**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE CALLS FOR IMPROVED COOPERATION BETWEEN MUNICIPALITIES AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE AGENTS**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 2 March 2021** – The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development today received a briefing from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), and the Agricultural Produce Agents Council (APAC), on the national fresh produce markets.

The committee heard from APAC, whose mandate is to regulate fresh produce, export and livestock agents. APAC’s primary focus is the protection of farmers. APAC, in collaboration with the former Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, held 18 training sessions for 942 small commercial farmers across South Africa. The committee welcomed that APAC regulates 910 fresh produce agents and over R18.2 billion per year in the industry. APAC has a history of having an unqualified audit for 28 years through private audits.

The committee welcomed the Project Rebirth of the National Fresh Produce Markets which is a key public marketing infrastructure for food security and local economic development. It is a collaborative effort between the government and the fresh produce industry to improve and revive its operations and service standards throughout South Africa.

However, the committee heard that municipalities were not doing their part to plough back 5% of the revenue generated from these markets for the maintenance and development of the fresh produce markets. In many instances markets are dirty with dilapidating infrastructure and without management capacity by the respective municipalities, and therefore the committee will call for an intervention from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs for assistance.

The committee also heard that there was no overarching act to support these markets which fall under the municipal by-laws, however the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development must ensure that legislation in this regard is developed.

**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.**