**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE CALLS FOR DETAILED CONSOLIDATED DATABASE OF ALL STATE-OWNED FARMS**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 10 February 2021** – The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development yesterday received a briefing on the 2019/20 Annual Report by the Ingonyama Trust Board (ITB) and in the second meeting received a briefing from the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development on the progress registered on the release of state land for agricultural purposes.

The committee heard from the ITB Chairperson, Jerome Ngwenya, that the ITB is the accounting authority for the trust and that Treasury regulations, including Regulation 14, apply to the trust. For the 2019/20 year, the ITB achieved four out of seven targets under the administration programme. Two out of five policies were approved and the other three have been finalised as at March 2020. The communication strategy was not approved by the board as the internal process was not finalised.

Furthermore, the ITB achieved four out of 10 training programmes and the non-achievement was due to capacity constraints. There was no training for traditional councils and no educational grant as the ITB reported that these were unfunded expenses. The ITB receives grant funding from the department while the trust derives its budget from revenue collected from its trading and investments activities. The income from trading activities is mainly from leases, contractual royalties and compensation from servitudes.

Transfer payment from the department is mainly used to cover operating costs of the board. The ITB received R21.4 million from government and is said to be insufficient to cover its operating costs, the balance of the budget is paid from the trust.

Committee Members posed many questions to the ITB and some of those related to the ITB providing an updated organogram and an explanation on the short contracts of nine employees whose contracts ended in October 2020. Due to time constraints, the ITB will provide written answers to the committee by 19 February 2021.

At the second meeting, the committee was briefed by the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza, on the progress registered on the release of state land for agricultural purposes. The Minister clarified that only farms which were under the South African Development Trust have been released. In the Western Cape and Gauteng, as there were no Bantustans or homelands, there were no farms under the South African Development Trust.

The Chairperson of the committee, Zwelivelile Mandela, welcomed the presentation and the establishment of the steering committee and its sub streams. The Electronic Management System for the database of the farms was developed in-house and thus no additional costs were incurred.

The department received a total of 43 997 applications for the 700 000 hectares of farm land, which comprises 627 farms. The committee has requested a database of these farms, and a list of the eligible beneficiaries. The committee further called for a full database of all state land ownership in both the Agriculture and Land Departments. The committee heard that the Land Rights Enquiry has been completed with the exception of Mpumalanga and North West provinces, where 33 farms were completed with the exception of one farm which is awaiting a meeting confirmation with the traditional authority. In the North West province, 246 farms were completed with a 150 farm enquiries outstanding in one district.

The department has to respond to all questions posed in writing by 19 February 2021.

**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.**