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TO: ALL NEWS EDITORS AND JOURNALISTS

AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-PROCESSING ARE KEY TO THE GROWTH OF SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY – DIRECTOR-GENERAL OCTOBER

The Director-General of the Department of Trade and Industry (**the dti**), Mr Lionel October says agriculture and agro-processing are key to the economic growth of South Africa. October was addressing delegates at the two-day National Small Business Summit which started in White River, Mpumalanga, today.

The objective of the summit is to provide a platform for stakeholders using the mandate of Small Medium Micro Enterprises (SMME) development in order to engage on government SMME programmes and find solutions to challenges facing small enterprises in South Africa.

“The building of a strong agricultural sector, agro-processing, training and support of informal business as well as the beneficiation of raw products can reduce the country’s unemployment rate currently sitting at 25%,” said October.

October added that government has decided to support agricultural activities to the tune of R1.2 billion to build and sustain the sector.

“If we crack the agricultural sector, this will lead to the growth of SMME in the country and a dent in the unemployment rate,” added October.

Professor Abel Sithole from the Institute for Futures Research said SMMEs need to look beyond South African borders to expand their businesses.

“Government and consumers are not utilising SMMEs to procure products and services instead they are making use of conglomerates that are doing quite well and have massive capital to sustain themselves,” said Sithole.

Sithole also said government policies need to be relaxed so that SMMEs can contribute positively to the growth of the economy.

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