

MINISTERIAL BRIEFING ON AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

TIME: 09:50 – 14:00

SUBJECT: PROGRESS MADE ON INTERVENTIONS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

TUESDAY, 25 AUGUST 2020

ZOOM MEETING

ITEM 1. PROCEDURAL MATTERS

- 1.1 Opening and Welcome,
- 1.2 Attendance and apologies

ITEM 2: MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION:

2.1 INTERVENTIONS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

1. BACKGROUND

The outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic has had a negative impact on the South African economy and especially the Agricultural Sector. The sector lost value in production, unrealised revenues due to lockdown restrictions on trade and general movement of goods and people. In particular, the effect of the lockdown restrictions was hard felt by the downtrodden and poor who depend solely on the Agriculture sector for jobs, livelihood and other life essentials. Farmers especially small scale and commercial establishments lost a great deal of production and revenue streams.

The operations and programmes of the department on land reform and rural development were also severely affected and slowed down. This had a dire effect on progress with regards to Spatial Transformation and Land Development objectives due to slow down effect on Land Reform programmes and economic development.

Municipalities have a direct interest on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development. Land is the primary asset and lever to catalyse economic development and especially Rural Development. Without access to land ownership in strategic areas the development visions of many of our municipalities will never materialise. The Land Reform programme is therefore central to municipal interests for development. Resolution of land claims, acquisition of strategic pieces of land (especially state land) for development use in many of our municipal areas is paramount to SALGA's desire to guide Spatial Transformation and re-organization of the "*Apartheid Spatial Form*" for the inclusive benefit of all our citizens.

The devastating impact of the covid19 pandemic to farmers, farm dwellers and local economy of our rural municipalities in particular, will leave a long term effect on our planned development goals and plans. Already, our municipalities have been reporting among other the following key challenges:

- Increased incidences of land evictions
- Loss of jobs and its domino effect to municipal indigence as many more people are losing their jobs/incomes and start to default on their municipal rates and service payments
- Delayed processing of land development applications due to lockdown restrictions impacting on travel and conducting of inspections
- Growing risk of food security concerns
- Growing risk of small scale farmers defaulting on their bank loans and thus risking job losses and disruption of essential food security networks
- Growing risk of insufficient readily prepared and planned land parcels for such uses as burial and cemeteries services
- Risk of exposure to large scale spread of infections due to lack of adequate access by farm workers and poor rural households to Personal Protective Equipment which is essential for combating the spread of the COVID-19 virus
- Shrinking of available cashflow and going concern risks due to low collection levels and non-payment of rates and services during lockdown months

2. MUNICIPAL RESPONSES TO COVID19

Municipalities are at the coalface of service delivery and have also been at the forefront of the fight to combat the spread and minimise of negative impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic to our citizens. Upon declaration of the State of National Disaster and clarion call to join forces in the combating of the spread of the covid19 virus, many of our municipalities were through into the deep end. They had to respond to:

- Need to secure safety of citizens by providing and extending essential services like water, refuse, sanitation, electricity and road maintenance to citizens in vulnerable positions. This had to be given whether citizens were able to pay or not
- Provide essential tools to defend citizens from infecting each other by providing free access to PPEs (Personal Protective Equipment) to vulnerable groups (Poor, Elderly, Disabled and other) who reside in our spaces. This included farm workers in some instances especially in rural and agricultural areas
- Provide and or facilitate provision of additional non-assigned emergency functions and services like provision of shelters, food parcels, maintenance of rural/farm roads and sanitization of public spaces like taxi ranks etc
- Responded to the growing demand for municipal public health and environmental services to complement the work of Department of Health (Primary Health Services)
- Engaging IGR partners to mobilise resources towards the relief of stresses caused by the covid19 pandemic to our local economies.

In particular, SALGA acknowledges and appreciates the relief brought by the following relief programmes but not limited to:

- Non-governmental organizations like UNDP, Solidarity Fund and others who partnered with government at different levels to provide necessary relief packages to the vulnerable groups in peri-urban, rural farming communities and agricultural sector in particular. These interventions have brought a great deal of hope to our municipalities and citizens at large.
- Covid19 Economic stimulus packages announced by President Ramaphosa and detailed by our various ministries such as the R1,2 billion by Hon. Minister Didiza's department for Farmers and Agricultural Production Support

2. SALGA's RESPONSE TO THE MINISTER'S BRIEFING

SALGA acknowledge and appreciate the hard work done by the department in combating the impact of covid19 and advancing the strategic programmes on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development as described in the

Minister's briefing. We take note and have keen interests in further engaging the department on where we can collaborate through our municipalities to take forward the pronounced developments in respect of:

- 1) The Agriculture Master Plan programme
- 2) The Land State Land Allocation programme
- 3) The Rural Development Strategy and Land Reform programme

We also wish to extend our invitation to the department to join hands in the resolution of the following key challenges currently facing local government:

- 1) Resolution of the Land Administration system value-chain challenges
- 2) Resolution of the areas of impasse currently experienced between Rural Municipal Councils and Traditional Authorities in respect of the full implementation of SPLUMA
- 3) Joint-provision of capacity to struggling municipalities to fully realise the value and effectively implement SPLUMA
- 4) Sharing of experiences and knowledge systems between municipal Local Economic Development Functions and the department's Research Agencies

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

SALGA, extends its gratitude to the NCOP for the opportunity to present and reflect on the interventions and responses of LG to Covid 19.

Further, SALGA recommends that:-

- 1) **The briefing by the Hon. Minister T Didiza** on Progress Made on Interventions to Mitigate the Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development be noted
- 2) **The National Council of Provinces** support the commitment for further engaging between SALGA and the department to iron out key areas of collaboration in advancing the pronounced developments in respect of:
 - a) The Agriculture Master Plan programme
 - b) The Land State Land Allocation programme
 - c) The Rural Development Strategy and Land Reform programme
- 3) **The National Council of Provinces** support the commitment for further engaging between SALGA and the department **join hands in the resolution of the following key challenges currently facing local government:**
 - a) Resolution of the Land Administration system value-chain challenges
 - b) Resolution of the areas of impasse currently experienced between Rural Municipal Councils and Traditional Authorities in respect of the full implementation of SPLUMA
 - c) Joint-provision of capacity to struggling municipalities to fully realise the value and effectively implement SPLUMA
 - d) Sharing of experiences and knowledge systems between municipal Local Economic Development Functions and the department's Research Agencies