

MEDIA RELEASE BY MINISTER IVAN MEYER ON THE EVE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN REGULATIONS

26 March 2020

The recently announced 21 Day COVID-19 Lockdown Regulations has understandably created much anxiety within the agriculture sector.

I do however want to assure farmers and farmworkers that in terms of Regulation No. 398 of the Disaster Management Act, 2002, the sector, being responsible for food security, has been declared as essential.

This declaration reemphasises that the entire food value chain, from farm-related operations, agro-processing and food manufacturing, logistics and related services, wholesale and retail services, and all support functions that ensure efficient delivery of the agro-food system have to be functional to ensure that there is access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food.

The safety of our farmers and farmworkers on and off work is very important to us.

We have to ensure that critical agricultural production activities such as harvesting continue uninterrupted – this is done under strict prescripts as provided for in Regulation No. 398 of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 and Department of Health COVID-19 hygiene protocol. General hygiene measures must therefore be strengthened.

National Government will continue to facilitate the export of strategic agricultural commodities to ensure safe and smooth trade during this period. Relating to citrus, an agreement has been reached with Japan for alternative measures that would ensure uninterrupted trade for the 2020 citrus export season.

Enough food is available at our food distribution and logistics will ensure food security. There is therefore no need for panic buying of food as it only creates distortions and artificial scarcities within the food supply sector.

I am thankful for the excellent co-operation I have been receiving from organized agriculture and for their commitment to protect and support farmers and farm workers during this period.

End.

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