**BUDGET DEBATE ON READJUSTED BUDGET OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LAND REFORM:**

1. Chairperson, the COVID19 pandemic, tragic as it is, offers us a rare opportunity to restructure the whole nature of land holding as well as the entire agrarian economy in this country.
2. It calls for local solutions to the problems of inequitable land distribution, as well as the skewed, monopolised agrarian value chain.
3. You need no reminder of where we come from, and equally, you need no reminder of the monumental failure of your post 1994 establishment to return land back to the people.
4. You need no reminder of the fact that the agrarian economy is dominated by monopolies across the value chain, and that these purposefully close off any opportunity for meaningful engagement by Africans.
5. You need no one to remind you that your land restitution programme in particular has been a painful failure. It promised people whose memories of dispossession were still vividly clear, that they were going to get their land back.
6. So many have died without ever realising this dream, because today, you still have not settled all the land claims lodged before 1998.
7. And of the budget items of this department, you saw it fit to cut the restitution budget far more than any of your line items.
8. Those who got the land through any of your programmes have been frustrated by your absolute neglect, no post settlement support, and your deliberate encouragement of intra-community conflicts.
9. The Babanango Land Claimants in KZN are one such community, as are the Ndabeni Land Claimants in Cape Town. They are examples of how your injudicious interference in community affairs has led to a complete collapse of community agency, and the death of dreams of land repossession.
10. These are communities that will suffer the most from these adjusted budget, because you will now have the excuse not to do even the barest minimum.
11. While the department may have run out of solutions, there are solutions aplenty around.
12. We need to fast track the amendment of Section 25 of the Constitution, to take the land of our people back from the invaders and the settlers, without compensation, and give it back to the rightful owners.
13. We need to create watertight mechanisms to ensure that the land does not fall on the hands of gluttonous politicians of the ruling elite, whose insatiable desire for self-enrichment knows no bounds.
14. We need to use this opportunity to promote a massive programme of food production across the country, favouring small scale farmers, women and youth led farming enterprises.
15. We need to build and support fresh produce markets in each municipality for access by small-scale food producers, with a minimum of 50% access by women and the youth.
16. We need to establish and capitalise agricultural development nodes in each of the nine provinces to increase the quantity and quality of agricultural production.
17. We need to restructure the Land Bank into a broad based Agricultural Development Bank, with a clear mandate to support emerging black farmers, including those farming in communally owned land.
18. We need to subdivide agricultural land and ensure that our new vision for agrarian reform is premised on the sound and viable principle of promoting smallholder agriculture.
19. Only these can ensure that we emerge out of COVID 19 with a vibrant, restructured and productive agricultural sector, driven in the main by black people.
20. This adjusted budget lack the requisite imagination to take the country of the pit it is in now, and we reject it