



**For immediate release
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WHAT WE NEED TO REBUILD AND COME BACK EVEN STRONGER

Most South Africans are aware of the dire situation created across the country by the past week's unrest and looting. Dairy producers were not spared. It was a traumatic experience for every dairy farmer who threw away milk, a perishable product, which could not be transported due to the impact that riots had on the milk collection routes and to see grazing being set a light, was just as bad. A heartfelt thank-you to the community members who stepped up to join producers in fighting fires and protecting delivery routes.

"The South African dairy industry is producing a little bit less milk this year, compared to the first six months of last year, but there is still more than enough milk to meet consumer's needs," says Colin Wellbeloved, national chairman of the MPO.

The Minister of Agriculture, minister Thoko Didiza, met with agricultural stakeholders on Friday, 16 July, to discuss the impact of the unrest on food security. The aim was to shift the focus from the bleak picture left by the damage to infrastructure and the untold loss across the value chain, and to finding solutions to the problem of delivering essential products where shops have been destroyed. Wellbeloved represented the dairy industry during this critical discussion.

"The minister had a very good understanding of problems that dairy producers are faced with and gave her assurance that we are a strong priority," says Wellbeloved. "The minister's face lit up when I told her that we produce, daily, enough milk for a cupful for each and every person in KwaZulu-Natal."

Government has made food security a priority and troops have been deployed to protect farms and farming towns. "The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is fully aware of the importance of the agricultural sector in KwaZulu-Natal to the economy and the wellbeing of South Africans in general," says Luke Gibbs, chairman of the MPO KwaZulu-Natal. "Rapid response capabilities are being organised to assist in the rural areas. Both the SANDF and the South African Police Service have ramped up efforts to secure the supply chains."

The Minister of Trade, Industry, and Competition also published a notice in the *Government Gazette* during the past week to exempt companies that supply essential goods from certain provisions of the Competition Act to ensure that essential goods are delivered nationwide. "The relaxed provisions will permit companies in the broader supply chain to cooperate in a manner that would normally be deemed anti-competitive," says Bertus van Heerden, chief economist of the MPO. "The MPO shared information and collaborated with Agri SA, Agbiz and other role players in this regard."



“We cannot let our guard down yet, despite an apparent reduction in threat levels,” says Gibbs.

“Remain vigilant, stick together in communities, use the security networks available, and most of all remain steadfast as we will surely prevail as South African dairy producers. We are too important to fail.”

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