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# Rural farms to supply school food

## Commercialisation programme

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**K**WAZULU-NATAL'S rural-based producers will be empowered to provide for school feeding schemes.

The Agribusiness Development Agency board chairperson Dr Edwin Ngidi said it was implementing the Radical Agrarian Socio-Economic Transformation (Raset) programmes that empowered rural-based entrance-level farmers to grow.

"The situation in KZN currently is that in rural areas producers are not commercial. We are looking at assisting them with production, input supply and the logistics of getting their produce to their local schools," said Ngidi.

The agency said it was interacting with those small-scale producers to use agro-processing to combat unemployment in rural areas. It would also assist to link them with the market and the input suppliers.

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs Sihle Zikalala announced during his budget policy speech his department had set aside R57 million for the activation of the Raset programme ex-

pected to unleash considerable business opportunities for emerging farmers in the food production value chain.

According to the KZN Agrarian-Transformation Brochure of 2015, agriculture as a primary sector contributed about 4.4% of the provincial gross value added (GVA).

### Contributed

However, KZN produced 30% of the national agricultural output and hence contributed significantly towards creating formal and informal employment.

Furthermore, more than 30% of the provincial GVA in the manufacturing sector could be attributed to the "food, beverages and tobacco", as well as the "wood and paper" industries, which were directly related to outputs from the agricultural sector.

The primary agricultural sector contributes more than 7.5% to the total employment across all districts.

Ngidi said the low economic environment had posed challenges to the funding of small-scale producers, who generally did not own land and had no collateral required by banks.

He said the other challenges they had were the underdevel-

oped infrastructure, lack of mechanisations and the transport logistics for their produce.

Regarding farms that were given to beneficiaries through land restitution programmes, but were currently unproductive, Ngidi said it was important for departments to work together.

"You find that the department bought the farm while it was still operational but due to communication breakdown, it ends up vandalised.

"In that case it becomes difficult to ascertain if the farmer took some of the implements with them or the thugs vandalised it seeing that it was unoccupied."

The University of KZN agricultural development and local development expert professor Maryann Green said the programme was set to empower local producers so the government could procure from them at the local level for the school feeding scheme. "However, local people should produce according to what their particular area offers, which could have an impact on their local economic development. This could also lead to them having a market that extends beyond schools in those communities."