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**BUDGET VOTE 29:**

**AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**HONOURABLE INKOSI R.N. CEBEKHULU**

Honourable Chairperson,

The purpose of Budget Vote 29 is to provide equitable access to land, integrated rural development, sustainable agriculture and food security for all.

Although agriculture is a relatively small sector in the South African economy in terms of its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product, it has been a stellar performer in shoring up the economy; thus, cementing itself as one of the major redeeming features of the South African economic performance.

There is no doubt that South Africa urgently needs to address the provision of agri-logistics and rural infrastructure for agricultural and rural development to be realised. The government needs to invest in agricultural and rural infrastructure that supports the expansion of production and employment, small-scale farming, and rural development.

The rural areas of South Africa are in desperate need of infrastructure such as facilities for storage such as silos, fresh produce facilities, packing houses, transport links to main networks such as rural roads, branch train lines, and ports, as well as the fencing of farms.

Other critical infrastructure includes irrigation schemes in poor and underdeveloped areas, improved research and development on pertinent rural issues which includes the expansion and revitalisation of agricultural colleges, processing facilities such as abattoirs, feedlots, and dairy parlours.

Therefore, the IFP welcomes the budget's commitment to critical infrastructure, including transport and logistics, water, and sanitation. However, considering that under the current government, we are still battling the cancer of corruption, one could only be hopeful that there will be no misappropriation of funds that will hamper the much-needed rural agricultural development.

Statistics South Africa has reported that in 2021, about 2.1 million people experienced hunger. Food insecurity was also listed as one of the main reasons for the July 2021 riots in KwaZulu-Natal and parts of Gauteng. It has been reported that South Africa is technically food secure but many households don’t have enough food for their dietary and nutritional needs. Statistics South Africa has also reported that there are more than half a million homes where children under the age of five experience hunger. Without adequate food that is nutritious, children are at risk of malnutrition, which can lead to stunting and physical and cognitive development problems. These children battle to learn and underperform at school, which perpetuates the vicious cycle of poverty and struggle.

Further, persistent load shedding poses an ongoing threat to food security – as it may lead to shortages of food in the country. Given the centrality of food security to the well-being of South Africans and the country’s stability, parts of the agricultural sector dependent on electricity for irrigation, packing, processing and cold storage should be shielded from load shedding above stage 4.

With the above-mentioned taken into consideration, the IFP supports this Budget Vote.

Siyabonga. I thank you.