**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE CALLS FOR DETAILED PRESENTATION ON BUDGET SPENT ON CASP AND ILIMA LETSEMA**

**Parliament, Friday, 20 November 2020** – The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development today received a briefing from the former Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries on its 2019/20 annual report in preparation for the Budget Review and Recommendation Report.

The Chairperson requested the department to prepare a detailed presentation on how the budget was utilised for the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (Casp) and Ilima Letsema.

The committee also noted that the department was reconfigured, with Agriculture merging with the Department of Rural Development, while Forestry and Fisheries merged with Environmental Affairs.

The committee further noted that there has been a regression in meeting performance targets from the 2014/15 year to 2019/20 year under review, with programmes 3 and 6 receiving a qualified opinion. Members expressed concern with the overall performance of the Department and the fact that the Department was using the lockdown as one of the reasons for not achieving certain important targets. They also emphasised the lack of correlation between performance and expenditure where the Department used almost 100% of the budget even in cases where performance targets were not achieved.

The committee called for an integrated risk strategy that speaks to both departments of Agriculture and of Land Reform and Rural Development.

The department reported that the Covid-19 pandemic was one reason why it did not meet its targets. However, the committee refuted this, saying the pandemic began at the end of the quarter. The committee requested a report from the department on which offices were operational during the lockdown, as most offices were not accessible to farmers.

The Chairperson of the committee, Inkosi Zwelivelile Mandela, called on the department to report on the failure of the Land Bank to provide financial support to small-scale farmers. The Chairperson also queried whether the Land Bank has fully utilised the funds allocated to it. He called for the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development to work as one department to further the cause of small scale farmers.

The committee called for the department to have a fully functional Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and noted that extra personnel have been employed. The committee also urged the department not to wait for the last quarter to assess projects and programmes, but to do so continuously during the year.

The Chairperson also expressed his dissatisfaction with the responses received to questions posed by the committee. He will request that the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development attend the next meeting.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, INKOSI ZWELIVELILE MANDELA.**