



# agriculture, forestry & fisheries

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Department:  
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE DEPUTY MINISTER  
GENERAL BHEKI CELE  
AT THE 38<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE FAO CONFERENCE**

**THEME: “*BREAKING THE CYCLE OF RURAL POVERTY AND HUNGER BY  
STRENGTHENING RURAL RESILIENCE*”.**

**06 – 13 JUNE 2015**

**Rome, Italy**

Chairperson of the Conference  
Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegations  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and privilege to be here today on the occasion of the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Conference. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency Dr Graziano da Silva on his re-election as the Director-General of FAO. South Africa recognizes his leading role in building consensus and strengthening international political commitment for food security.

Chairperson, the theme of this year's Conference General Debate, "breaking the cycle of rural poverty and hunger by strengthening Rural Resilience" is not only timely, but relevant. While almost 805 million people around the globe, are reported to be food insecure, it is however, heart-warming to learn from the 2013 FAO Report on the State of World Food Insecurity (SOFI) that the number is currently in the region of 7,3% lower than in 2012. This is a global landmark achievement and the gains must be commended and celebrated. Global hunger is indeed in retreat. Bringing the statistics home, according to the 2014 General Household Survey, of the 53.7 million people in South Africa, about 14 million of South Africans go to bed hungry every day. These reports are not only alarming but paint a gloomy picture in that, while some of us waste food, a large number of people have no food. In South Africa we ask; what can we do to eliminate/unlock poverty traps and push back the frontiers of hunger and poverty?

South Africa has made significant inroads on progress regarding the MDG 1 "**eradicating extreme poverty and hunger**" since the adoption of these goals in 2000. While poverty levels and its depth are declining, levels of inequality have remained high in South Africa. Hence, in South Africa, poverty and hunger issues remain at the pinnacle of government priorities. The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, was on point when he said "we are in a world of plenty, and no one should go hungry". The South African government has accepted this challenge.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Hunger Challenge demands a multi-pronged approach in terms of social and economic interventions. We have adopted radical socio-economic transformation to reverse some of the social ills afflicting our communities as follows:

South African Government continues to diligently entrench social protection programmes such as social grants, Community Nutrition Development Centres, provision of Food Parcels, disaster relief schemes, School Nutrition Programmes, Early Childhood Development and the Expanded Public Works Programme for job creation with associated co-benefits. We have begun turning the corner and there are visible signs of developmental impact in this regard.

In giving effect to the country's Vision 2030 as pronounced in the National Development Plan, we have adopted a nine-point plan to give our economy a 'big push.' The Revitalization of the Agriculture and Agro-processing value chain is number one in this nine-point plan and our Agriculture Policy Action Plan (APAP) is our programmatic response to this national priority founded on a systematically crafted integrated value chain approach to agriculture, forestry and fisheries. This plan focusses government and the entire sector on the value chains of selected high-value labour intensive commodities. APAP introduces a market-led approach to ramp-up the production of these commodities, reduce input costs, increase exports and reduce our reliance on the import of Agricultural and food products.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, we remain resolute and fully committed as government to turn the tide against the "poverty and hunger challenge". We have adopted the "business unusual" approach as government to create a conducive environment for farmers, irrespective of the size of their farms, to take the centre stage in managing their own development. Investment in agriculture and other socio-economic solutions is therefore regarded as being key to revolutionize rural economies and provide the necessary economic growth stimulus. With APAP, government, in partnership with the private sector and civil society, stands ready to step up efforts and provide all means possible to roll back the scourge of poverty and hunger with the concomitant creation of jobs and dramatically increase the

contribution of agriculture to the gross domestic product. In our quest to realise this objective, we will spare no effort as government in introducing smallholder farmers and the youth, into mainstream agriculture to advance the future of food security in the country.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, I wish to take this opportunity to remind delegates about the XIV World Forestry Congress which my government is hosting in collaboration with FAO. It is my pleasure to announce that we are poised to deliver a successful and impactful world class event from 7 to 11 September 2015 in Durban and I hereby invite you and the global community of sector policy makers, researchers, scientists and foresters to join us at the XIV World Forestry Congress.

Thank you for the opportunity Afforded to us.

I thank you.