

## Effective communication of the Master Plan is vital for implementation

Most of the national government's agricultural policies and programmes depend on implementation by the provincial governments and municipalities for their success. The policies crafted in Pretoria have to find their way in various local agricultural strategies to materialize. The same goes for organized agriculture structures such as Agbiz. The engagements about multiple issues that constrain agribusinesses can be discussed with government leadership in Pretoria. Still, the execution is typically dependent on the cooperation of the provincial government and various municipalities. This doesn't mean that the national government is not impactful, quite the opposite. It sets the tone and focus for policy and takes the lead in important programmes such as land reform and blended finance. But on most other policies, the details are often left to the provinces to execute. The levels of administrative efficiencies amongst the provinces are typically displayed through the implementation rate of various programmes.

The key to this process, aside from the technical competence of each provincial government or municipality, is communication. We discussed this point earlier this year. It bears emphasizing as the government pushes to complete its Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan process by the end of the year and move towards implementation. The implementation of the Master Plan will primarily depend on the collaboration of provincial governments, farmers and agribusinesses. This means all parties involved should have a shared understanding and buy-in of the Master Plan. The private sector players have been represented in the drafting and consultation process over the past year, primarily interacting with the national government. The national government then has the responsibility to effectively communicate the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan to all provincial governments. This helps in the near term and ensures that when the provincial government reviews their agriculture strategies, they align them with the Master Plan and allocate spending accordingly. This also means when the agribusinesses consult with the local government offices in various country regions, there could be a common understanding about the agriculture development focus of the country.

In communities with agriculture potential but limited or no organized agriculture, such as various regions (former homelands) of Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, it is the government's responsibility to communicate with community leaders in such areas. The Master Plan is centred on a joint-venture approach to development. The communities are crucial to forming the shared vision and sense of responsibility in the implementation process.

In areas with organized agriculture groups, the provincial government should be encouraged to interact with various agribusinesses in their regions as they identify the potential projects of collaboration and areas of critical interventions to improve the ease of doing business. The government should lead this process, assisted by the national structures of various farmer groupings and Agbiz. Such interactions would also help cover farmers and agribusinesses that are crucial in some towns, yet not members of established organized farmer and business groupings. All hands should be on deck during implementation. Roles and

04 November 2021

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responsibilities should be communicated when agreed upon by the social partners. This requires effective communication from the government's side.

Agriculture is a local government task. The challenges that various agribusinesses and farmers face, such as poor road maintenance, electricity supply, and water interruptions, are primarily critical local government competencies. These are also vital hindrances to investment and growth in the agriculture and agribusiness sector and are identified in the Master Plan.

As the technical work of the Master Plan draws to a close, the communication strategy should be drafted to nudge the provinces to budget along with the Master Plan objectives and interventions for their regions. The government should lead this communication effort, utilizing all possible cost-effective avenues, while organized agriculture and agribusiness also play a role through doing provincial visits. Agbiz has already embarked on such a task through our recent visits to the Western and Eastern Cape and parts of Gauteng. We plan to proceed to other parts of Gauteng before year-end and other provinces next year. Our stakeholder engagement visits are not limited to the Master Plan but include a range of agriculture policy matters. The Agbiz office has communicated to our members that we are yet to visit.