

FPMI PUBLIC HEARINGS ROUND 2: CHAIRPERSON'S OPENING REMARKS

Introduction

Good morning and welcome to the Fresh Produce Market Inquiry's second round of public hearings.

From March 2023 the Inquiry has been occupied with the gathering and analysing of evidence from stakeholders across the fresh produce value chain. The Inquiry has received written submission and data, has undertaken field investigations across South Africa and held a previous round of public hearings.

Today marks another milestone as the Inquiry commences its second round of public hearings. Following the first round of public hearings, wherein insightful contributions were made by various stakeholders, the Inquiry identified a need to continue gathering information from large fresh produce retailers.

As the Spar Group and Woolworths participated in the first round of hearings, the Inquiry invited Pick n Pay Retailers, Shoprite Checkers and Food Lover's Market to participate in this round. Out of the contacted retailers, only Shoprite Checkers declined to participate in this public hearings.

Purpose of the public hearings

Public hearings are an important part of the Inquiry's processes and allow for a further means of engagement between the Inquiry and stakeholders in a public setting.

The second round of public hearings continues the Inquiry's information and evidence gathering processes.

Order of proceedings

As with the first round of hearings I shall be chairing these proceedings and will be assisted by the Inquiry's Technical Director, Mr. Ruan Maré. Stakeholders will be led by Mr. Derrick Bowles, the Inquiry's evidence leader and admitted attorney. He will be supported by the Inquiry's technical team.

Stakeholders will have an opportunity to address the Inquiry, should they wish to, whereafter the evidence leader will pose certain questions to the stakeholder.

Proceedings are live streamed and also recorded.

Insofar possible the hearings will be conducted in a manner that does not divulge confidential information. At times, the proceedings may enter into an *in camera* session to safeguard confidential information. Such sessions will be limited to ensure as much of the proceedings as possible occur in public sessions.

I express my thanks to Pick n Pay and Food Lover's Market for their time and willingness to participate in these hearings.

I now hand over to Mr. Bowles to lead the Pick n Pay Retailers in the first session.