

## Agbiz presents to the portfolio committee on agriculture on the responsible use of agricultural remedies

### Background

Following earlier presentations to the portfolio committee on agricultural remedies where calls were made for the banning of certain remedies, Agbiz had requested an opportunity in August of 2025 already to also present to the portfolio committee. The request was granted in November and on 25 November Annelize Crosby, on behalf of Agbiz and assisted by Roleen la Grange from Croplife SA, Willie Jacobs from Potatoes SA, Paula Bester from CGA and Corné Louw from Grain SA engaged with the portfolio committee members on the importance of agricultural remedies and the responsible use and regulation thereof.

### Presentation

In its presentation, Agbiz alluded to the fact that Modern agricultural production systems rely on access to safe, regulated agricultural inputs - including pesticides - to ensure viable crop yields and safeguard national food security. The agricultural industry is committed to safe, responsible agro-remedy use; science-based regulation; and sustainable agricultural practices. Industry also supports continued stewardship, and the alignment with international best practices while safeguarding long-term sustainability of agricultural production systems. Like electricity, motor vehicles and pressurised gas, crop-protection chemistry is inherently hazardous but indispensable when managed within strict parameters. Plants and animals suffer disease and pest attack just as humans face illness; modern pesticides, when properly chosen and applied, are the agronomic equivalents of antibiotics and vaccines.

Agbiz cautioned that any sudden blanket bans may lead to serious unintended consequences and ultimately be counterproductive. Sound policy must strike balance between public and worker health, environmental sustainability & imperative to produce sufficient, affordable, high quality and safe food.

While alternatives such as organic farming methods are valuable within specific niches, they are not yet scalable, commercially viable, or affordable across broad-hectare staple crop systems. Agbiz also pointed out that the agriculture practices and production in SA risk differ from that in other countries and continents. Producers are custodians of both the environment and the livelihoods of thousands of workers and are committed to upholding high standards of safety, compliance, and stewardship in pest and disease management. A lot of misuse is happening outside of the agricultural sector. Industry is committed to developing more sustainable and lower risk solutions; however, these solutions take time to develop and implement.

Regarding the regulatory environment, South African agriculture operates under a highly regulated crop protection regime. There are strict labelling laws, application standards, maximum residue limits (MRLs), and recordkeeping requirements. The Fertilizer, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies, and Stock Remedies Act (Act No. 36 of 1947) – primary legislation governing registration of remedies. Many Regulations have been promulgated in terms of the Act. There are also other environmental, health and labour legislation applicable. Proper resourcing for enforcement and co-ordination between govt departments is essential. There are also Pest Control Operator Regulations in place which focus on safe - and responsible use of hazardous remedies.

The agricultural sector acknowledges risk associated with agro-chemical use; invested in promoting responsible, regulated & safety-conscious practices throughout value chain. The agricultural sector recognises the need to evolve towards safer and more sustainable crop protection systems. However, this must be done **pragmatically and collaboratively**, with due consideration for local production realities, economic viability, and food security imperatives.

Agbiz proposed Industry the establishment of a formal multi-stakeholder task team, composed of government departments, organised agriculture, scientists, and civil society, to develop and guide the implementation of any future HHP phase-outs or regulatory changes.

### **Questions and responses from portfolio committee members`**

There was a robust debate on the presentation and many questions posed by members of the portfolio committee to which Agbiz and the representatives from members responded. Amongst other things there were questions on the definition of food security, what is being done to phase out highly hazardous pesticides and what alternatives have been identified, what protection is in place for farmworkers and how is this enforced? Agbiz undertook to submit some additional written input to the portfolio committee.

### **Input by the Minister, Director-General and Registrar**

The meeting was attended by the Registrar of Agricultural Remedies, the DG as well as the Minister. They also responded to some of the issues raised. The Registrar indicated that there is an existing 2010 policy document that recognises the importance of agricultural remedies, but also the importance of protecting the environment and peoples 'health. There is a specific category of remedies, which is the highly hazardous

pesticides that require proper management. He said that industry should clearly demonstrate what they are doing in terms of the hazard and risks associated with HHPs. The approach is to phase out these HHPs, subject to the availability of alternatives. It is important to note that HHPs are applied by professional applicators. He said that products are not banned where there are no alternatives.

The DG spoke about food safety and the role of other government departments. He referred to the Colloquium held in September and said that there will be further engagements on the subject. He also alluded to recent G20 discussions on agricultural production and innovation and food security and food safety. He said that South Africa produces enough food for its people, but we need to deal with food losses. A food security plan is being drawn up.

Minister Steenhuisen said that SA is committed to moving away from HHPs, because of international commitments. He also said that the Act 36 processes have been digitalised. He added that biological alternatives is in the process of being fast tracked in the registration process.

The video of the meeting can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Udkr79CIVJQ>

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