**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE CALLS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PROPOSED SOLUTIONS TO ALLEVIATE IMPACT OF LOAD-SHEDDING ON FARMING**

**Parliament, Friday, 24 February 2023 –** The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development has welcomed briefings it received today from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development. The briefings included one on proposals to alleviate the impact of load-shedding on farming and the farming sector, as well as a briefing on the Animals Protection Amendment Bill.

The department was led by its Minister, Ms Thoko Didiza, who was accompanied by her deputies. The committee heard that the escalating energy crisis presents a food security risk for the country and that the government should support a call for a properly planned load-shedding approach in agriculture and food businesses.

The task team established by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development informed the committee, among other things, that Eskom has been requested to ensure that properly calibrated and less severe load-shedding is implemented in the concentrated irrigation regions. Furthermore, the power utility is open to this engagement and has requested that provincial farmer structures contact Eskom’s regional representatives to explore the possibilities.

The committee also heard that Eskom clients in the sector with dedicated supply infrastructure should apply for load curtailment, while customers supplied by the same feeder/ substation can group together and also apply for load curtailment. Customers in municipal supply areas where switching is done by Eskom and it is possible to exempt/curtail, municipalities should be allowed to do their own switching to accommodate customers.

In welcoming the briefing, the committee called for, among other things, an inclusive structure of stakeholders in this intervention, concrete practical and translatable plans, and direct involvement of all the farmers in the provinces, both new and established ones. Furthermore, the committee called for the translation of the proposed solutions into actions.

The committee was assured by the department that vulnerable smallholder farmers are receiving support, there is a rebate for farmers on tariffs and separate connections to farmers who get electricity as part of communities, as well as the installation of micro grids.

The committee also received a briefing on the Animals Protection Amendment Bill. The committee is still considering the Bill.

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

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