

## **PRESS RELEASE**

(for immediate release)

### **RPO POSITIONS TO REPRESENT THE FARMER'S INTEREST IN A SUSTAINABLE RED MEAT INDUSTRY TO PROMOTE FOOD SECURITY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The sustainability of the red meat industry in South Africa is under threat if proper support in terms of animal health on the farm is not achieved.

*"In addition to volatile market conditions and the importance of steady market channels, animal health is one of the critical drivers for South African livestock farmers to continue to deliver quality red meat to the market,"* said Mr. Koos van der Ryst, national Chairman of the Red Meat Producers' Organisation (RPO).

Dedicated focus must also be given to empower entrants to the red meat industry with the necessary training and support to ensure sustainable and competitive production in order to grow the availability of high quality products.

The RPO Executive Council and key role players in the agricultural industry attended a strategic planning session on 24 and 25 January 2018 in Bloemfontein, where in-depth discussions were conducted regarding the core role that the RPO should fulfil in future to ensure sustainability in the total red meat value chain. Dr. John Purchase, Chief Executive Officer : Agbiz, who facilitated the session, said: *"With the changing agricultural environment, now is the ideal time to determine what the RPO's role should be in future."*

Van der Ryst says: *"The RPO is focused on ensuring the competitiveness and sustainability of the red meat industry, in which red meat producers are empowered to competitively and sustainably produce and unlock value."*

Exciting opportunities for expansion of the RPO functions, support of the red meat industry and unlocking value for farmers were identified during the discussions. A number of important elements were highlighted, which included steady market access and marketing opportunities for farmers' products; building strategic partnerships and relationships to positively impact the total value chain; inclusivity and transformation of the red meat industry; proactive management of animal health and expansion of functions such as research and development, production development, training and technology transfer.

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It is essential to proactively address bio-security risks, such as animal health, including traceability, to promote top-quality production, thereby contributing to food security and economic growth in South Africa. The RPO, together with NERPO, will manage this function and substantial funds from the new statutory levy will be used for this purpose. In partnership with the Animal Health Forum, focused attention will be given to this. In addition, marketing opportunities need to be utilised and the necessary market channels created to ensure market competitiveness. The RPO will increase focus on consumer education, to grow the local market and increase the constant demand for red meat.

Mr. Van der Ryst concluded the session with the following: "*The future is in our hands and I am excited about the role we will play as the RPO to help ensure the sustainability of the industry.*"

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**ENQUIRIES**

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