**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 3683**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER [No 38-2022 SIXTH PARLIAMENT]  
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**3683. Mr N S Matiase (EFF) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development:**

How has the African Continental Free Trade Area been used by her department as a policy instrument to gain markets for the Republic’s agricultural products? **NW4509E**

**THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT:**

The Department has been part of the development and adoption of the agreed upon Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Policy Framework. The Department will, therefore, consistently apply this to gain markets through the harmonised standards that align the African SPS system with international science-based standards, border processes, sharing of information and technical capacity building.

This Policy Framework is guided by the World Trade Organisation SPS Agreement and International Standards Setting Organisation (Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex), International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), International Office of Epizootics (OIE). Therefore, South African agricultural products will gain markets through the harmonised standards and the specific protocols that would be negotiated at a bilateral level.

The AfCFTA market access pillar has been concluded with only a few outstanding technical issues, particularly the finalization of tariff offers, rules of origin and customs-related matters. At a policy level, the Department will domesticate the relevant legal policy instrument to facilitate the effective implementation of the Agreement. The AfCFTA Sanitary and Phytosanitary Annex will be incorporated into the DALRRD’s policy to process trade under the AfCFTA Agreement. This will help to ensure smooth access to the African market while ensuring that good quality standards in respect of food, plant & animal health are maintained. The Department will further embark upon trade promotion programmes to ensure detailed awareness and knowledge of the AfCFTA agreement and its market access requirements.

Through an Interdepartmental forum including the South African Revenue Services and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (SARS and the dtic), the Department will also work to ensure that member countries respect and comply with the agreed rules of trade. Where implementation challenges arise, the Department, through this forum, will work to resolve them using the agreed legal instruments such as the Dispute Settlement Mechanism in the agreement.