

“Trying times need courage and resilience. Our strength as a people is not tested during the best of times.” Thabo Mbeki

STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS (SONA)

The Presidents SONA last night will have pleased many in the agricultural field, while we need to see the words translated into actions, the emphasis on a market led economy and a greater role for the private sector bodes well for the future. In particular, we welcome his announcement that Transnet is focused on improving efficiencies at the ports through procuring additional equipment and implementing new systems to reduce current congestion. This was after the CGA called on the President to announce immediate interventions to improve the situation at the ports ahead of the 2022 export season kicking off.

Below are some other extracts that are particularly pertinent for the citrus sector:

- We all know that government does not create jobs. Business creates jobs.
- Around 80 per cent of all the people employed in South Africa are employed in the private sector.
- The key task of government is to create the conditions that will enable the private sector – both big and small – to emerge, to grow, to access new markets, to create new products, and to hire more employees.
- The problems in the South African economy are deep and they are structural.
- When electricity supply cannot be guaranteed, when railways and ports are inefficient, when innovation is held back by a scarcity of broadband spectrum, when water quality deteriorates, companies are reluctant to invest and the economy cannot function properly.
- With a view to addressing these challenges we are accelerating the implementation of far-reaching structural reforms to modernise and transform these industries, unlock investment, reduce costs and increase competitiveness and growth.
- The electricity crisis is one of the greatest threats to economic and social progress.
- Load shedding continues to have a huge impact on the lives of all South Africans, disrupting business activities, and placing additional strains on families and communities.
- Our economy cannot grow without efficient ports and railways.
- Over several years, the functioning of our ports has declined relative to ports in other parts of the world and on the African continent. This constrains economic activity.
- The agricultural sector, for example, relies heavily on efficient, well-run ports to export their produce to overseas markets.
- Fresh produce cannot wait for days and even weeks stuck in a terminal.
- This hurts businesses and compromises our country’s reputation as an exporter of quality fresh produce.
- Transnet will ask for proposals from private partners for the Durban and Ngqura Container Terminals within the next few months, which will enable partnerships to be in place at both terminals by October 2022.
- Transnet will start the process of providing third-party access to its freight rail network from April 2022 by making slots available on the container corridor between Durban and City Deep in Gauteng.
- Transnet has developed partnerships with the private sector to address cable theft and vandalism on the freight rail network through advanced technologies and additional security personnel.
- This collaborative effort is already showing results in reduced disruptions to rail operations
- The agriculture sector has significant potential for job creation in crops such as citrus, table and dried grapes, subtropical fruit, avocados, berries and nuts.