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SPEECH DURING A WEBINAR ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN FOOD SYSTEMS

DELIVERED BY

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Programme Director

Your Excellency, Ambassador Kionka, European Union

Chairperson of the Commission of Gender Equality, Ms Tamara Mathebula

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Women Producers and Industry Representatives

Senior Officials in the Department

Ladies and Gentlemen

The year 2021 marks the 76th anniversary of the United Nations and the 26th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform of Action.

We will recall that the Beijing Declaration and the Platform of Action called for, among others, addressing the inequalities and poverty that still persisted in society and adversely affected women and children; and affirmed that the “eradication of poverty based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice requires the involvement of women in economic and social development, equal opportunities and the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people-centered sustainable development.

As South Africa, we celebrate the life and legacy of umama Charlotte Maxeke. All these anniversaries are interconnected as they seek to promote, elevate and enhance women’s central role in ridding our country and the world of the scourge of poverty, hunger and malnutrition and putting us on a trajectory envisioned in the Sustainable Development Goals and the National Development Plan 2030.



Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development · Departement van Landbou, Grondhervorming en Landelike Ontwikkeling
Muhasho wa zwa Vhulimi, Mbuedzedzo ya Mavuna Mveledziso ya Mahayani, uMnyango Wezolimo, Izinguquko Kwezomhlaba
Nokuthukiswa Kwezindawo Zasemakhaya Ndzawulo ya Vurimi, Antswiso wa Misava na Nhluvukiso wa Matikoxikaya · Litiko
Letekulima, Tingucuko Kutemhlaba Nekutfutukiswa Kwetindzawo Tasemaphandleni · UmNyango wezokuLima, ukuBuyiselwa kweNarha
nokuThuthukiswa kweNdawo zemaKhaya · Kgoro ya Temo, Peakanyoleswa ya Naga le Tlhabollo ya Dinaga- magae · Lefapha la
Temothuo, Kabobotjha ya Naha le Tlhabollo ya Dibaka tsa Mahae · Lefapha la Temothuo, Pusetso dinaga le Tlhabololo ya Metsemagae
ISebe lezoLimo, uBuyekezo lwemiHlaba noPhuhliso lamaPhandle



This year's women month commemoration happens at a time when South Africa, like many other countries around the world, heeded the call by the Secretary General of the United Nations, to begin the process of leveraging the power of Food Systems to deliver progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and come up with bold actions and solutions to food systems challenges.

It also happens at a time that our country is gripped by the waves of the Covid-19 pandemic and the aftermath of the social unrest that we experienced last month. Our resilience as a nation has been tested and what has emerged is that focusing on transforming our local and national food systems is key to building and sustaining social, economic and environmental resilience over time.

Last week, I invited you to this webinar to share with you the outcomes of the process we, together, embarked upon since June 11th, when I launched country-wide Food Systems Dialogues.

I hope that the majority of you on this platform formed the more than 3500 participants in the 11 dialogues that we have had thus far. We are eager to hear your views, not only on the solutions and actions that have been put forward, but also on how you as women will engage with the process of implementation going forward.

We convened this webinar to provide women active in food systems an opportunity to share what they regard as actions required to position women as significant players in ensuring safe and nutritious food for all as well as building resilience of our food systems. The actions and solutions that will be shared today will be anchored on existing policy instruments and programmes on offer. But, they will also be used to identify the gaps within government policy and programmes to achieving the goals of ending hunger, malnutrition and poverty and putting our economy on a sustainable trajectory.

Those of you who were present at last week's webinar would have heard about a number of policy instruments and programmes on offer by my department, aimed at supporting women.

One such policy is Beneficiary Selection Policy. This policy advocates for and sets a target of 50% of the beneficiaries of state land to be women. We acknowledge that one of the challenges of access has been information about what offerings are available and how to access them. We are improving on our information and communication strategies.

In addition to our funding mechanisms that are available such as CASP, Ilima Letsema Land Development Support, we have recently developed a Blended Finance Instrument working with our Development Finance Institutions and Private Banks.



We were able to assist a total of 40 884 women through the Presidential Employment Stimulus Initiative and we have approached the National Treasury to approve the extension of this programme in response to the need that has been expressed.

We have also started Women in Agro-processing and agribusiness program. Through this program we want to expand women's knowledge of and upscale their entry into the agribusiness sector. We are doing this in order to ensure that support mechanisms for women in the agribusiness sector are available.

In this year of Charlotte Maxeke, we are piloting the Women in Agro-processing and Agri-business programme with 100 women who have already entered the agro-processing space albeit on a small scale. The intention is to incubate these women enterprises such that they can become sustainable and grow. This pilot will provide lessons learned for both government and women beneficiaries and help in formulating a much more impactful programme.

Government has also recognized that we cannot achieve all these commitments alone. We therefore, need to embark upon meaningful Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) with the private sector, academia and international partners in our quest to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and NDP 2030.

It is for this reason that we are hosting this webinar together with TOTAL Energies, our long-time partner in women empowerment for the past 22 years, Ecosystem Development for Small Enterprise, an EU funded project and UN Women. We will be hearing first-hand the power of partnerships in driving food systems transformation for sustainable development.

I thank you for your presence here today and for your attention!!

