Introduction
As we enter the year 2007, we take the opportunity in presenting the *Strategic plan for the Department of Agriculture 2007*, to assess the challenges we faced in the previous year, the successes we achieved in overcoming these and how we intend to meet present and future challenges. We continue under the theme, “Renewing our pledge—a national partnership to build a better life for all”.

For this financial year, our focus will be on further improving food security through household food production, especially among the most food insecure and vulnerable communities. The strategy will further focus on developing financing requirements for emerging farmer support programmes through the Micro-agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa (Mafisa) and reviving agricultural, state and state-supported community schemes.

We also aim to focus on our strategic performance areas and ways on how to accelerate service delivery in the department in 2007, especially in the empowerment of women. In this regard, we launched the Women in Agriculture and Rural Development (WARD) initiative in October 2006. This will culminate in the 4th World Congress of Rural Women, which will be held at the International Convention Centre in Durban, from 23 to 26 April 2007. The congress will be preceded by an African Consultation of Rural Women that will be held at the same venue from 19 to 21 April 2007. Good progress has already been made in organising the congress in order to ensure its success.

To further accelerate service delivery, we adopted a strategy called Operation Gijima in November 2006, which is aimed at fast-tracking delivery of the departmental programmes. This strategy was adopted following a three-day Lekgotla, which I chaired, including the nine provincial Members of the Executive Council (MECs), their Heads of Departments (HODs), Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and top management of state-owned enterprises. The decision for the strategy was the result of concerns voiced from many quarters about an apparent lack of visible service delivery, including the slow pace of implementing the 2005 Land Summit resolutions and the unfolding of AgriBEE.

During the Lekgotla I also launched Letsema/Ilima to assist in popularising departmental programmes already in existence, i.e. the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP), Mafisa and Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD), which offer support to small-scale farmers. Another objective of the campaign is to encourage people, especially in rural communities, to utilise fallow-lying land to plant food for their own households. The fast-tracking of the key areas identified above, will assist in the transformation of the agricultural industry and empowerment of women, the youth and the urban and rural poor. We believe, that through Operation Gijima, we will be able to deliver on our objectives.

Through CASP, post-settlement support was provided to targeted beneficiaries of land reform and other farmers who acquired land through private means. An amount of R300 million was allocated to CASP for the 2006/07 financial year, focusing mainly on the provision of on and off-farm infrastructure. Although implementation was hampered by a number of challenges facing the provincial departments of agriculture, such as a lack of capacity, a lack of proper planning and a lack of alignment with other programmes, significant improvement was made during 2006. In 2007, delivery on CASP projects will be one of our main focus areas.
Various strategic performance areas have been prioritised for speedy implementation in 2007. In addition, we will use a one-stop-shop approach to package and present accessible services and support for the sector. In this case, we will focus on implementing an integrated service, including Mafisa, CASP, LRAD, Land Bank development finance and other development finance assistance aimed at supporting emerging agricultural entrepreneurs.

Financial services are extended to economically active poor rural households, small farmers and agribusinesses through Mafisa. This credit scheme is administered by the Land Bank and provincial departments assist potential clients to access the scheme. By means of the scheme loans are provided to emerging farmers who were served neither by the Land Bank nor other financial institutions. The disbursement of loans commenced in January 2006 and progress is monitored continuously in order to accelerate the implementation of the scheme.

Knowledge and skills development in the agricultural sector are critical factors to promote the growth and transformation of the sector. Following the launch of the Agricultural Education and Training (AET) Strategy in 2005, we established a National Agricultural Education and Training Forum as well as Provincial Agricultural Education and Training Forums in 2006 as part of the implementation of the strategy. These forums will address issues of skills shortage in certain agricultural fields, as well as unemployed graduates. Through strengthened agricultural education and training we hope to enable Government to achieve its broader poverty alleviation and job creation goals.

As part of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA), the Household Food Security Programme was expanded to all nine provinces to promote the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty and food insecurity by half by the year 2015. Detailed business plans have now been developed for identified ASGISA projects in five key areas such as livestock development, establishment and rehabilitation of new and existing irrigation schemes, biofuels, land rehabilitation and the development of agricultural development corridors.

One of the initiatives, project Gweb’indlala in KwaZulu-Natal, focuses on food security through infrastructure development, provision of key production inputs, facilitating access to markets, job creation and poverty alleviation. Livestock development, and particularly goats, has also been identified as a focus area in the emerging farming sector. We aim to increase the percentage of commercially traded goats from the current 10 to 30% in five years.

As part of the national goat development programme, successful projects have been implemented in Umzimvubu and Kgalagadi, which serve as models for a national roll-out. The programmes are targeted at benefiting resource-poor black farmers, especially in Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, North West, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces.

We will continue our engagement with emerging farmers to determine to what extent they will benefit from the biofuel programme. An interdepartmental task team on biofuel is directing the strategy on biofuel and a submission will be made to Cabinet with specific recommendations on biodiesel and ethanol blending. The roll-out plan will ensure the participation of emerging black farmers and, therefore, national and provincial departments of agriculture are in the process of mobilising emerging farmers.

With globalisation, the opening of markets and trade in regulated agricultural products has increased the possibility of illegal importation of agricultural products, as well as the risk of various diseases and pests. During 2006 we focused on the improvement of continuous surveillance systems for effective monitoring of animal and plant diseases to minimise risks associated with disease outbreaks. Outbreaks of avian influenza in ostriches, African horsesickness and Classical Swine fever in pigs were contained successfully, largely because of quick action taken by the department and the high level of co-operation with provincial departments and stakeholders in the areas affected.

Regarding the agenda of the International Relations, Peace and Security Cluster, the DoA’s role in the AU is in skills transfer and information sharing as well as research and development to fulfil the aims of NEPAD; leading and facilitating trade agreements among emerging economies, especially concerning India, Brazil and South Africa co-operation (IBSA); follow-through of the trade agreement with the People’s Republic of China in pursuance of the Africa-China Forum Protocol to implement skills transfer and agrarian development to benefit South Africa and the African continent; and facilitating the reviving of the WTO talks.

Every year presents its own challenges and opportunities for our strategic planning. Our aim is to renew our pledge—a national partnership to build a better life for all. I look forward to working with all stakeholders in agriculture to achieve this goal.

Ms Lulu Xingwana (MP)

MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND LAND AFFAIRS
The Strategic plan for the 2007/08 financial year was prepared within the prescribed guidelines of National Treasury and the Department of Public Service and Administration.

OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic plan is presented in five parts. The introduction and the political and organisational overviews are presented in Part 1. In Part 2 we reflect on the sectoral overview and performance as well as existing governance systems. Part 3 provides information on the department’s mission statement, gives insight into the organisational structure, approved key result areas (KRAs) and objectives, its legislative mandate and programme for 2007, the departmental planning process and other processes. Part 4 focuses on the programme of work and budgets for the 2007/08 financial year, and Part 5 contains the annual performance plans of the five departmental programmes and can be regarded as a department-wide business plan per quarter, extracted from the operational plans at programme level and presented in relation to each of our strategic priorities. In this section we also attempt to reflect on the manner in which the programmes contribute to the strategic priorities.

A set of annexures has been included as additional information to the Strategic plan. These include internal service delivery standards, the information management plan, the communication strategy and a list of relevant reference documents.

In this Strategic plan we aim to review the challenges we faced in meeting targets we had set for ourselves in 2006, our achievements, and focus on the steps to be taken in 2007 to realise our vision and its objectives as set out in The strategic plan for South African agriculture of November 2001. In the coming year we will focus on the fast-tracking of service delivery in the eight departmental priority areas, especially in the key areas identified in Operation Gijima.

AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (AADP)

South Africa experienced an increased demand by African countries for technical assistance support in the field of agriculture. A technical assistance programme (TAP) called the African Agricultural Development Programme (AADP) was established as a contribution towards regional stability and the sustainable development of the economies of African countries. The TAP is considered to be an important enabler for Southern African Development Countries’ (SADC) regional development with potential long-term benefits for South Africa.

A report on intra-African agricultural trade to promote trade as part of the AADP is being finalised. The department has completed desktop studies for selected countries, which will be visited in order to supplement the information for compiling the report. Negotiation positions for ongoing negotiations within the SADC, World Trade Organisation (WTO), Southern African Customs Union (SACU), Mercosur and the TDCA review are being developed as the negotiations proceed.

Through the assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) technical co-operation support, the department has co-ordinated the development of a national medium-term investment programme (NMTIP) as a frame-
work for implementation of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) at national level. Bankable investment project profiles have been developed to focus national efforts and actions onto specific areas of project development and funding.

During 2007 we will continue our close relationship with the FAO and the FAO Africa Regional Office to ensure our contribution to a prosperous Africa and a better world.

**AGRICULTURAL BROAD-BASED BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (AgriBEE)**

The draft AgriBEE Charter was completed and submitted to the Minister for consideration and approval. In November 2006 the charter was discussed with the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture and Land Affairs. Proposed changes were incorporated in the charter and it was handed over to the Minister of Trade and Industry for gazetting.

Good progress was made during 2006 with the testing of business models with selected commodity groups and local development organisations working on the best way to integrate emerging participants into mainstream agriculture. Evaluation and monitoring systems for AgriBEE activities are being set up and implementation and monitoring interactions will be conducted at national, provincial, regional and local levels. Selected service providers will conduct training workshops on the impact and relevance of AgriBEE on local municipality delivery levels and the agricultural sector during 2007.

Implementation of AgriBEE is based on the commodity/product value chain approach and diversified through ASGISA. This approach is integral to creating linkages, partnerships and networks for balanced, mutually benefitting results for all concerned. It will ensure enhanced competitiveness and sustainable development with improvement/expansion of the existing businesses, rehabilitation of ailing agricultural business concerns and expanded entry for new businesses in the sector.

As part of the process to unlock the full entrepreneurial potential in the sector, we have also been encouraging partnerships between established agricultural enterprises and emerging farmers and entrepreneurs. The grain strategy’s implementation plan is nearing completion and the fruit industry’s commodity action plan is in the process of being developed.

To empower youth and women to contribute towards the transformation and growth of the sector, the external bursary scheme and the experiential and internship programme were established. Since the introduction of the bursary scheme in 2003, a total of R18,9 million has been invested in students studying for various degrees within the identified scarce skills categories within the agricultural sector. A total of 383 bursaries have been awarded in the past four years and a further 100 bursaries are planned for 2007/08. About 160 graduates were placed as interns within the department and agricultural commodity organisations in 2006/07. Our aim is to inspire and support the entry of youth into the agricultural sector.

**COMPREHENSIVE AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME (CASP)**

During the past two years agricultural support has been provided to land and agrarian reform projects, which contributes towards food security, job creation and poverty alleviation. Since the implementation of CASP in 2004/05, a total amount of R750 million has been allocated to this programme. Because delivery of agricultural support services is dependent on the capacity of provincial departments, we continued to direct the process of empowering the provinces with regard to planning, implementation, information dissemination and reporting.

The Micro-agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa (Mafisa) provides access to finance for farmers, especially beneficiaries of the land restitution, redistribution and land tenure reform programmes. The Land Bank administers the credit scheme on behalf of the department and provincial departments provide assistance to access the scheme. Four development finance institutions are currently participating in the disbursement of Mafisa funds in the provinces.

Challenges experienced in implementing the scheme mainly included a lack of capacity and a lack of economic and/or financial experience at provincial departments. Intervention measures were instituted and provinces have now assigned Agricultural Economists to assist applicants with their operational plans. The process of training Credit Committees in collaboration with AgriSETA is also continuing.

During 2005/06 and 2006/07 amounts of R144 million and R196 million, respectively, were transferred from the department’s budget to the Land Bank. To date good progress has been made with providing loans and a total of 900 loans to the value of R24 million were approved by end of September 2006. Loans have been issued since January 2006 and progress is monitored on a continuous basis to fast-track implementation of the scheme.
A total of 84 agricultural farmer co-operatives have been established. These co-operatives are fully registered and linked to financial services and businesses. We facilitated the training and capacity building of all established co-operatives through accredited training institutions and colleges of agriculture.

To ensure the commercial viability of emerging farmers from a household food security level to commercial level, a farmer-to-farmer mentorship policy was approved. This policy will be piloted in four provinces on 36 projects. During 2007 a total of 36 extension officers will be trained in providing mentoring to farmers.

The agricultural marketing environment was reviewed and a report with specific recommendations to revisit the Agricultural Marketing Act will be submitted to the Minister. Good progress was also made with reviewing the agricultural trade strategy and the first draft, incorporating industry inputs, has been developed. The strategy will also incorporate the outcome of the marketing review process.

To develop a comprehensive agro-logistics strategy and an investment plan, a report on the status of agro-logistics in South Africa has been completed. The report is at present being discussed with other government departments such as Transport, Trade and Industry and public entities such as the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC), Spoornet and the industry.

A total of 17 commodity-based agricultural marketing value chain profiles were produced and published. Farmers use these profiles to gain insight into the agricultural marketing structures of the different industries.

In July 2006 the EFTA-Southern African Customs Union (SACU) agreements were signed for implementation in 2007. This will, however, also depend on the ratification procedures followed by the SACU partners. The trade negotiating position for free trade agreement between SACU and India has not been finalised yet because of a delay in negotiations as a result of the new government in India.

The department regards skills development as one of the critical areas for the success of ASGISA. About 800 emerging farmers received hands-on training in various fields of farm management at the Grootfontein Agricultural Development Institute (GADI). Commodity-directed mentorship programmes were presented to a total of 10,000 farmers, while 2,251 farmworkers received adult basic education and training in line with the objectives of the draft transformation charter. All the participants in the programme are beneficiaries of the Agrarian and Land Reform Programme.

During 2006 several policies and strategies were developed to promote sustainable agricultural production. These include policies on animal improvement, aquaculture, wildlife ranching, range and forage, grain, vegetables, industrial and indigenous crops, ornamental plants, as well as biosafety.

Livestock farming by black emerging farmers is often characterised by overstocking and poor productivity, leading to overgrazing. The livestock development strategy was developed and is currently being implemented to address this challenge.

Production guidelines aimed at providing information to farmers, extension officers and other clients were also developed. These included guidelines for small-scale egg production, household broiler production, a management programme for a small-farm piggery, rabbit production for household use, animal traction, urban and peri-urban animal agriculture, milk goats, weaning of calves, beef cattle, veld management, fruit production, grain crops, vegetable production, industrial crops, ornamental plants and indigenous crop production.

Early warning climate advisories were issued to the agricultural sector on a monthly basis to assist farmers in managing climatic risks. An awareness campaign on broad risk and disaster management issues was also launched to create awareness on how to manage risks. A total of 62,470 farmers participated in the drought relief scheme. Altogether 52,259 of these were small-scale farmers and 10,211 commercial farmers.

**INTEGRATED FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION PROGRAMME (IFSNP)**

The department took an active role in arranging the World Food Day celebrations that were held in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal on 16 October 2006. In celebrating this initiative of the FAO, more than 186 countries joined hands with our country on World Food Day. This was also symbolic in the sense that it was on this day that the FAO was founded in 1945. The theme for 2006, “Investing in agriculture for food security”, highlighted the vital role of agriculture in ensuring that all people have access to sufficient food of a wide variety to lead healthy, active lives.

The event also marked the midway point of the 20-year period between the 1996 World Food Summit when the world’s leaders pledged to reduce poverty and food insecurity by half by 2015. The World Food Summit plan of action and the South African Constitution (which was enacted in the same year) recognise access to food and clean water as part of basic social rights. To take further steps toward achieving this objective, the Special Programme for
Food Security (SPFS) will be expanded to all nine provinces. Altogether 10% of the total CASP budget will also be aligned to projects that contribute directly towards food security. In line with the strategic goal of reducing food insecurity, a total of 66,364 households were provided with agricultural production packages in all the nine provinces during the third quarter of 2006/07.

The Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information Mapping System (FIVIMS) project was piloted in Ga-Sekhukhune district, Limpopo Province and launched during October 2006. As part of the national roll-out, food security profiles for the 13 rural nodes will be developed and baseline surveys conducted in three rural nodes.

In the light of the importance of food security in the nation’s development and the overall goal of improved welfare of the population, Government places high priority on several national policies and programmes, which outline the coherent goal to raise the nutritional levels, especially the more vulnerable sections of the population. Some of these initiatives include:

- Ziyazondla in the Eastern Cape Province
- Siyavuna in KwaZulu-Natal
- Asibuyele Masimini in Mpumalanga and a number of other Household Food Production Programmes country-wide.

Within the Social Sector Cluster we are challenged to take the lead regarding the implementation of the IFSNPs. For this purpose, we collaborated with relevant stakeholders, including nongovernmental organisations, schools and communities in general, to assist in the development and dissemination of suitable technologies, information and training modules to provide assistance in increasing the levels of household food production.

Through ASGISA, a number of initiatives were embarked upon to address its objectives and this includes Project Gweb’indlala, which focuses on food security through infrastructure development, provision of key production inputs, facilitating market access, job creation and poverty alleviation. As part of popularising of ASGISA and to relieve poverty and alleviate food insecurity in the country, the department expanded the Household Food Security Programme to all nine provinces. This programme was first piloted in KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces.

**KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (KIMS)**

To improve the accuracy of crop estimates, a new producer independent crop estimate system was developed and implemented in the Free State, North West, Mpumalanga and Gauteng provinces. This new system, which is partially funded by the Maize Trust, will complement the existing point frame sampling system. Preliminary results from the new system are very promising.

The department co-operated with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in a study to review South Africa’s agricultural policies. After a peer review process at the OECD, which, from a developing country perspective, proved to be a resounding success, the report was finalised, published and officially launched in 2006. The outcome of this study will be used as a measure of Government’s intervention in the sector.

As the official source of agricultural statistics in South Africa, we focused on providing reliable, up-to-date information on the performance of the agricultural sector on a monthly and quarterly basis. This included monthly forecasts on the production of field crops on provincial level and quarterly monitoring of the economic performance of the sector. Overviews of economic changes and the impact on the sector were published on a regular basis.

Commodity-based agricultural marketing training materials for grain, livestock, horticulture and industrial products have been produced. In addition, a facilitators’ training guide for implementing the training programme has also been developed. The material will mainly be used as a basis for training farmers in agricultural marketing.

A national Agricultural Education and Training Forum executive committee (NEAT) was established in 2006 as part of the implementation of the AET strategy. The forum will operate along the lines of the National Agricultural Research Forum (NARF) and will deal with matters pertaining to agricultural education and training. The forum’s executive committee will advise the Minister for Agriculture and Land Affairs on skills development issues.

**NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (NRM)**

A natural resources atlas was developed to provide access to a comprehensive set of data and a framework for strategic planning at national and provincial levels for the implementation of programmes such as land redistribution, LandCare as well as international conventions focusing on biodiversity, climate change and land assessment for long-term sustainability. This electronic atlas provides access to 63 national spatial layers of information on soil,
climate, vegetation, terrain, land capability, as well as high-resolution satellite data. This will be implemented in the next five to ten years in co-operation with other national departments, provinces and municipalities.

A groundwater development atlas has been created to provide information on the nature of groundwater potential. Databases for agriculture infrastructure, mechanisation and energy will be developed to inform appropriate decision-making processes. A draft strategy on irrigation development has also been developed to enable and guide the development of irrigation as well as improving the irrigation water use efficiency in South Africa.

The LandCare programme was established to promote productivity through the sustainable use of natural resources, to improve food security and create employment, therefore encouraging South Africans to use sustainable methods of cultivation, livestock grazing and harvesting of natural resources in order to limit land degradation. Using various degradation indices, including soil and rangeland degradation, the level of degradation can be determined. The department identified five provinces, namely KwaZulu-Natal, North West, Northern Cape, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape as the most degraded parts of South Africa.

Although LandCare is a community-based programme, the emphasis of the extension approach in the provinces has now shifted to a greater emphasis on participatory planning, development and an implementation approach to projects. Doing development for the communities has been replaced by working with the communities in order to ensure the rehabilitation and sustainable management of natural resources.

Because of LandCare awareness activities, rural communities in the provinces have a greater awareness of the value of conserving the natural resources. Through the use of conservation farming methods and in-field water harvesting, certain projects have led to a significant increase in production on high-potential land. Grazing lands have been brought into a sustainable management system through correct fencing into camps and suitable water reticulation systems and through the removal of alien invader vegetation. Wetlands used for agricultural purposes have been protected by improved management practices.

**NATIONAL REGULATORY SERVICES (NRS)**

As a result of an increase in trade in regulated agricultural products, illegal import or export of products poses the risk of introducing a range of diseases and pests. The department’s participation at the three tiers Border Control Operations Co-ordinating Committee (BCOCC) was fortified and we are currently a prominent player in developments within this structure. We managed to reduce the numbers of interceptions on noncompliant exports while the interceptions for noncompliant imports increased by 20% owing to the employment of additional staff at strategic locations and the deployment of the Sedupe K9 (snifferdogs) inspections at OR Tambo International Airport. Inspection and auditing services increased by 25% during 2006 with special emphasis on programmes for the exporting of fruit and liquor, trade control for compliance of a variety of agricultural products and border control inspections.

During 2006 the department once again managed to control the outbreak of animal diseases effectively. An intensive campaign was launched to combat the outbreak of Classical Swine fever in the Eastern Cape Province by culling large numbers of infected pigs and compensating the owners. The further spreading of the disease was effectively contained by the high level of co-operation and strict control measures that were enforced by the department and provincial departments of agriculture.

The suspension on horse exports from South Africa was repealed in October 2006. Although a few reports of African horsesickness were received outside the controlled area, South Africa’s export status for horses was not affected negatively. A call was made on owners to vaccinate their horses annually.

The EU lifted the ban on the importation of South African ostrich meat in November 2006 after the successful eradication of the outbreak of avian influenza (H5N2 virus) in ostriches in the Western Cape Province in July 2006. We will continue with extensive surveillance of all ostriches and chickens throughout the country. Chickens have remained negative for the H5N2 virus at all times. An avian influenza contingency plan was drafted and implemented in co-operation with the Department of Health. We also embarked on a national media awareness campaign on avian influenza, which included radio advertisements, which were broadcast on 11 SABC radio stations and television advertisements on SABC 1,2,3 and eTV.

To promote the international trade of agricultural products, engagements with trading partners were enhanced with the aim of maintaining existing markets and accessing new ones. These engagements included bilateral negotiations with the People’s Republic of China and the United States of America on citrus exports. Control measures to promulgate new ports of entry and regulate the movement of citrus within South Africa were published. An intensive promotion and awareness campaign on plant health matters was conducted at the ports of entry.
The South African Pesticide Initiative Programme (SAPIP) was set up to assist the horticultural sector to continue to comply with new European Union (EU) legislation on pesticide use and maximum residue levels of pesticides. The programme is currently in its third year and progressing well. Five out of twelve applicants have been selected as part of the capacity-building arm of the programme for emerging farmers. The aim is to strengthen capacity with regard to good agricultural practices in order to maintain and improve the export potential of participants to the EU. More than 4000 participants will benefit from this project, which will be launched in 2007.

A joint programme between the department and the Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB), the agri-export technologists sponsorship programme was initiated to address export requirements among emerging farmers. To date, 25 of the 100 students who will go through the programme have been trained. All students are from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and will be required to mentor emerging farmers.

A database of emerging horticulture farmers is being developed with the assistance of the Citrus Growers’ Association and other stakeholders. Training in responsible pesticide use as well as the integration of emerging farmers into existing grower associations has now started.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R&D)

A consultation process was followed with all major stakeholders within the national agricultural research system in formulating the draft R&D strategy. Inputs from the consultations will be consolidated in the strategy and will be endorsed by the National Agricultural Research Forum (NARF) in June 2007. Ad hoc short-term research projects were co-ordinated and managed through service level agreements with the Agricultural Research Council (ARC). A total of 41 research and development projects to an amount of R42 million were commissioned by the department in the 2006/07 financial year.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the restructuring of the department and the consequent implementation of the new structure on 1 April 2006, the normal operations of the department were affected. Some business units were subjected to greater management changes as some functions were relocated to other line functions while some had to be incorporated into new programmes. The purpose of the restructuring was to enhance organisational performance and to strengthen the department’s capacity to improve service delivery and the implementation of national programmes.

In the year ahead there are many challenges facing us. However, we are convinced that within our new enabling environment we will be able to contribute towards the development of the sector and provide the necessary services to resource-poor farmers. We further believe that, in the spirit of Operation Gijima and with the policies, strategies and programmes that we have in place, we will succeed in pushing back the frontiers of poverty in our country.

May I take this opportunity to thank the Minister and Deputy Minister for their political leadership and support, and the Chairpersons of the Parliamentary Committees for their expertise and guidance. I also want to extend my appreciation to the leadership and staff of all the agriculture state-owned enterprises, the agribusiness community and farmer organisations who contribute in ensuring that we meet our commitments to the South African agricultural public. I would also like to thank my management team and all the staff members in the department for their hard work involved in the development and implementation of the Strategic plan.

Mr Masiphula Mbongwa
DIRECTOR-GENERAL: AGRICULTURE