

<b>MEDIA RELEASE</b>	<b>PSA welcomes Minister's vision to modernise agriculture and boost the rural economy</b>
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<b>EMBARGO</b>	None
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) commends the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen, for outlining a clear and forward-thinking vision to modernise and grow South Africa's agricultural ecosystem. The PSA is encouraged by the Minister's focus on key priorities, including shifting agricultural logistics from road to rail and adopting advanced technologies to reduce crime and increase productivity within the sector. Minister Steenhuisen highlighted the sector's significant economic contributions, noting that the South African economy grew by 13.4% in the first quarter of the year, creating 21,000 new jobs. Since 2008, the agricultural sector has achieved an average growth rate of 7.5% per year.

The PSA welcomes the Minister's emphasis on supporting small-scale farmers through blended finance initiatives, which will reduce financial barriers and improve access to markets. The Minister pointed out substantial opportunities for small-scale farmers to supply produce to hospitals, schools, and prisons, strengthening food security and boosting local economic activity. Moreover, the Minister addressed the outdated legislation governing the agriculture sector, some of which dates to 1947. He reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring that these laws are updated to align with modern products, technologies, and practices. A continuous review of the agricultural ecosystem will be undertaken to identify areas for improvement and innovation.

On the issue of rural safety, the PSA supports the Minister's call for more effective policing and the use of technology to combat farm attacks and stock theft. The Minister noted that technology will allow farmers to monitor large areas and protect their assets, enhancing security in rural regions. Additionally, the PSA welcomes the Minister's proposal for the G20 and its partners to invest in local food production opportunities, particularly within the agro-processing sector. By linking fresh markets with informal sector players, small-scale farmers, and women- and youth-owned farms, the PSA believes this will stimulate local production and foster food diversity.

The PSA acknowledges the Minister's focus on engaging the Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition as well as Botswana authorities to resolve trade bans and foster constructive regional engagements within the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

While the PSA fully supports this initiative, the government is urged to take swift action to implement these systems, particularly in disadvantaged communities. Doing so will not only address unemployment but also contribute to reducing poverty, thereby ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth across the agricultural sector.

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