



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# 2020 NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

## KZN lab tests popular medicinal plant mhlonyane for possible use in Covid-19 fight

<https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/kwazulu-natal/kzn-lab-tests-popular-medicinal-plant-mhlonyane-for-possible-use-in-covid-19-fight-48438579>

*Artemisia afra* or African wormwood is commonly known as Wilde als or mhlonyane. Picture: Johannesburg City Parks

Published May 23, 2020

**Durban - The status of African wormwood or umhlonyane, as it is known in isiZulu, in traditional medicine is set to increase after the KwaZulu-Natal government asked a laboratory to test if can actually be used to cure Covid-19.**

The herb, whose potential to cure the virus was first touted by Madagascar, was among a number of indigenous plants Premier Sihle Zikalala unveiled on Saturday at a clinical laboratory, which is based at Cedara Agricultural College in Howick outside Pietermaritzburg.

Across Africa, umhlonyane is reported to be widely used to treat various flu-related ailments.

"This laboratory will be our arsenal in the fight against Covid-19. This laboratory – which has the capacity to produce a thousand (1000) 300 ml bottles of hand sanitizers per day – has produced sanitisers for use by various departments and for dissemination to various communities," said Zikalala.

He said the laboratory had produced chemicals that had been used to sanitise more than 700 informal settlements in the province.

"Through this laboratory, the premise of indigenous traditional healers and African medicine specialists that is a possible solution to our Covid-19 crisis will be clinically tested.

"This will be a critical site for research so that our African scientists or traditional healers can have their experience tested," he said.

Zikalala said there was a possibility that a collaboration between indigenous healers and western scientists would produce a formula that would save the world from Covid-19.

By tapping into our indigenous knowledge we want to explore if some of our own indigenous plants and herbs cannot help us fight ailments and diseases as it was the case in the past.

"I must stress that we are in no way suggesting that these should replace Western medicine and pharmaceutical interventions," added the premier.

He said it was high time that the African continent claimed its space in the global arena.

"We want to come up with African solutions not only for African challenges but also for global challenges.

"This laboratory is one of the instruments that will help us achieve that," said Zikalala.

Addressing the media on Saturday, Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande said South Africa had collaborated with Madagascar around the issue of umhlonyane.

Story continues below Advertisement

He said the country's Department of Science and Innovation had bilateral agreements with its counterpart in Madagascar to collaborate in conducting research on traditional medicines.



“We are going to work together with Madagascar about the knowledge of our traditional healers because we are searching for the cure everywhere.

“But through our collaboration we should check if the herb (umhloniyane) is indeed the right one (for coronavirus) so that it would not lead to disaster,” said Nzimande.

He said since Madagascar had been advised to seek independent trial of the plant, “as the country we are willing to partner with Madagascar, and we have already been in touch with Madagascan through our own science councils within the context of the World Health Organisation guideline for evaluation of traditional medicines.”

“Which means we work with them to see if this umhloniyane they are bringing forward would indeed work or not

“This would include necessary advice on non-disclosure agreements and all related intellectual property rights requirements, which must be cleared upfront,” said Nzimande.

**Political Bureau**

**The Mercury**

## KZN premier launches multi-planting season



*The planting season was unveiled this week where the provincial government led by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development planted a co-operative 400-hectare farm in Umzimkhulu. Pictures: SIBONISO MNGADI*

Published Oct 25, 2020

**Durban - KwaZulu-Natal Premier Sihle Zikalala has launched a multi-planting season as he intensifies the use of farms acquired through land reform programme.**

Zikalala said the province has set aside a sum of R90-million for planting throughout the summer season.

The planting season was unveiled this week where the provincial government led by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development planted a co-operative 400-hectare farm in Umzimkhulu, in the southern part of the province.

The farm which is run by women produces dry crops, including maize and beans was acquired through the land reform programme.

While launching the programme, Zikalala said the multi-planting would focus on underutilised land in the province



This was in response to the decline in farm production as a result of land expropriation.



Shortage of skills and lack of resources by those who had benefited from the programme was said to be a reason most farms acquired through land programmes were lying fallow.

Zikalala said his cabinet would launch the programme throughout the province for the next coming months.

He said the planting programme would be monitored and evaluated by the South African Farmers Development Agency (SAFDA)

In addition, R30-million would be availed for producing seeds and agriculture equipment, he said.

“Our commitment is to plant one million hectares of land by 2024 and this is our first step. We hoped that by harvest season next year we would have planted over 21 000 hectares of land as the provincial government.

“The planting initiative will provide much-needed assistance and support such as seeds, fertilizers and chemicals to resource-poor farmers.

It is time to roll up our sleeves, to unite with the land, and achieve the agricultural revolution that our province has been yearning for over two decades,” said Zikalala.

He urged citizens to rally behind the programme so the province could achieve its target and have an abundant fresh and nutritious harvest by next autumn.

Zikalala said agriculture was a crucial driver in the food and nutrition security and economic recovery action plan to avert the province from falling too low below the breadline following the spells of droughts experienced in the past five years and recently, due to Covid-19 lockdown.

“This year, 21 277 households will receive food security-related support. By 2024, we aim to have 50 percent of provincial government spent on entrepreneurship for women-owned business.

“Our aim is to ensure that at least 40 percent of land to be acquired under the Rural Land Reform Programme will target 40 percent youth by 2024,” Zikalala added.

Bongiwe Sithole-Moloi, MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, said the department through its mechanisation programme would support farmers to achieve the target set by the government.



<https://www.iol.co.za/business-report/economy/kzn-food-security-in-state-of-disaster-zikalala-ee39484b-7639-4b44-9f32-a6a56f5fbbc4>



*South Africa - Durban - 30 October 2019 - The drought in KwaZulu-Natal has led to dry terrain in the region with little food for animals. Picture: Bongani Mbatha/African News Agency (ANA)*

Published Oct 26, 2020

**DURBAN – KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), the main provider of South Africa’s agricultural produce, is on the brink of a severe food crisis due to a drought that has ravaged the region in the past five years as well as Covid-19 disruption, KZN Premier Sihle Zikalala warned on Friday.**

Zikalala said while harvests and the outlook for staple crops were promising prior to the pandemic, Covid-19 and the national lockdown had turned the already fragile food security state of the province into disaster.

“Unless immediate action is taken, it is increasingly clear that the impending worst food emergency could have a long-term severe impact on thousands of children and adults already impoverished in KwaZulu-Natal,” he said.

Zikalala was speaking at the launch of the Provincial Multi-Planting Season in the Harry Gwala District in KZN on Friday.

The launch was part of the food and nutrition recovery action the premier and KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development MEC Bongiwe Sithole-Moloi hosted with the aim of strengthening solidarity behind the call to begin planting in October to bolster food security.

Zikalala said regarding the land expropriation without compensation programme, in KZN 21 farms amounting to more than 9 000 hectares would be made available to local black farmers.

“We also encourage community members to use the land they have in their rural areas to plant with the intention of ultimately supplying the markets to ensure food security.

“We want the Raset programme to provide a market to young and upcoming farmers. Their produce will be taken to schools and hospitals. We intend to also come up with agri hubs that will assist to process produce so that we could even export,” he said.

Sithole-Moloi said due to financial constraints, the provincial government had launched this programme aiming to plant 21 000 hectares throughout the province, which would cost R90 million for the current season alone.

The Harry Gwala region has the most land at 4 000 hectares that will be ploughed this season.

University of Zululand economist Professor Lorraine Greyling said times were tough in the agricultural sector.

“With the current state of economy and so many jobs lost, this meant that people lost spending income to now live on grants and this led to a demand insecurity.

“Now we have farmers who are asking themselves whether they should plant or not. On one hand they know that if they plant they will incur debt and are not sure what will happen in the future.

“We might have reached a production standstill,” said Greyling.

## **BUSINESS REPORT**



### KZN govt moves in to help farmers battling outbreak of bovine brucellosis



Published Nov 17, 2020

**Durban:** Following the outbreak of bovine brucellosis in northern KwaZulu-Natal, the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) MEC Bongsi Sithole-Moloi visited the area on Tuesday to discuss efforts being made to combat the outbreak.

Sithole-Moloi visited the uMkhanyakude District, where teams from the department educated livestock farmers on the signs of brucellosis in livestock.

The MEC said if the animal has tested positive for the bacteria, farmers are encouraged to take the animal to the abattoir because it cannot be healed.

She said for animals who have the disease, there was a state veterinary services which will assist the community, especially with transportation to the abattoir.

“We’re hoping we’ll see less of those because now we are educating them and training them,” said Sithole-Moloi.

She said DARD will be bringing the vaccine to the farmers and if they need transportation for positive cattle, arrangements will be made.

Sithole-Moloi said blood samples of the cattle were taken to check if they were safe for human consumption, depending on how much bacteria was in the animal.



“We’re here to look out for the community, for them not to consume food that will harm them – no matter how much they love it, they have to leave it,” said Sithole-Moloi.

The MEC said farmers were also educated about how long the vaccine lasts in the animals for them to ensure they get the vaccine again.

Meanwhile, Dr Thembelihle Sikhakhane said some of the ways the disease can spread is sexually and if an animal sniffs a dead foetus, which has the disease. For humans, they can get the bacteria if they touch the blood of an infected animal.

Sikhakhane said in humans the bacteria is sometimes misdiagnosed. “It mainly affects cattle. It causes fever in humans and cows lose their calves in the third trimester,” said Sikhakhane.

He said DARD is initiating a vaccination drive for calves, aged four to eight months, which shall be implemented in all dip tanks found in uMkhanyakude, King Cetshwayo, uThukela and uMzinyathi districts, in the line with priorities related to food security, economic growth and rural development.

**Daily News**

# Grow your own food and save money

BY GCIS VUK'UZENZELE -17 August 2020 - 07:00

SOWETAN LIVE



Muziwakhe Nsele is becoming a successful businessman, thanks to his vegetable garden. Image: Supplied.

A gardener in KwaZulu-Natal has proven to be a smart businessman, selling his home-grown produce to put money in his pocket.

This is thanks to the One Home, One Garden and Fruit Tree programme aimed for KwaZulu-Natal residents.

Muziwakhe Nsele (42) is a popular man in Hlathini, a village near Melmoth where he lives and sells vegetables such as beans, cabbage and potatoes.

Nsele's business grew in leaps and bounds following the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19), with people buying from him rather than travelling to the shops.

With his profit, Nsele has bought six goats and plans to expand his agriculture business. "I will also be investing in layers and broiler chickens to expand my income streams through the sale of eggs and whole chickens," Nsele says.

The father of six says his business received a boost from the One Home, One Garden and Fruit Tree programme run by the province's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD).

The programme encourages people to start gardening at their homes as a means of fighting poverty and Nsele received seeds, fertiliser and advice from DARD.



DARD MEC Bongiwe Sithole-Moloi says the One Home, One Garden and Fruit Tree programme assists families that are suffering because of COVID-19.

She says: “The programme remains a crucial seed for a sustainable rural economy and with specific interventions and support from DARD, it can reduce and eliminate poverty through subsistence farming.”

To be part of the programme, visit the office of DARD at your local municipality. The contact details of the DARD offices can be found on the department’s website [www.kzndard.gov.za](http://www.kzndard.gov.za). Alternatively, call the department at 033 355 9100.



MEC for Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Bongsi Sithole-Moloi flanked by the department's deputy director-general Jerry Mfusi (left) and City Mayor Mzimkhulu Thebolla during yesterday's visit to the Cedara laboratory which has bumped up its production of sanitisers to meet the provincial demand due to the Covid-19 outbreak. (Moeketsi Mamane)

<https://www.citizen.co.za/witness/news/meeting-the-demand-20200407/>

## THE WITNESS

8 APRIL 2020

The KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) has bumped up production of sanitisers in its Cedara laboratory to help the provincial government's fight against the spread of Covid-19.

On Tuesday, MEC Bongsi Sithole-Moloi said the department had always produced its own sanitisers for use in its own facilities and by vets when they go out in the field, but it was never on a large scale.

Following the outbreak of Covid-19, the provincial cabinet resolved that DARD would increase its production of sanitisers to assist other departments and supply struggling farming communities.

This came after government received indications that the private sector was struggling to meet the growing demand, which saw prices escalating on the few available products.

Deputy director-general Jerry Mfusi said they previously produced about 25 litres a day to disinfect their labs and use in their facilities.

It contains 70% ethanol and water with either liquid soap or glycerine as the finishing product.

"We are now producing at least 1 000 300ml bottles and about five 25 litres a day. In the past two weeks alone we've managed to produce 4 443 bottles to try and meet the demand because we've got orders from the government departments and farmers."

Mfusi said he did not know whether the department would continue with the mass production post Covid-19 as they have received a positive response from those who have been using their sanitisers.

"It's the first time that such large quantities are being produced by government so we might have to look at DARD as a developmental department because there's obviously a need for this product."

Sithole-Moloi said the department would be distributing most of their sanitisers to disadvantaged farming communities who cannot afford to buy their own. She said this was DARD's contribution to the fight against Covid-19 as it was not selling the product.



# African armyworm outbreak pose threat to KZN cattle farmers

By Lloyd Phillips

|farmers weekly

7 April 2020 | 4:32 pm

*If it spreads, further afield, the African armyworm [*Spodoptera exempta* (Walker)] outbreak in KwaZulu-Natal's (KZN) Nkandla and Msinga areas could be the final nail in the coffin for many livestock farmers in the province.*



KwaZulu-Natal's smaller-scale livestock farmers will be at the most financial risk from the outbreak of African armyworm in the province.

*Photo: Mack Makhathini/KZN DARD*

If it spreads further afield, the African armyworm [*Spodoptera exempta* (Walker)] outbreak in KwaZulu-Natal's (KZN) Nkandla and Msinga areas could be the final nail in the coffin for many livestock farmers in the province.

The outbreak came hot on the heels of one of the worst droughts in living memory, the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak, and the [coronavirus disease](#) (COVID-19) global pandemic.

Thube Zondi, provincial secretary of the KZN chapter of the African Farmers' Association of South Africa (AFASA), told *Farmer's Weekly* that the province's livestock farmers, especially those farming on a smaller-scale and on communal lands, desperately needed material and financial assistance from government and other role players.

“During the drought there was no grazing. During the FMD [outbreak], many of the farmers could not sell their animals. With the COVID-19 [pandemic] the churches and schools that many emerging livestock farmers sold animals to have cancelled their orders. Now the African armyworm outbreak is eating grazing and livestock are at risk of falling ill due to armyworm related cattle poisoning.

“We are really feeling the pain. Our livestock farmers will not survive this without support,” he stressed.

A statement by the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (KZN DARD), said that while the African armyworm outbreak was currently limited to the Nkandla and Msinga areas, it could spread, due to the moist soil conditions resulting from recent widespread rain in the province.

During her visit to the Nkandla area on Thursday, KZN DARD's MEC, Bongwiwe Sithole-Moloi, urged livestock farmers to be on the lookout for signs of African armyworm and to immediately report these to local agricultural advisers.

Information on the Agricultural Research Council's (ARC) website, said pesticides were more effective on recently hatched African armyworm larvae than on larvae that had opportunity to grow before being sprayed.

“Where the caterpillars are moving from one land to another, they can be halted by ploughing a furrow with pits dug at intervals. The larvae will crawl along the furrows and eventually fall into the pits where they can be covered up or treated with [a] chemical.”

Sithole-Moloi said that while grazing on African armyworm-infested veld and pastures, cattle could inadvertently consume the larvae and be poisoned as a result.

“Signs to note [of this poisoning] are the appearance of large strings of watery saliva drooping from [the animals'] mouths; difficulty swallowing; severe thirst; bloating; grinding of teeth; and nerve twitching,” she explained.

The ARC's website said that as soon as these symptoms were observed, all animals needed to be removed from the affected pastures and a vet called in to treat the sick animals.

It added that “a good” prevention of further poisoning was to leave the veld or pasture ungrazed for at least 40 days.