**African Christian Democratic Party**

 **12 May 2022

ACDP Parliament
Budget Vote 29: Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
Speech by ACDP Parliamentary Whip, Steve Swart MP**

**ACDP MP concerned that the 199 children who died from malnutrition in the first two months of this year might just be the tip of the iceberg**

"Chairperson,

The ACDP would like to pay tribute to all the farmers, commercial and emerging, along the whole agricultural and all those along the value chain - who continue to provide food to South Africans. South Africa has the highest level of food security in sub-saharan Africa and is a net exporter of food, and for this we can be grateful.  Aan ons boere, ons sê baie, baie dankie.

However, the Russia-Ukraine war has raised concern about escalating global food insecurity as these countries are major exporters of grains, oil seeds, fertilisers and crude oil. Since the war started, the prices of these commodities have risen significantly, and South Africa, interlinked in the global commodities market, is exposed to these price increases.

The grain and oilseed plantings in KwaZulu-Natal have also suffered due to the heavy rain, leading to delays in harvesting. There are also pre-existing constraints to agriculture growth, which include inefficiencies in state administration, infrastructure issues, security, and geopolitics.

Despite the fact that South Africa is a net exporter of food, there are roughly six million people in the country who do not have enough food to eat.

What is even more alarming is that according to the latest data available to the National Department of Health, 199 children died from malnutrition in the first two months of this year, with KwaZulu-Natal hardest hit.

This is probably the tip of the ice-berg with the department saying it was concerned that many more child deaths might occur away from its facilities, especially in rural districts.

It is disgraceful that the government donates millions of rands to foreign countries when some six million people in the country do not have enough to eat. Families are destitute in our own country, and children are dying increasingly of malnutrition in the country.

Surely, honourable minister, charity must begin at home, and more resources should be directed to ensure our population is not starving.

People go hungry not because food is expensive or scarce, but because as agricultural economist Wandile Sihlobo states “households simply do not have any income. Even if something [costs] R2, to a man without R2 that is unaffordable.”

The ACDP agrees.

But whose responsibility is it to feed the hungry? While the government bears the lion’s share of responsibility, it cannot do it alone. The private sector, civil society and ordinary people need to assist in tackling the issue. Food donations to organisations that feed the hungry should be encouraged. The ACDP is playing our role in this regard as well.

Lastly, the ACDP wishes to thank those churches and other faith –based organisations, and NGO’s such as “Gift of the Givers”, who are assisting with food donations and distribution at this critical time, particularly following the devastating floods in KZN.

You are the true heroes.

I thank you."