



## agriculture, land reform & rural development

Department:  
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**22 May 2020**

### **JOINT MEETING OF SADC MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY AND AQUACULTURE**

Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza (MP), attended a virtual joint meeting of SADC's ministers responsible for Agriculture, Food Security and Aquaculture on 22 May 2020. The ministers noted the erratic rainfall that occurred during the 2019/2020 season in many parts of the region, which reduced area planted, contributed to poor germination and crop establishment.

The ministers also noted that, inversely, the northern parts of the region received excessive rains that caused flooding, which resulted in loss of lives, displacement of populations, destruction of infrastructure and washing away of crops in north-eastern parts of the region.

Furthermore, the ministers recognised the impact that COVID-19 had on the region, especially on the smooth undertaking of field operations and timely distribution of agricultural inputs, especially in rural based

communities. The pandemic further had a negative impact on the food and nutrition security and livelihoods of communities in member states; even noting that prior to COVID-19, the food insecurity in the Southern African region was already alarmingly high. The pandemic also has seen a delay in the assessment of food and nutrition status of the region due to travel restrictions many countries have put in place to contain the spread of COVID-19.

The ministers adopted the commitments made at the African Union Commission (AUC) and Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) AUC/FAO Ministerial Meeting, as a response to the COVID-19 and encouraged member states to implement these measures. Member states were also encouraged, through an intervention made by Minister Didiza on behalf of the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries; Ms Barbara Creecy, to implement these measures for the aquaculture industries too. The ministers further endorsed the guidelines for virtual collection of food and nutrition section data in the face of restrictions for face-to-face data collection due to COVID-19 pandemic. On transboundary pests and diseases, the ministers noted that the migratory pests, especially African migratory locusts, African armyworm and fall armyworm, continue to undermine regional and national efforts to improve crop production, due to the serious damage they cause to crops. Member states were encouraged to ensure that measures are put in place to address transboundary pests.

The ministers also endorsed the SADC Animal Genetic Resources Conservation and Utilisation Strategy, after noting that there is a rising global demand for food of animal origin and other livestock commodities. Furthermore, they endorsed the implementation of the Harmonised Seed

Regulatory System (HSRS), to ensure that there are harmonised regulations that would allow safe and quality seeds for the region.

End

**For media enquiries, contact Reggie Ngcobo, Media Liaison Officer, on 082 883 2458.**

**Issued by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development**