2,6 billion allocation towards animal health and biosecurity interventions.

Biosecurity is not only a veterinary matter, it is an economic issue, a trade issue and food security issue. If animal diseases are not contained effectively, export markets, those farmers lose income, rural jobs are threatened and provincial economies suffer major losses.

Hon House Chair, the ANC, therefore, supports stronger investment in institutions such as the Onderstepoort Biological Products, OBP, and the Agricultural Research Council, ARC. These institutions are strategically important to South Africa’s agricultural sovereignty.

The ANC has consistently argued that South Africa cannot depend excessively on imported vaccines, imported agricultural technologies and foreign scientific solutions while domestic institutions deteriorate. That is why the ANC policy supports

UNREVISED HANSARD

rebuilding local scientific capacity, vaccine production capacity and climate resilient agricultural research.

House Chair, the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of domestic production capacity and scientific self-sufficiency. Countries that lacked local manufacturing and research capacity struggled to respond effectively to challenges and problems.

House Chair, similarly, outbreaks of the FMD in South Africa exposes the urgent need to modernise veterinary laboratories, improve vaccine supply systems and strengthen the disease surveillance mechanisms.

The ANC believes that these investments are essential for long-term agricultural competitiveness.

The ANC also recognises that market access remains one of the greatest barriers facing emerging black farmers. It is not enough to produce food if farmers cannot access logistics, infrastructure, export channels and agro-processing mechanisms and opportunities. That is why the ANC strongly supports the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, AfCFTA, as a strategic opportunity to expand export markets for South

UNREVISED HANSARD

African agricultural products across the entire African continent.

The AfCFTA presents enormous opportunities for provinces to support and export processed agricultural goods, livestock products, fruit, grain and manufactured agro-products into growing African markets. This is aligned with the ANC's long-term standing vision of African economic integration, regional industrialisation and south to south trade co-operation.

House Chair, however, trade competitiveness depends heavily on infrastructure efficiency. The ANC acknowledges that logistical bottlenecks in rail, road and ports continue to undermine agricultural export and increase costs for producers.

However, House Chair, we recognise the interventions by the Minister of Transport and the cluster in making the rail more efficient and so forth and so forth. That is a step in the right direction, Chair.

Farmers cannot compete globally while products remain delayed at ports, rail systems collapse and rural roads deteriorate. I've already mentioned the intervention by the Minister of

UNREVISED HANSARD

Transport in that regard. That is why the ANC supports greater infrastructure coordination through District Development Model and stronger investment into logistic corridors that connect rural production zones to domestic and international markets.

House Chair, the ANC also continues to prioritise agro-processing as part of its industrialisation agenda. For decades, South Africa exported raw agricultural products while importing high-value processed goods. This limited job creation and economic diversification in rural provinces.

The ANC’s agro-processing strategy seeks to challenge the pattern by developing agro-industrial zones that support local manufacturing, packaging, food processing and export beneficiation. This approach creates rural industries, expand employment opportunities and strengthen provincial economies.

House Chair, the ANC further recognises the growing threat of climate change and climate viability to food production. The anticipated El Nino conditions from mid-2026 pose serious risks to crop yields, livestock production and water availability across several provinces.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The ANC, therefore, supports stronger climate resilience programmes, improved extension services, drought preparedness strategies and investment in climate-smart agriculture.

The democratic state, House Chair, has a responsibility to support farmers, particularly smallholders and emerging producers in adapting to changing environmental conditions.

The ANC's agricultural policy is rooted in the understanding that food security is also a national security. No country can claim true sovereignty while depending excessively on imported foods, imported fertilisers and external agricultural systems. That is why the ANC supports calls for strengthening domestic fertiliser production, including revitalisation of products to reduce dependence on costly fertilisers. This is not merely an economic issue, it is about protecting South Africa's long-term food security.

As I am about to conclude, before I deal with some of the issues raised here. The ANC remains committed to a developmental agriculture model that promotes transformation, supports emerging farmers, expands scientific capacity and strengthens rural economies.

UNREVISED HANSARD

This budget vote advances those objectives. The ANC, therefore, supports the budget. Thank you.

House Chair, I would like to take the opportunity to express my sincere gratitude and profound thanks to the ANC debaters, all of them, the Chair of the committee, hon Sithole, and the MECs. They have really dealt with the issues and they have provided possible solutions to the challenges, especially around the 42% of the budget which is geared towards food security.

Well, I serve in the same committee with the other two hon members here, hon Pienaar and hon Boshoff. I thought that you will have the conviction of your courage to say that one of the challenges we have as a Select Committee on Agriculture is the non-attendance of the Minister, which remains a serious challenge. I thought you would be objective and raise it, as the Minister only attended today because of the House debate, but usually he’s not there.

We have been emphasising one point, hon Masipa, stop claiming easy victories. [Interjections.] You must be magnanimous. We have laid a foundation as the ANC, and all the fruits that are there is as a result of our intervention before the Government

UNREVISED HANSARD

of National Unity, GNU. Give credit where it is due, don't be jealous, it's a bad policy.

Hon Masipa, your silence is deafening on key critical issues, and instead you are boasting about you being number one on the whole front of issues, and that is not the true reflection ... so ... including yourself and hon Swart, your boasting is misleading, gloating is negative. [Laughter.] Now, stop bragging ... [Interjections.] ... that is cheap ... and let's deal with the crisis that we are confronted with as a country, the food and mouth disease, etc. So, don't attribute any success to a particular party, no. It's not a party thing, it's a crisis, it's a pandemic. It's just like our President did well in Africa, in terms of COVID-19, but we have never made noise about it. It's highly recognised, it's in records etc.

I can't fathom ... as I conclude ... I can't fathom why the EFF and the MKP have trapped themselves in a perennial rejectionist approach; you reject everything. How then will your core constituency take you seriously? How will we be able to address the current challenges confronting agriculture when you don't support the budget? That is cutting your nose to

UNREVISED HANSARD

spite your face. And to claim easy ... not victories but to be populists.

Hon House Chair, I'm happy ... we support the budget. Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: Hon House Chairperson, it will be a miss of me not to start by really expressing my unhappiness at the hon Mabilo. Let me say this to you sir, I have never missed a single invitation in this House. Not once, not ever nor to an invitation to the committee, including after hours. The only thing I was not able to attend was the workshop in Gauteng because I had previous commitments on that day.

I have been here whenever I am requested, and I would maybe ask you to speak to the committee chairperson to establish the facts before you make allegations of serial nonattendance in the House which are serious allegations to make when is actually not bound up by the facts. Wherever this House wanted me I have made myself available here.

I want to thank the members of this House for what I think has largely been a very constructive debate. I think it has been incredibly helpful to move a number of processes forward. I

UNREVISED HANSARD

want to agree with a number of members and to say to you, you have been heard. I understand fully the problem of lack of available patient capital particularly for small-scale emerging farmers. The whole point of having the developmental financing instrument like the Land Bank, is to ensure that entrance who cannot meet requirements of traditional lending institutions are able to access finance. Unfortunately, the thresholds in many instances have become as high as commercial lending institutions. This means that we have a whole missing gap of patient available capital for small-scale farmers to be able to access. Some of the requirements for instance of having to not have any other employment before you can access financing inhibits those who are transitioning into fulltime agriculture from being able to do so. I think that we could be able to look at this as a department.

I have heard you today, loud and clear. It is something that both the Deputy Minister and I are exercised about and when we return to the House, we hope to have a clearer way forward. That applies on a number of things. From accessing cheap insurance to patient available finance and capital.

Financing of agriculture is a very complex thing. It is not like financing somebody to open a spaza shop where on day one

UNREVISED HANSARD

you sell your disprins; you are selling your cooldrinks and you get money coming in. Agriculture requires a very big upfront commitment of input costs, of diesel, of equipment, of land and it takes two to three years before you start to see a building up of an ability to be able to profit and start paying back.

And so, we do need to deepen and widen in South Africa the pool of available capital to small-scale farmers and entrance. I think that is very, very important.

I share the hon member's concerns about climate. We are also equally worried about the predicted outcoming El Niño and we have to make sure that dams are available and full. That we have access to climate resilient seeds as a result of incredible research done by the Agricultural Research Council, ARC, and others. We need to understand we have to adopt to climate change. It is not going away; it is with us.

We also need to look at the provincial capacity of our veterinary services which I think have been allowed to whittle away over the years. It is only when you have a crisis like this that you start realising importance of having well-funded veterinary services and the like.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Infrastructure has been spoken about a lot today. Whether it is roads, our ports and whether is our rail. This is very, very important. There is no use of finding new markets and developing market chains and value-chains if we cannot get our product to market. Our stone food producers alone this last season lost R1,6 billion worth of revenue as a result of failing infrastructure and slow ports. We cannot afford to lose that amount of money in a country like this, and it dents the confidence of our customers abroad if we are unable to provide on time and the quality that is required.

I now would also like to thank the MECs who participated and thank them not only for their participation in today's debate. However, to attending our Minmec meetings and for the incredible work that they are doing on the ground. The MEC Rockman who spoke here today, MEC, ... [Inuadible.] ... Azako and MEC Sambatha who spoke today, our colleagues from KwaZulu-Natal are all actually out there on the ground getting the vaccination done. We would not be able to be rolling out the vaccines without the support of our MECs. I want to thank each and every one of them, MEC, Ramokgopa in Gauteng for the excellent work they are doing.

UNREVISED HANSARD

I do want to return to one or two inputs that were made if I may, today. I would start with the hon Vand Den Berg and I am very glad the hon Van Den Berg mentioned two things, digitisation and Act 36 and delays because had him been paying attention he would hopefully noticed that not only have we digitised but Act 36 applications now through inbuild home build departmental build application process where all Act 36 applications going into the future we done digitally, we also hired 37 assessors. We have the scientific experience and capability to go back and start addressing the backlog there. So, the Act 36 is starting to move forward now as a direct result of digitisation and as a direct result of us putting money where it matters by hiring into the department the expertise that we need. So, I can give him the full assurance that that is happening.

May I also then just say as well that I noted the hon Mhlongo repeated that keyboard warriors' assertions that we only putting aside R10 million or something for biosecurity. That is not the case. If you look across the department's budget is huge amounts billions of rand going to biosecurity. If that was not the case, I would simply ask the hon member from the MK party that where did the R490 million come from that this department and this government has already spent to date on

UNREVISED HANSARD

Food and Mouth Disease, FMD, vaccines which have been provided free of charge to every farmer across the country? It has come because our budget is geared towards that.

Hon Sithole, I think you have made some good points. One of the other reasons I am glad you touched on was fertiliser and I am very glad that you raised this because it was a subject of much discussion at the Southern African Development Community, SADC, Agricultural Ministers meeting that I Chaired last weekend. We have taken a resolution as SADC to start developing our own fertiliser capability within the region so that we are able to insulate ourselves from the shocks of closure of the strait of Hormuz, the war in Russia and Ukraine and other global constraints and to start to build up the regional fertiliser capacity alongside a regional vaccine bank that would keep antigens for our region.

I now would like to turn to my hon friend Montwedi who said that I and I quote, “Disconnected from reality.” I would advance to the hon member that it is him that is disconnected from reality. For he says there is nothing happening in agriculture. Jobs are up. Exports are up. Growth is up. We are becoming one of the worlds largest exporters of deciduous fruits. New markets opened. New opportunities, new entrance

UNREVISED HANSARD

meeting the market. Now he tries to indicate that I invented Foot and Mouth Disease and that only since I became the Minister it has been going around the country. Foot and Mouth Disease has been endemic in South Africa from the early 1900s. It has gone through the various waves and this current outbreak that we are dealing with actually started in 2021. And because of the old strategies have not worked to contain it, it is why we have had to implement a new strategy to deal with the Foot and Mouth Disease crises.

So, I can give the absolute assurance that it was not invented by me, and it was not started by me, but I can tell you this, I am going to end it once and for all in South Africa.

I also want to say to him that he needs to do his reading a bit better. The Kaonafatso ya Dikgomo, KYD, Programme is still being implemented. Our directives to ARC annual reports 2024-25 and he wants to see where the programmes go in 202-27, it is all there in black and white. Perhaps a little less criticism and a little more time spent reading he will be able to do this.

I did find one very interesting thing about the hon members' contribution. I do not know if other members in the House

UNREVISED HANSARD

noticed it. Lots of criticism not a single solution put on the table. Not one. Not even one alternative! Minister, you are doing this wrong, this is what you need to do. Not one. Just criticism. Perhaps that is why when Floyd Shivambo left the EFF he said and I quote:

> He left them because they have become directionless and increasingly embracing corruption in government.

For me Floyd Shivambo and certainly if I lessoned to that contribution made by the hon Montwedi today its full of sound and fury as Shakespear would have said signifying nothing because is directionless and there is no direction or alternative that is given. Just criticism. However, we are happy to accept criticism. We will carry on doing what we are doing. We will beat FMD. We will grow the sector and make agriculture the greatest, place for job creation and economic growth with your help. Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon Steenhuizen for the input you have just made and the clarifications you have made on various issues affecting agriculture.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Hon delegates, right now we have come to the end of this debate of Budget Vote No 29: Agriculture.

I would like to thank the Minister and the Deputy Minister for participating in this debate

Aluta Continua, hon Minister and hon Deputy Minister!

Debate concluded.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND JUSTICE ON THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT'S REPORT ON THE PROVISIONAL SUSPENSION FROM OFFICE OF MR I B BLOSE, AN ADDITIONAL DISTRICT COURT MAGISTRATE AT KWADUKUZA, KWAZULU-NATAL

Ms J S MANANISO: Chairperson, I won't repeat what you have read as the report of the Select Committee on Security and Justice, but I want to take fellow South Africans and all hon members on the call that the committee received a briefing from the Magistrates' Commission on the suspension and withholding of remuneration on 25 March 2026.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The committee was informed that the commission received a complaint from Ms Bukeka Ndamandi who alleged that she was a client of Mr Blose when he was in a private practice. Ms Ndamandi alleges that Mr Blose failed to pay trust money to her as a client. As the commission investigated the matter, further misconduct was uncovered. Hon members and fellow South Africans, I want you to follow through the report. This is one of the reports that where we say ...

Sepedi:

... ga re seke motho, re seka molato ...

English:

... is we are speaking about. As I said, the commission uncovered and resolved to lay charges related to failure to disclose information when he applied for an acting position, as well as the interdict to practice as a legal practitioner by the High Court. The commission considered the following factors: Mr Blose is only doing party head matters, which is a precautionary measure due to the seriousness of the allegations against him. Mr Blose was interdicted by the High Court to practice as a legal practitioner, and the finding has a bearing on his suitability to be a judicial officer. The allegations against Mr Blose are of such a serious nature that

UNREVISED HANSARD

it is not in the interest of the judiciary nor the public that he should continue to serve as a judicial officer.

The commission served documents on Mr Blose on 21 July 2025. On 4 August, Mr Blose responded. On 7 October 2025, the matter served before Executive Support Committee, Esco, where it was resolved that the disciplinary matter should proceed and to recommend to the Minister that Mr Blose be professionally suspended. On 4 November 2025, the Minister professionally suspended Mr Blose. Hon members and fellow South Africans, then as the committee, we note with dissatisfaction that with the progress being made by the Magistrates' Commission in respect of the speed with which they are attending to disciplinary matters and reporting to Parliament. Indeed, the Magistrates' Commission has taken the advice of the Select Committee on Security and Justice on board in speeding up these matters and we are happy to note the progress.

The committee also expressed its satisfaction with the increase in the number of recommendations to withholding the remuneration of magistrates found to be guilty of misconduct charges, as this will decrease the burden on the taxpayer.

Sepedi:

UNREVISED HANSARD

Re latelela tšhelete.

English:

The committee looks forward to a review of legislation and to the collaboration approach with other relevant departments being implemented by the commission in addressing disciplinary matters. The committee continues to encourage the magistrate to perform their work with the highest ethical standard and strongly discourages all acts of misconduct within the magistrates.

We wish to send a clear message to those magistrates who are engaging in acts of misconduct that our committee expects magistrates to serve in our courts of law with the highest ethical standard and to refrain from all acts of misconduct and to uphold the code of conduct. Magistrates should ensure that they conduct themselves in such a manner that is reflective of the values of our Constitution, which protects the administration of justice and upholds the rule of law. We look forward to our future engagement with the commission on these matters.

Having considered the Minister for Justice and Constitutional Development report, dated 4 November 2025, submitted in terms

UNREVISED HANSARD

of Section 13 (3)(b) of the Magistrates Act 90 of 1993, on the confirmation of professional suspension from the Office of Magistrate of Mr I B Blose. An additional district court magistrate at KwaDukuza, KwaZulu-Natal, pending the outcome of a misconduct hearing into his fitness to hold office as a magistrate. The committee recommends that the National Council of Provinces confirm the professional suspension of Mr I B Blose.

With what I have been taking you through, hon members and South Africans, I think you are satisfied with conclusion reached by the select committee. I want to thank the collective of the Select Committee of Security and Justice, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development and the Minister, and as well the commission and the Parliamentary Monitoring Group, PMG, for taking our report for public access, because we know it is through public access that the community and South Africans can know what we do as parliamentarians in terms of holding people accountable. So, we thank everybody, and this is one of the select committee that is non-partisan when we engage on issues of ethical standard. We are bringing this report before you just to show you that we are a committee at work, as public servants, as

UNREVISED HANSARD

appointed, as permanent delegates from different provinces. You are well represented by those collectives. I thank you.

The House Chairperson (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon Mananiso, for the well-articulated report.

Question put: That the Report be adopted.

IN FAVOUR: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West, Western Cape.

Report adopted in accordance with section 65 of the Constitution.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE ON CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION - OVERSIGHT VISIT IN TERMS OF SECTION 139(1)(B) OF THE CONSTITUTION IN MASILONYANA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY: DATED 5 MAY 2026

Mr T M KAUNDA: House Chair, greetings to all the office bearers of our NCOP, hon members, both special and permanent delegates and fellow South Africans. Allow me to spend these 10 minutes allocated on behalf of the Select Committee on

UNREVISED HANSARD

Cooperative Governance, Public Administration, Human Settlement and Water and Sanitation.

Chair, the Select Committee has noted that the Free State Provincial Executive Council resolved on 25 October 2025 to invoke Section 139(1)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa on Masilonyana Local Municipality. The select committee has noted that the decision of the Free State Provincial Executive Council was informed by the dysfunctionality of the municipality, which led to material breaches of its obligation to provide basic services and meet its financial commitments.

In terms of the substantive matters, the select committee has also noted that the other reason for the invocation of section 139(1)(b) of the Constitution in Masilonyana Local Municipality includes the deterioration of financial management and internal control systems, which have caused the increase in the unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure, degeneration of relationship between the municipality and organised labour and failure of the local municipality to provide clean water to the community.

UNREVISED HANSARD

I will skip the other observations; I will just shoot straight to the recommendations. We recommend that the National Council of Provinces approve the invocation of Section 139(1)(b) of the Constitution in Masilonyana Local Municipality. The Free State MEC for Cogta should consider instituting Section 106 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act of 2000 to investigate allegations of corruption, maladministration and fraud in Masilonyana Local Municipality immediately after the National Council of Provinces has adopted this report.

The MEC for Cogta in the Free State should table the findings and recommendations of the forensic investigation report to Masilonyana Municipal Council for consideration and adoption. The Free State Cogta should, after tabling the forensic investigation report to Masilonyana Municipal Council, table the adopted report to the National Council of Provinces and the Free State Provincial Legislature within 90 days.

The appointed administrator should provide the Select Committee on Co-operative Government and Public Administration within 14 days after the adoption of this report by the National Council of Provinces, with a report on the illegal appointment of the CFO and current position, service level agreements with the water and electricity suppliers, payments plans and quarterly

UNREVISED HANSARD

reports on the implementation of the municipal turnaround strategy, to implement section 139(1)(b) of the Constitution in Masilonyana Local Municipality.

The appointed administrator, in collaboration with the speaker, the mayor and Free State Salga should fast-track the process of ensuring the functionality of the ethics committee and the Municipal Public Accounts Committee in order to ensure good governance in the local municipality.

The appointed administrator should develop a post-audit action plan to deal with the recommendations of the Auditor-General emanating from the 2024-25 audit outcomes in the local government and table the action plan to the municipal council for consideration and adoption. The MEC for Cogta in the Free State, in collaboration with the Free State Salga, should conduct lifestyle audits of all managers and skills audits of all employees within Masilonyana Local Municipality.

The Free State Salga should provide systematic and structured support in terms of section 154 of the Constitution to enable Masilonyana Local Municipality to deal with HR matters related to bloated administration, job evaluation grading approved and funded organisational administrative structure. The speaker

UNREVISED HANSARD

should, as part of accountability and transparency, share the oversight visit report of the select committee with all the stakeholders who participated during the oversight visit that we staged in the municipality.

The Free State MEC for the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs should table to the National Council of Provinces quarterly report and termination report in terms of section 139(1)(b) of the Constitution in Masilonyana Local Municipality. Hon House Chair, I hope I have saved your time. This is what we are submitting on behalf of the select committee. I thank you.

Debate concluded.

Question put: That the Report be adopted.

IN FAVOUR: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West, Western Cape.

Report adopted in accordance with section 65 of the Constitution.

UNREVISED HANSARD

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE ON CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, WATER, SANITATION AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS) ON OVERSIGHT VISIT IN TERMS OF SECTION 139(1)(B) OF THE CONSTITUTION (1996) IN NKETOANA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY: DATED 5 MAY 2026

Mr T M KAUNDA: House Chair, let me also observe the protocol that has been displayed before me. The select committee has noted that the Free State Provincial Executive Council resolved on 17 December 2025 to intervene in Nketoana Local Municipality in terms of section 139(1)(b) of the Constitution. The decision to invoke section 139(1)(b) in Nketoana Local Municipality was informed by persistent dysfunctionality of the municipality characterised by deterioration in governance, oversight and serious deficiencies in management and administration.

In terms of audit opinion, the select committee has also noted that the municipality has received seven consecutive disclaimer audit opinions reflecting deep-rooted failures in financial management, accountability and compliance. Therefore, the select committee recommends to the NCOP as follows, that the National Council of Provinces approves the invocation of section 139(1)(b) of the Constitution in

UNREVISED HANSARD

Nketoana Local Municipality, that the Free State MEC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs should consider instituting section 106 of the Local Government Response System Act of 2000 to investigate allegations of corruption, maladministration and fraud in Nketoana Local Municipality immediately after the National Council of Provinces adopted this report, that the MEC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs should table the findings of recommendation and recommendations of the forensic investigation report to Nketoana municipality council for consideration and adoption, that the Free State MEC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs should, after tabling a forensic investigation report to Nketoana municipality council, table the adopted report to the National Council of Provinces and the Free State provincial legislature after 90 days, that the appointed administrator provides data support to the select committee covering the number of boreholes, projects, plans to deal with debtors and creditors and appointed contractors implementing projects within the local municipality within 14 days after the National Council of Provinces has adopted this report, that the Free State MSC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs in collaboration with the SA Local Government Association should provide support in terms of section 154 of the Constitution to

UNREVISED HANSARD

enable the local municipality to fill vacant critical positions, develop post-audit action plan and ensure functionality of oversight committees, that the speaker and the Chief Whip of political parties in the local municipality must ensure discipline compliance of the councillors to the municipal code of conduct in respect of attending council meetings as well as the committee meetings and taking resolutions for municipal implementation, that the speaker should as part of accountability and transparency share the oversight visit report of the select committee with all stakeholders participated during the oversight visit by the Select Committee on Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, that the Free State MEC of the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs should table to the National Council of Provinces quarterly progress report and termination report in terms of section 139(1)(b) of the Constitution in Nketoana Local Municipality. We therefore submit before this honourable House, and we will expect the support thank you very much.

Question put: That the Report be adopted.

IN FAVOUR: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West, Western Cape.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Report adopted in accordance with section 65 of the Constitution.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): I would like to thank permanent delegates, MECs, all special delegates and the SA Local Government Association, Salga, representatives for availing themselves in the sitting.

The Council adjourned at 21:08.

UNREVISED HANSARD