

**Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development Interview Transcript**

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**Chairperson:** Prof. Lucia Anelich

**Representative of the Department:** DG Mr Ramasodi

**Country Report Team:**

Prof Anelich: Your department is crucial in the response from an agriculture and food supply chain as well. So we are particularly glad that you could join us to be willing to discuss certain issues that you might have experienced and to explain to us the good things that the department actually did do in terms of assisting the agricultural sector and of course the remainder of the food supply chain where the department has a mandate. My name is Lucia Anelich. I have my own food safety consulting and training business, but I'm also Adjunct Professor at the Central University of Technology. It's always nice to have sort of a face to face introduction and I'll put my camera off so that we just save perhaps on the bandwidth and we hopefully not experience any difficulties. So thank you very much indeed before we ask any questions. Do you perhaps have anything you would like to say?

DG: Good day Prof, I am very sorry and I am just travelling but at the same time let me just indicate it's good to see you again. I have had a contact with you...where I am in terms of the program for health and food safety. There are no question in terms of the engagement, we are just happy that there is an angle that we need to have around the intervention that we have had around Covid-19 from a departmental point of view. Thank you very much.

Prof Anelich: Thank you very much. Yes, it's good to engage with you again as well. So perhaps as far as the first question is concerned and I hope we don't lose you during your travels in terms of the signal, but I'll indicate if you don't mind if there is a break in the signal that I might just ask you to perhaps repeat a portion of what you might have said that we may have missed. So in terms of the pandemic itself, how did your department respond to the pandemic specifically related to the impact on our agriculture in the country, the supply chain of the agricultural products including food where you as a department have a mandate? And that's the first part of the question and the second part is

what potential effect was there on imports and exports of agricultural products including food? Thank you.

DG: Right at the beginning of the hard lockdown on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, there were a few interventions that the department had to make in order to respond to the pandemic. The first one was to look at the funding options that we had within the department to ensure that winter production in the country happens uninhibited especially for smallholder farmers and also, for those farmers that were within a program within the department called the proactive land acquisition strategy where they had funds. (Lost signal). We had to ensure that we have got funding that was meant to address those farmers who were within that component of work that we are doing in terms of our land reform project. Then we also set aside money for farmers, R100 million specifically those who were within the Land Bank and who would have found it very difficult to service their debts if the hard lockdown continued over a period of time. So all in all there was funding that was set aside through reprioritization of funds within the department to deal with the aspects of ensuring that we continue with production in the entire phase.

Coming to issues of market access in terms of Import and Export we set up through the minister a Task Team that has to continually seek into the National Joint Intelligence and Structure that we had as we work towards a program to ensure that we have got what we would have had previously... in terms of free trade and then restrictive trade because of the restricted movement that we had. This team was comprised of industry, comprised of the department and comprised of Academia and all the state-owned entities that are here and by those I refer to PPECB, the Perishable Products Export Control Board, the Agricultural Research Council, and The National Agricultural Marketing Council. Those were the once very active.

We also engaged with the University of Pretoria and through them, there was an innovation which was called the Food Tracker which tracked all hindrances, for instance if there were challenges that had to do with auctions through the tracker they would trace that they have a problem in terms of auction or problems with food movement from any port or where ever. Then they would have a refocus within the department to deal with that particular issue. That was one of the critical areas for our work when it came to Covid-19. The other area of intervention they have had was to engage with international partners because at that stage one would have expected we would have blockages at ports of entry. We had to negotiate new protocols as you know Prof. even from your current work. We have got protocols with the importing countries whether it's citrus or whatever product that we are exporting around March, April and May. We negotiated with international partners who ordinarily have their inspections in South Africa to then allow us this year to forgo pre-inspection to ensure that

we do the inspection and they don't have to send their people to South Africa to come and do the inspection. That was negotiated with Japan, Korea, China. We also had negotiations with the US on the very same pre-certification programs. We negotiated also with Japan on the citrus program where normally we would have our own inspectors doing post-clearance inspection. So we also negotiated for that so that we could forgo to secure for that trade during that time and from a perspective of ensuring that they are exports because one of the issues is around ensuring that we don't only safeguard national food security but we have got also a responsibility to look at regional food security to ensure that our ports were open to ensure that staple foods are also imported to the neighbouring country. Those were the interventions that we had to ensure that there is trade in the region and globally to ensure that internally there is movement of commodity. The internal work that we did Prof. and colleagues was to ensure that when the regulations were first passed, the very first regulations that we have had you would recall that agriculture was declared as an essential service and food, some of the agricultural produce were also declared as essential goods so in that way you would have a way where agriculture was least affected; yes there were areas which were affected like liquor production, shearing of sheep and goats such as Angora and even tobacco was also impeded. But most of the agricultural trade was open except those with floriculture had difficulties at the beginning to call from the top of my head, but we ensured that as we proceeded all of these sectors were opened up through negotiations ensuring that there is a case that is always presented through the economic work stream of the Nat-joints so that agriculture could be there. And the results are there that if you look at agriculture was the only positive growth in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2020 which is when the hard lockdown... continued right through the other quarter, Thank you.

Prof Anelich: Thank you, That's a very comprehensive answer. You've given us a really good run down. There were some sectors that were interviewed; one of them was the group that import frozen meat into South Africa and you've mentioned, briefly, that there were these negotiations to forgo pre-inspection, in other countries with your reassurance that DALRRD would be doing the inspections at the ports. There were some cases where the officials from the department that were not available and in some cases there were problems with paperwork, so the demurrage costs were actually quite high in certain cases, sometimes the frozen meat would be lying at the ports for a good month. Whereas, you know under normal circumstances, it would take 3 days or so to release the consignment. Could you perhaps elaborate on some of the challenges you faced in this regard?

DG: Obviously you have heeded the issues that are at hand, you are in the middle of the pandemic, there are movement restrictions and there are issues around paper work. The biggest issue here forgoing other inspections, it does not mean you don't have to have, a let me say in this case a certificate of compliance either an animal health certificate or food safety to ensure that there is

attestation to import conditions that are there from the importing countries. In cases like that if there is documentation that is needed I will say that it will be released for such consignment as it is not according to international practices, but one would expect that the paperwork would be in place in terms of all the needed certification that could be there for animal health certificate or meat safety certification and its attestation. From the South African point of view apart from that paperwork that is required, if everything was ok I would have thought that other issues that we had to deal with during that time was the closure of offices or contacts that people would have had with people who have had Covid and that would influence the way that we did our work because if there would have been exposure, people would have been expected to self-isolate for a period of time before coming back to work that also led to a backlog. Even during that time we had staff that did not necessarily come in, more staff reduced to only in this case animal health technician to do the work. Granted there were issues that we had to deal with but to date if there were issues that were not dealt with, all consignment that had to be held back, there is a process that is provided for within the Act where one is not happy with the actions of whoever is the delegate of whichever executive officer in terms of the Meat Safety or the Animal Diseases Act, they can appeal that division. If there is an appeal process we would also expect that there would be delays more than before but in a nutshell I think in a period where we have got a pandemic you have got uncertainty in a particular country, you would expect that there would be impact in terms of service delivery on the ground.

Prof Anelich: Yes, thank you that's absolutely, correct. I mean the closure of the offices we were aware of that. I was just wondering if I can just follow on from that exact same point, are there learning's that have come out of this pandemic that the department could rectify if I can use it if that word going forward? Should we be faced with another pandemic in the near future?

DG: I think Prof the word rectify might be a word that I would not be comfortable with, I would be comfortable with modification because rectification seems to suggest that there was something wrong that was done, which is not the case as you know within a particular developing scenario we need to then modify whatever system that you have and respond to what is happening at that stage. So, I would go with the concept of modification instead of rectification.

Prof Anelich: Absolutely, sorry I just wanted to say by all means you're quite correct. Modification is a far better word. Thank you.

DG: Yes, so we have had quite a few adaptive strategies that we had to engage. Part of the adaptive strategies was to ensure that we have got a standard approach in terms of people who are working. We would not necessarily have every person coming to work so that we can limit the exposure if any. You would also have people who would work straight from home to the point where they have got to

work trying to give colleagues electronic devices so that they can login. In terms of the exports for plant products, we went immediately I think on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, we went into electronic certification which is something that I think also faced us from what we experienced right through. I think one of the areas that we also had to deal with was in terms of the certification of import payment offices that we are having something that we currently dealing with. We have then tried to have multiple offices that we would issue from, even at this stage is one of the things that we are dealing with to ensure that you can issue a certificate from any of the offices and we can then divide the workforce just to be at different places so that we don't have a total shutdown, when we have got to address the issues if there was a contact within an office. I think the other area that is very important apart from it which is going to be a global phenomenon is video inspection that are coming up quite a lot. We have done quite a few with China. We would then have our inspectors on the ground to do what we call a visual demonstration of what is happening and they would take a decision based on that. So I think the world of risk management has moved on in terms of biosecurity where you can move to the next phase using videos and using other engagement mechanisms in order to change an inspection. I think the other area that is very important in terms of moving ahead is how do we deal with the global impacting disease such as FMD and others when people cannot move and people cannot bring their animals to the collation point whether it's a dipping tank or a healthy facility, but how do we respond as the department and how do we ensure that we have got a dispensation for the people to address those issues in loco, having a dispensation per the areas as we are trying to look at. There are many lessons that we have learned from this Covid-19 and I think it serves as a positive step for us to just move to the next phase during Covid-19 and post-Covid-19. There is a lot of work that we have done including just ensuring that from a perspective of the regional bases, we advise each other for even have best lessons from all African countries to ensure that how do we deal with Covid-19. We have a committee on agriculture, water and environment that we are leading including rural development that is being led from technical and ministerial side. We have done a lot of work, ensuring on a regional basis, where we advise each other and share best lessons from all African countries on how we can deal best with Covid19.

Prof Anelich: Thank you very much indeed. I had a question here related to relief packages. So the question revolves around why was a blanket approach followed with relief packages when agriculture was exempted because it was an essential service and therefore exempted from most of the lockdown regulations. Could you perhaps explain the rationale behind that decision?

DG: For fear of responding to a question that I do not understand, Prof would you paraphrase?

Prof: Thank you. I'm going to ask Prof. Kirsten to clarify. He wrote that portion of the chapter so I am going to invite Prof Johann Kirsten to please clarify that question.

Prof Johann Kirsten: Yes, I think the questions that you've answered so far illustrated how the department has applied the science and understanding of the constraints with imports and trades and the importance of ensuring that hygienic and food safety dimensions are protected very well. So that was quite impressive to hear your response to that. But this question relates to the point that you made right at the beginning of your introduction where you basically argued that they were specifically relief packages illustrated for people on the plus farms and on keeping the land reform system going etc. but the difficulty that most of us had with the approach was that the virus and the pandemic did not have a diverse impact on different farm types and different Industries, given that most of the industry was exempted from the lockdown regulations or production went ahead and even most of the farmers received good prices, especially in the field crops sector. So the mere fact is what made the decision, what drove the decision to provide this universal R30 000 to 50,000 approach to individual farmers without unpacking the damage that they have incurred as a result of the pandemic? I think that's in essence the thing - one would have thought that given that South Africa's fiscal resources are under constraint that you wanted to use the money for those vulnerable groups in the food system and also for those industries that were harmed by the lockdown regulations such as wine and tobacco and barley. So that was the sort of thinking behind the question.

DG: Thank you very much Prof and let's address maybe the first issue that says that there was a universal 30/50 000 that was given to the farmers. I think that was never the case Prof. The people that got the assistance from the department were depending on a model that we developed way back in terms of each and every commodity and how to deal with that. There is a model that determines how a person will be assisted and dependent on either the hectarage or the number of life stock whether LSC (??) they are having. So that was not universal but it was based on the needs of that particular individual based on a model that has been there for some time. The issue around how we would have determined impact - you would recall that this call was made by the minister just after there was an indication about the hard lockdown and it was in anticipation of what would happen within the sector if everything did not go according to plan. You would know that we have set up the legislative perimeter, but in terms of how the farmers would have responded, one would never know and therefore the reasoning behind it was to ensure that farmers could still produce during that particular time. Those who were producing live stock could still produce, those who would produce field crops, winter crops during that time ...vegetable... it was very clear. There was a clear criteria of five commodities that we were concentrating on and it was to meant to boost agricultural production during the pandemic which is something that you would have to think as to be very important during

that time. So it was not based on what you would say an impact analysis and saying that we are moving after the impact. It something that was futuristic to say how do we crop up the agricultural production during this time? Thank you very much Prof.

Prof Anelich: Thanks very much indeed. And then perhaps moving on a little bit further from that is how do you view the effectiveness of communication of the agricultural departments strategy with the different agricultural organizations and sectors. You did mention that you did have communications with various associations such as the PPECB, ARC and you know the National Agricultural Marketing Council, but were there other organizations that you communicated with and sought assistance and engagement with in the various agricultural organizations?

DG: Yes, quite a lot. I mean we worked with the agricultural industry, the minister would have meetings with the entire agricultural industry, whether you are talking about the organised agriculture, you would have your Transvaal Landbou Unie being represented, you would have your AgriSA represented, AFASA represented at the meeting, AFGRI represented, the New Agricultural Farmers organisations such as FUSA represented at the meetings where we have got discussions on agriculture. And of course, from an agricultural business standard AFGRI would be there at the centre to deal with the issues and when you look at academia UP being at the centre in terms of the business enterprises. It's something that we have done and something we will continue doing from engaging with the industry. Of course the other areas that would happen during the pandemic is that you would have direct request that would come from different organisations. For instance the wine industry and the liquor industry on a regular basis when the issues would continue the exchanging notes with the department you would have the same happening with the people who are running the livestock industry... the same almost everywhere. So it was a fluid kind of engagement with the industry on the issues and all agricultural industry issues were escalated either through the economic work stream or even by the minister herself and the NCCC to ensure that agriculture was invited during this period because we are still within the pandemic stage.

Prof Anelich: Thank you. Yes, there were some agricultural organizations that were not included in those early discussions. I'm wondering if....is there a plan in place to perhaps engage wider with other agricultural organizations such as the pork producers and some others as well that felt they were not included in the original discussions?

DG: Thank you very much, I don't think that from a perspective of the department, there is any exclusionary tactic in terms of dealing with the industry. We discussed with the pork industry, I can even I can even pick up my phone and talk to the CEO now. So if there is any industry that would feel that they had been excluded from the discussion one who'd have thought that there was an omission.

Because agricultural industry and all the people who are within the industry they have got a challenge. I usually say, we will forever be at the site of finding solutions within the industry. So, we worked with the pork industry in terms of the current outbreak.

Prof Anelich: We have lost you regarding your signal, so did you perhaps end the conversation at that point, where you were saying the all communication channels and that you know, you would do anything that you could to continue communicating with the different sectors. Is that ultimately what you were saying?

DG: Yes, we are open for discussion with all sectors and it might not necessarily be for instance, we were talking about the Pork industry. If there were issues with the pork industry quite well, we could have picked up and dealt with it. The issues around Covid-19, we dealt with them at an organised agriculture level because for instance if we have got to break them down to say we will consult with everybody, RMIF,....whoever is within this industry of ours, it would be very difficult to have that. But if there are specific issues that a particular industry would like to discuss with the department or that department vice versa would like to discuss with the industry and their hindrances within the Covid-19 pandemic, we always open our doors and engage with them.

Prof Anelich: Lovely, thanks very much. Please know that I wasn't suggesting that the pork industry had a problem. They were getting communication from AGBIZ at the time, so they actually felt that they were getting you know communication as needed from the department, but they were some others that were mentioning they were not part of the original discussions, but I think you've answered that question really well, thank you.

Now, there are one or two more see we do still have some time. So, you did mention farmers and some farmers that couldn't move and they couldn't and there was a problem and you were looking at some dispensations. But what specific activities did you undertake to support small farmers, emerging farmers, whether it was financial or in any other way specifically to geared towards those groups, the more vulnerable groups?

DG: I think that aligns with what Prof Kirsten was indicating. When we had Covid-19, we advertised for a relief fund. In fact, a fund not a relief fund, a Covid-19 fund, which seeks to then boost production at smallholder level and we had forty thousand (40 000) applicants that applied for that funding. We ultimately were able to support almost 15,000 with assistance of just over R550 million to boost their production. I think that's one area of exploration to say we will do any impact study on what the impact was but there has been positive output coming from there. So that's what we did in terms of the smallholder farmers. When it came to the subsistence farmer, we are currently in the process of

just finalising the presidential employment stimulus initiative, which is to the value of just under R1 billion which will afford the subsistence farmers assistance of between R1,000 and R9,000 for production and that is going very well and one of the lessons that we have used from the initial funding that we had for covid into the presidential executive, we have moved from a paper-based system, and now we are currently to using electronic systems just to do everything from application up to verification and payments. So those are the lessons we have learned and these are the interventions that we are doing for our farmers. Obviously, apart from these two interventions, huge interventions that we are having we still have got departmental programs that are also meant to deal with household food security like your “Fetsa Tlala” program through “Ilema le Tsema” and we still provide for infrastructure through the CUSP funding and through the engagements that we have had, we have just also finalised a few issues relating to the one hectare one household that we also supporting. So those are the interventions that we have at that vulnerable group level. Thank you very much Prof.

Prof Anelich: Thank you. You mentioned household food security. Does your department engage in any way with other departments related to for example the sharp increase in food prices and how that would affect household food security?

DG: Thank you very much Prof, yes, we do in actual fact that there is a committee that deals with integrated food nutrition and security within government that is led by the DPME and it's quite broad. It involves your Department of Social Development, it involves all those who are within nutrition - you would know the definition of food security includes your ability to also buy food. So it's quite broad. In actual fact what we have now through our engagements with the FAO; we have just done a study that will be released very soon that was looking at the hot spots within the country where you have got very high levels of food insecurity. This will be discussed right through the very same committee and will also be taken to the inter-ministerial committee to be dealt with on interventions that if evidence-based interventions that we can have within the country to deal with food insecurity. Of course, there's quite a need to ensure that there is active participation in terms of ensuring that we produce at household level in order to ensure that people would be only needing funding for other issues other than food security because there are vast tracts of land, especially in the rural areas that can be utilised just to try and deal with this issue of food security. Thank you.

Prof Anelich: Thank you, That's really good news. I'm wondering now, of course, the next question has to be, can we access that FAO report and when do you envisage that report being released, because I think it would be really useful for this group?

DG: No, the report is ready, it's just going internal consultation and both you and Prof can always drop me a line so that we can discuss the probable timelines. It still needs to go through the internal

processes because it was a joint funded by the FAO but the leadership is an offshoot of what I was talking about. When it comes to the African Union where the Ministers of Agriculture responsible for agriculture and food security determined that we need to provide this through a task force that had to deal with the issue around hotspots. So we can always have that line of much to say as the report is ready, we will avail it to you so that you can see what it says about food security in South Africa.

Prof Anelich: That's really wonderful. Thank you. Very grateful that you are able to share that with us. So in terms of your National Department, how did you cascade various activities and coordinate various activities between national, provincial and local? Do you feel that those activities were well streamlined or did you have some challenges in that regard? Thank you.

DG: I think in all the work that we are doing, because let's take the way that we work, for instance for the very same programs that I was talking about they start at national level, but the process of adjudication or let me say the process of application after adjudication level starts from within a local municipality. Therefore, it might be very important just to indicate that yes, there would be challenges because you move from a district base and go to provincial and we go to National. In most instances, there will be challenges in terms of just ensuring that there is smooth transition to ensure that you can at the end of the program, be able to do adjudication, you do awarding or do payments and everything. So there were teething programs that we experienced, that is why we went electronic and at the same time I think it would not be fair to the system because I think the provinces, the municipalities and the national departments that we worked with under the circumstances, were doing a sterling job, because we really were on a lockdown that led to all the systems whether within the three levels of government were working with very minimal resources but pulled it through. Thank you.

Prof Anelich: Thanks very much indeed at this stage. I would like to invite some of the attendees if anyone has some burning questions that have not been addressed, to please ask Mr. Ramasodi. You're welcome to put your hands up. I'm keeping an eye on the system here.

Prof Colleen Vogel: Hi greetings and my name is Colleen Vogel from the Global Change Institute at Wits University. Thank you so much for the very useful inputs. This may be a little bit outside of the areas linked directly to agriculture, but I was wondering about water issues and water access and delivery in particular in the rural areas. We've got some inputs from other DGs. I'm just wondering if you could indicate how to was being rolled out any challenges that they were, you know, the perception was that we had tanks, this despite the fact that we are a drought ridden country and already had a disaster management Act that was supposed to be much, much more proactive. I'm just

wondering if you could reflect whether that was a huge challenge - obviously water is critical for agriculture, also for the vulnerable and those who were trying to get access to water. Thank you.

DG: Thank you. Thank you very much. I would want to defer because from an agricultural perspective, we never picked up the issues around water, but I would agree that it would have an impact at rural areas, but from our side we never dealt a lot with issues around water. Thank you.

Prof Anelich: Thank you very much, anyone else with a question for Mr Ramasodi? It seems not. So let me continue then. I don't know that you had much to do with the informal sector, perhaps the sector that would be selling fresh fruit and vegetables, but perhaps do you have any mandate in that regard? If so what your department did to assist those informal traders, particularly in the beginning when initially there were prohibited also from trading.

DG: No, that's a good question. You know at the beginning of the hard lockdown you would recall that the bakkie traders as we call them were prohibited from doing quite a lot of trade and one realised immediately at the fresh produce markets at the farms, there was a total almost fall in terms of those who or produced from these areas and it became very evident of the importance of the bakkie trade. In fact, there is a study that I saw is just that I don't have it in front of me that shows a percentage in terms of what it is worth within the sector - it's a very important part of our food system and when we realised this one of the things that we did was to start agitating for them to be allowed to move food from fresh produce markets and also the very same in terms of the selling areas in different areas. For instance, if you go to a place like Alexandra each and every second house would have an outside stall where fruits or vegetables are being sold. So this is something that we started agitating for to say if you have got to deal with food security, it needs to start where the people are staying because one does not need to go to town in order to get food let the bakkie traders move so that you can have food being brought to the doorstep of those who need it. That worked but it was an omission in the first instance that impacted on that agricultural sector without a doubt. Thank you very much Prof.

Prof Anelich: Thank you. I'm so pleased you did address that because yes, the informal sector in general, the spaza shops the bakkie traders etc.... you quite correct that they make up a huge portion of the movement of food in the country and they were an incredibly important sector that sometimes doesn't get the support or in fact the recognition that they potentially should. So I am very pleased that you did have an input in that. Lastly, we've heard so much about a potential third wave that would be coming round about autumn / early winter for us. So how do you as the department view the preparedness for the next wave of resurgence of infections should that in fact occur? And also if

any new variants should be emerging. How do you see it as a department in terms of your preparation?  
Thank you.

DG: Yes 'Prof, let me attempt to respond to these two ways. The first one is what kind of work is the department involved in, in order to ensure that there is work around for instance pandemics such as Covid-19. And this is a scenario plan that I think Doc is building. We are part of a team from government led by the Department of Science and Innovation, which is looking at innovative ways of how do we ramp up our capacity first to detect and also deal with zoonotic diseases in the concept of what you know, as one Health Program, where we have got all the Departments....Health, Agriculture and Environment just to manage any issue that has got to deal with zoonotic diseases. The second one is to ensure that there is capacity within government and quickly move into the production of vaccines and as you would know the department of the state owned entities in terms of the OBP that has got the capacity to produce vaccines but animal vaccines in this case, but we view that to be a capability that can be used to also build capabilities within the human health aspects. So there is work that is currently happening from that perspective. In terms of us as a sector responding to the third wave, I think we have got a lot of lessons from the first and the second wave to be able to move into the third wave. We are responsive and building forward in terms of ensuring that we are ready, ensuring that our workforce is ready. We are as a department trying to move into e-platforms to ensure that our work is not impeded. We are also ensuring that our front liners in terms of those who are doing inspection certifications have got all electronic gadgets to assist us to move quicker into the system.

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DG: There is an element of us also moving into the new area of electronic systems where we would need to communicate quite effectively with a sector. We are also moving into a new way of trying to boost the sector because previously we tried the blended finance and that blended finance for the sector going forward was going to be very difficult to sustain. We have had engagements with banking South Africa and we have come up with a new concept that will be launched very soon of launching of the blended finance, which will then assist all our farmers to get a platform that would involve private sector involvement broadly other than the Land Bank per se. We think that will also assist us if we move in the space because it's very important that we ensure that there is agricultural production right through. We also believe in a concept that we always have got to deal with from a perspective of engagements with other African countries, there has been an agreement to say how do we ensure that we move ahead? This is part and parcel of what I can say would be the way that we have got to deal with the pandemic supposing that we move into the third wave. The first one is to ensure that

we stick to the crop calendar, in that all inputs must be ready to ensure that we plant on time and we produce according to our requirements.

The second one is around how do we ensure that we have got an open system that allows us to have our borders open during a particular period of time because if we don't have the borders that are open during a particular time, then we run the risk of having the pandemic being visited upon us. I think if you have got a look at the imports of rice over a period of time, you will also realise that it's also part and parcel of our food security in terms of staples. What we know as staples as pap has now shifted to the tastes and preferences of people as Prof Kirsten would say, has moved to another level. Therefore your food security might not necessarily only rely on what you are having as the country and outside. So if you have got to have the third wave, you need to ensure that the borders are open to address those issues. The other issue that is of importance I think when it comes to the current output in a context of the country would be ensuring that the financing of agriculture is secure because if financing of agriculture is not secured, you run the risk of then having a challenge going forward. Lastly, I think it's about boosting internal systems of production and registering products that would be used for our own agriculture and making ourselves less dependent on imports. I think those would be my kind of broad-brush issues that we have got to look at supposedly doing that scenario planning for the third wave. Those are the things that I think should be in place and have to be in place for us to move forward, thank you.

Prof Anelich: Thank you, very very much indeed. We have come to the end of our time and but I would love to give you the last word, please if you have anything that you would like to add to bring under our attention, I would appreciate it. So please do so.

DG: Prof I think Covid-19 has taught us just to be agile, to be mobile and to be very fluid in terms of responding to the issues that are there. I think it has taught us that some of the mechanisms that we might have had policies / strategies might not be responsive and therefore, there is a need for a new dispensation that would ensure that we become more responsive to pandemics, It has also taught us that we shouldn't take for granted the issue around zoonotic diseases and their transfer to humans and that element in terms of the one health concept would need to be clearly attacked for South Africa to move forward and be a country that would lead in terms of research in terms of implementation in that space. Thank you very much Prof and thank you to all the people who are on the platform.

My apologies as my microphone kept cutting but I should say that the questions that were asked were relevant in terms of the work and I hope that ultimately there will be something that comes out of

this. I promise that as we had discussed we will share with you that hotspot lessons that we have had through our partnership with FAO. Thank you very much.

Prof Anelich: Thank you, very very much Mr Ramasodi. I want to thank you profusely for your time and for connecting with us while you were clearly busy traveling on the road. I want to thank everybody else that also attended this meeting / this interview and I want to thank you Mr. Ramasodi for being so open and honest with us and for sharing so much information and activities that the department has undertaken and seeks to undertake going forward. So once again, thank you. I hope you are traveling safely and everyone, have a very good day. Goodbye.