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Press release: Land reform gains the highlight of a “business as usual” State of the Nation Address

In response to President Ramaphosa’s 2024 State of the Nation Address, Agbiz Chairperson Francois Strydom welcomed the recognition given to South Africa’s real gains in the area of land reform; *“As can be expected in an election year, the focus was largely on counting the successes of the fourth administration. While we would have liked to see bolder steps taken to stimulate our economy, the value of recognising the sector’s efforts towards land reform cannot be overstated. The agricultural sector is highly competitive and capital-intensive. In the absence of direct state support, inter-generational knowledge and investments are often required to buffer against shocks brought on by a volatile market and climate. This is a tough environment for new entrants, but despite these challenges, we have managed to achieve a real and lasting transformation. The industry has played a significant role in this transformation by providing skills transfer and financial and technical support. Acknowledgement of the progress that we have made is a breath of fresh air, especially after an attempt in the recent past to amend the Constitution to allow for expropriation without compensation. A special mention must also be made of the role that Agbiz’s members, affiliates, and staff have played in the process, as vindicated by the President’s mention of our Chief Economist, Mr. Wandile Sihlobo. We are proud of these achievements, and it is heartening to see recognition given its due.”*

Outside of land reform, Agbiz CEO, Theo Boshoff noted the following: *“Aside from encouraging remarks on land reform, the address provided little in the way of policy direction for the coming year. Instead, the address provided a status update on a number of processes that are underway. We can interpret this in one of two ways: on the one hand, the address was devoid of any new ideas or major announcements to stimulate economic growth. On the other hand, one can argue that it was an affirmation that the state is not deviating from commitments made in the previous SONA but rather allowing critical processes to reform our electricity, logistics, and water infrastructure to unfold. Business has invested a great deal of time, capital, and goodwill into these collaborative efforts. It seems as if these processes are being supported at a critical time when the temptation must be there to shelve longer-term pragmatic processes in favour of a populist approach. We hope that this trend will continue after the elections, as our economy sorely needs a dose of pragmatism.”*

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