

Newly launched agricultural development agency to bring industry players together

The launch of the Agricultural Development Agency (AGDA) at the three-day Africa Agri Tech Conference and Expo in Pretoria has been heralded as a landmark in the history of South Africa. The new organisation will be a private business initiative that will work closely with the government in all aspects of agriculture from skills transfer to the practical aspects of implementing land reform.



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Thoko Didiza, the Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform said the formation of AGDA is an excellent example of a positive response for business to work with government in the drive to uplift the economy that went out as a request from President Ramaphosa in 2018.



AGDA to launch at 2020 Africa Agri Tech Conference

11 Feb 2020



"The addition of the variety of businesses involved with the agricultural industry which are now or will become members of AGDA will be an important instrument in meeting the need for the responsible use of land in the reform process," said Minister Didiza.

"Access to finance and insurance are big challenges for new farmers and this is where an organisation such as AGDA can play an important role too as it will include major roleplays in the financial world."

The Minister also stressed the challenges facing farmers in terms of biosecurity that is being impacted by global climate change.



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On the positive side, the Minister said the Africa Free Trade Agreement, which comes into effect in July, will open the doors for increased export opportunities into Africa to the benefit of local farmers and associated businesses.

Improving the lives of millions

Rudi Dicks, the head of project management in the Presidency, said the President was given regular updates on progress with agricultural initiatives such as AGDA. He added that this sector of the economy was an important participant in the Jobs Summit, which was driven personally by the President. Dicks said that although there was no financial involvement with AGDA from the government at this stage there could be a possibility of capital investment in this type of initiative in the future.

Kallie Schoeman, the managing director of a 100-year-old farming business, was another prominent member of the agricultural community who gave his full backing to the AGDA initiative. He said that he saw the efficient use of agriculture as an excellent vehicle for reconciliation in South Africa as it was a practical way of improving the lives of millions by providing wider access to affordable food.

Malcolm Ferguson, an associate in the In Transformation Initiative, said the way forward for AGDA will be to continue with pilot projects, source funding from the private sector, set up a board of directors, establish operational committees and build on the initial list of 36 founding members.

The target is for AGDA to be operational by September 2020.

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