



## agriculture & rural development

Department:  
agriculture  
& rural development  
**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

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### **MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FROM MEC FOR KZN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR CYRIL XABA, FOR THE YOUTH AND FORESTRY LEGACY PROJECT**

Program Director

Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries: General Bheki Cele

KZN MEC for Education: Ms Peggy Nkonyeni

Umgungundlovu District Mayor: Mr Yusuf Bhamjee

Msunduzi Mayor: Mr Chris Ndlela

Representatives from the Forestry Industry

Officials from National, Provincial and Local Government

And, a special welcome to all the young people present

We are fortunate that in KwaZulu-Natal, we have a young woman, who could well serve as an ambassador for the Youth & Forestry Legacy Project. She hails from nearby Pietermaritzburg. Her name is Nonkululeko Ntinga and she had featured in an article in The Witness on Youth Day.

According to the article, Nonkululeko is the first black South African woman to have won a prestigious award at Stellenbosch University for graduating in her BSC Forestry degree with top honours.

Her studies were sponsored by Mondi and she is currently working for the company's foresters-in-training-internship program. Her story is that of the possibilities that exist for young people in Forestry and what the legacy project sets out to achieve.

Honorable Deputy Minister, General Bheki Cele, thank you for driving this inspiring project. As a province we are thrilled about the opportunities it opens up for young people in KZN. We are equally excited that the World Forestry Congress will be taking place in eThekweni in September.

Forestry is the biggest agricultural commodity in KwaZulu-Natal. It accounts for 24% of the total Provincial Agricultural GDP of R17,3 billion. After Mpumalanga, KZN is the second largest timber producing province. It is home to over 1000 commercial timber farmers and over 25 000 small-scale timber growers, the majority of whom are women.

When looking at the prospect for jobs and career development, Forestry offers young people a host of opportunities as it is not just about growing trees but the forest products that emanate from these economic activities. KZN is home to major forestry processing plants. According to the Forestry Industry, R19,1 billion worth of forestry products were exported from South Africa through Richards Bay and Durban. Statistics from the sector also show that the industry provides 80 000 direct and indirect jobs in the province. After dependents are taken into account, 300 000 people in KZN are dependent on the industry for their livelihood.

Given these statistics, the possibilities for youth employment abound and it is initiatives like the Youth & Forestry Legacy Project that begins the process of unlocking these opportunities.

The KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has been working with the National Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries on young growers and timber farmer development in the province. The Department also has a Youth in Agribusiness empowerment program and there is a successful Youth Timber Production cooperative operating in the Uthungulu District.

Like the national department, KZN DARD offers bursaries and internships and an exciting initiative for unemployed agricultural graduates is that the department intends integrating these graduates in agribusiness initiatives in the province through the Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA). Forestry with its many by-products can offer young entrepreneurs opportunities in matches manufacturing, charcoal or in furniture making. The list can go on.

There are also opportunities in secondary industries linked to forestry including fire management and disease and pest control.

On that note, I would like to appeal to you today to also become ambassadors for forestry by being careful about preventing fires. It is

currently fire season and a careless action like throwing a lit cigarette butt can cause devastating destruction.

Deputy Minister, thank you once more for launching this project. You have our full support. It is in partnerships and by united action, that we can truly serve our young people and grow them into the future farmers and entrepreneurs of tomorrow.

I thank you.