**Speech on Vote 29: Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
by Wayne Thring MP, ACDP Deputy President**

ACDP says it is time to put away failed racially based policies, and denounce and respond decisively to farm murders of all race groups

· raises concern over funds shifted for Covid-19 purposes, from programmes meant to assist small scale farmers and households

“Honourable House Chairperson,

When the ACDP interrogates the mandate of this department, which is to: provide equitable access to land, integrated rural development, sustainable agriculture and food security for all, we can come to no other conclusion than to say that the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development has failed the citizens of South Africa.

The lockdown has seen the department suspending some of its targets for 2020/21. These include activities that are critical for land acquisition and redistribution, agricultural production, food security, farmer support and capacity development, agricultural and rural development, as well as rural enterprise development. This budget is reduced from R16.8 billion to R14.4 billion – an overall reduction of R2.4 billion. Of great concern to the ACDP is the R258.1 million reduction for household food security, rural development sees a R199, 8 million reduction, and a R134.92 million reduction in economic development, trade and marketing.

This supplementary budget indicates that of the R2.4 billion suspended from the Vote, R913 million was shifted to covid-19 purposes within the vote. In light of the negative social impacts that the lockdown has had on individuals, it is concerning for the ACDP that money was taken from programmes that are meant to assist small scale farmers and households, with no tangible benefit seen in many hospitals, particularly those in the Eastern Cape, where patients have to fight for oxygen, wastewater runs in the corridors and rats drink the blood of patients that has spilled into the drains.

A Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (CRAM), published by 30 researchers from five South African universities last week indicated that in April, 3 million people lost their jobs, with the indigent and impoverished bearing the brunt. Of those interviewed, 47% reported that their household ran out of money to buy food in April 2020. The NIDS-CRAM Wave 1 survey shows that 7% of respondents (1-in-14) report that someone in the household went hungry ‘Almost every day’ or ‘Every day’ in the last 7 days, representing some 2,2-million individual’s in South Africa.

It is time to put away failed racially based policies, which erodes social cohesion in SA. It is time to denounce and respond decisively to the farm murders of all race groups, which threaten our food security, and give much needed thanks and attention to all farmers who put food on our tables. It is time to unite, build and grow our economy and in particular, our agricultural sector. The ACDP is prepared for this challenge.”