

**PRESS RELEASE May 23, 2016**

## **Top economist will discuss Land Reform as part of The Food Forum 2016 in Johannesburg**

Following new South African government pledges to speed up Land Reform over the weekend, Africa's biggest food expo promises expert analysis at a major conference in Johannesburg next month.

Africa's Big Seven (AB7) attracts hundreds of exhibitors from around the world and hosts The Food Forum 2016, a three-day conference that runs from June 19 to 21 at the Gallagher Convention Centre in Midrand.

Wessel Lemmer, senior agricultural economist at ABSA AgriBusiness, will be speaking on the third day of the conference on the aftermath of the drought in southern Africa and the implications of Land Reforms.

His presentation titled 'Economic challenges facing primary producers supplying the food chain' will consider the implications of government plans to redistribute the country's farmland.

On Saturday (May 22) Gugile Nkwinti, the minister of rural development and land reform, revealed his plan to revise land ownership across the country targeting farms that are largely still in white ownership, 22 years after the end of apartheid.

He told international news agency Reuters that he will impose limits on farm sizes, which will free up parcels of land to hand over to black South Africans.

He said: "If you are a small-scale farm and have 1,400 hectares, we will buy the 400, and leave you with your 1,000. We will buy the extra and redistribute it to black people."

Some economists and farming groups have said the proposals could hit investment and production at a time when South Africa is emerging from a major drought - pointing to the economic damage linked to farm seizures in neighbouring Zimbabwe.

Nkwinti reiterated that while the process of Land Reform needs to be speeded up 'to rectify past wrongs', he pledged that the government will 'stick to the law' and not follow Zimbabwe's destructive process.

Food Forum 2016 speaker Lemmer said in an interview earlier this year: "Land reform is important but must be fair and must work in the free-market environment. If we can ensure that South Africa strengthens its property rights, we will increase wealth for our citizens especially our entrepreneurial food producers. We mustn't over regulate our industry."

It means Lemmer's presentation will be of interest to a wide spectrum of delegates, from existing farmers right through to the companies that rely on a reliable supply of food to provide pre-packaged goods.

“We are very pleased to welcome Wessel Lemmer to The Food Forum 2016, which offers a combination of panel debates and speaker presentations covering the spectrum of issues affecting the food retail market in Africa,” said Christine Davidson, Vice President of dmg-ems Africa.

The three-day Food Forum 2016 begins on June 19 at The Gallagher Convention Centre and speakers on the food production sector during day three include Dr Mandala Buthelezi, Deputy President, National African Farmers Union and Phillip Usiba, Deputy President, Foundation of African Business and Consumer Services, talking about the effect of drought and prevention in future.

#### **Information**

**Africa's Big 7 (AB7)** runs from June 19-21 at The Gallagher Convention Centre, Midrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. It is the continent's largest food and beverage industry trade expo. Its seven specialised sectors cover everything from fresh produce and ingredients to manufacturing technologies, processing and packaging equipment, retail ready products, hospitality and catering equipment and much more. For more information, visit [www.africabig7.com](http://www.africabig7.com) The Food Forum 2016 runs across the three days and a full conference programme and confirmed speakers can be viewed at [www.africabig7.com/conference](http://www.africabig7.com/conference)

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