

## **DA calls for AU to debate the escalating farm input costs caused by the war in Ukraine**

*By Noko Masipa MP – DA Member on the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development*

House Chair,

The charter of the United Nations enjoins African states to, amongst other things, create a better life for all the peoples of Africa.

Post 1994, South Africans were promised freedom and a better life for all.

South Africa's Constitution that was adopted in 1996 bears the hallmarks of a liberal democratic order.

The OAU also enjoined leaders in the continent to play an active role in the global arena.

Russia's war with Ukraine provides Africa with an opportunity to introspect on global matters that affect our food basket.

In keeping with the spirit of the OAU charter, the Democratic Alliance Leader not only spoke out against the war in Ukraine, but also visited the conflict zone and saw first-hand the threat of food scarcity and looming higher inflation if the war persists.

That is what Africans do – show love and care. "Batho ke go hlolana." Ke se Afrika seo.

House chairperson, whilst 60% of the world's arable land is in Africa, the continent is faced with many farming challenges with abundant opportunities.

On this Africa Day, may we pause to reflect on the challenges faced by our farmers including the high price of fertilizer, high oil price, poor infrastructures, and the mismanagement of State-owned enterprises. These challenges and others contribute to many of our brothers and sisters fleeing the continent to the West to seek asylum and refuge due to hunger and economic reasons.

House chair, our challenges are not without opportunities.

Prior to the Russian war on Ukraine, prices of fertilizers had already gone up by over 100% and we expect another increase of 70%. All the potassium and 70% of nitrogen fertilizers are imported. Forskor, properly managed, is supposed to be able to produce fertilizers cheaply for the whole Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region. Unfortunately, due to mismanagement the institution is producing less than 20% of the needed fertilizers for farmers.

As parliamentarians, we need to join hands to reflect and make amends on our oversight role, especially on making agriculture work. We are duty-bound to ensure that institutions such as Forskor work and that the continent is able to produce enough fertilizer and lower costs of production and ultimately lower the cost of intra-African trade in the continent.

House Chairperson, under the ANC, many agricultural institutions collapsed due to poor policy choices on diplomatic relations, investments, and food production. For example, the Land Bank used to provide cheaper loans to farming community. Poor policy choices have failed the Bank.

The lesson learnt in the continent is not to repeat the mistakes of the Zimbabwean government's expropriation of farms.

Despite these uncertainties caused by poor policy choices, weet ons dat boere altyd 'n plan maak.

To strengthen resilience and sustainability in nutrition and food security on the African continent, we must accept and face the continental and global challenges that affect our farmers head on.

The quiet diplomacy on global matters by our government is a cause for concern. We have a duty to engage the global community to avoid the global risks for food production.

While the potentially dire consequences of the Russian war in Ukraine could be huge for Africa, our farmers are resilient. They need government support. Not corruption from colleagues on the right. As we celebrate Africa Day's milestone, let's join hands and address the looming danger of inflation on food production.

May this Africa Day be remembered as the day when Africa took her rightful place in the world. A day when African legislators stood up and spoke out against attacks on sovereign countries and the threat imposed on world food production.