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Joint final statement of the SA-EU Dialogue on soil information management

The Republic of South Africa and the European Union (EU) engaged in a dialogue on soil information from 10 February 2018 till 23 October 2018. The dialogue was conducted within the SA-EU Strategic Partnership and supported by the SA-EU Dialogue Facility. On the SA side the dialogue was led by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), represented by the Directorate "Land Use and Soil Management" jointly with the following public institutions: the Institute for Soil, Climate and Water of the Agricultural Research Council ((ARC-ISCW) and Stellenbosch University. On the EU side, the dialogue was led by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission with the participation of DG for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) and experts from INRA, France; BGR, Germany; SIU, Hungary; CREA, Italy and ISRIC, The Netherlands..

We acknowledge the contribution of all the European partners at the inauguration and final workshops (February and October 2018) and the assistance of CREA (Italy), BGR (Germany) and INRA (France) in hosting the study tour of a South African delegation in May 2018. We also acknowledge the inputs of the participants during the field study tour in South Africa in October 2018. These activities provided useful insights into structure and functioning of national soil information systems in Europe and South Africa as a public service and public-private interaction.

We, the parties to the SA-EU dialogue on soil information management have successfully completed the dialogue through bilateral engagement, exchange of experiences and practices leading to a better understanding of strategic priorities and required actions by DAFF and its partners in South Africa.

The dialogue among the partners has shown the value and importance of high quality soil information for policy formulation, decision making at different levels of land use, management and governance. This helps addressing the issues of food security, climate change, national development planning and compliance with international obligations under existing UN conventions and multilateral environmental and climate agreements.

The dialogue has involved a wide range of stakeholders in South Africa allowing for close interaction between the government and the civil society, farming community, agribusiness and associated industries. The dialogue triggered an intensive broad-based debate contributing towards the formulation of a national strategy on soil information in South Africa. The final dialogue event took place on 22 and 23 October in Pretoria.

The EU and South Africa are committed to further exchanges on the strategic priorities concerning the South African soil information system.

The parties acknowledge the dialogue outcomes and express hope that they will significantly improve the soil information flow and management in South Africa between government, land users, private enterprises, research and educational institutions and the general public stimulating national development, economic transformation and prosperity in South Africa.