

Statement by Minister Angela Thokozile Didiza, MP at the G20 Agriculture Ministers Meeting: 21 April 2020

H.E Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture of Saudi Arabia;

Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegations;

Distinguish Heads of International Organisations;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good Afternoon. I would like to extend a word of appreciation to the G20 for organizing this important meeting. My thanks goes to His Excellency Mr Abdulrahman AlFadley for making it possible that a majority of us meet in this platform to deliberate of the important matter that has both social and economic impacts. We are aware that primarily all our countries are concerned about protecting the well-being of their citizens from this devastating novel corona virus. The containment measures taken thus far has seen countries closing their borders, increasing testing of citizens and treating those that are sick.

A number of economies are facing serious challenges and more workers have lost their jobs and thereby their livelihoods. We as the agricultural community have

also noted the negative impact of some of these measures to food security of nations particularly those that rely on imports for a range of food stuffs. At the same time we have noted that a number of countries have allowed the agriculture and agribusinesses to remain as essential services, albeit under strict hygiene conditions.

It is also, important that I highlight what is a known fact to most of you that African Agriculture sector is so different from many global small holder and subsistence farmer systems in terms of its financial and operational capacity to respond to the crisis, particularly that it is weaker and this situation will need much greater levels of international support.

Recently climate change has had a negative impact in the production capacities of many countries as they experienced droughts and floods. Covid-19 has added another stress particularly to those countries which are still battling the locust invasion such as the Horn of Africa. Animal diseases such as foot and mouth have also had an impact in some countries, therefore as we reflect on measures to ensure food security globally we need to keep this in mind.

In South Africa we have ensured that agriculture as a sector continues to operate. In terms of our agricultural calendar we continue with harvesting of our summer crops and soil preparation and planting for the winter season. The government

has also allowed the transit and export of food through our ports as we are interlinked with our region and continent.

The continued production has meant working with all agricultural stakeholders to put hygiene measures in place. We have also given financial relief to ensure that farmers in distress can continue to operate.

In order to ensure that we assess the food security in the Continent, as the AU STC Chairperson on Agriculture, we convened a meeting on the 16th of April 2020 with FAO where majority of Africa Ministers of Agriculture participated. At the conclusion of this meeting we agreed to set up a task force that will continue to monitor the food security situation in the African Continent and make interventions where such is necessary.

It is our view therefore that as the G20 we should continue to increase awareness and understanding of the potential of technologies to promote sustainable agricultural productivity, to contribute to the environment through the sustainable use of natural resources and to create greater scope for evidence-based policymaking in the sector.

I would like to propose that as the G20 we need to address export restrictions as already highlighted by other members.

In terms of transparency of available food stocks in Member States I propose that the Agriculture Market Information System be utilized to provide better information in assessing global food supply and advise G20 countries on levels of food production, consumption and stocks , as well as on food prices in real time.

I also propose that we should ensure continued food production. We support the agricultural calendar as proposed by FAO. This tool will ensure that farmers keep to this calendar and agricultural input supply chains are aligned to this calendar.

I wish the G20 Agriculture ministers every success.

I thank you