



agriculture
& rural development

Department:
Agriculture and Rural Development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MEC THEMBA MTHEMBU AT THE KZN
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT'S
SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARDS**

Date: Friday, 21st April 2017

Venue: Latitude Conference Centre, Dube Trade Port

Program Director

Acting HOD

Senior Management of the Department

District Managers for Agriculture

State Veterinarians from the Districts

Clients from Participating Districts

Members of the Provincial Batho Pele Forum

Our Special Guests the finalists for the Service Excellence Awards

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Service Excellence Awards present public servants with an opportunity to assess their careers and align them with the goals of serving the people, in essence, Batho Pele principals.

They are also an opportunity for me to appreciate and recognise the hard work you all put into ensuring that this department functions to its full capabilities to better serve our people who are key to our success.

Choosing a career in the public service means you dedicate your being to serving other people with integrity, respect and dignity for the greater good of your communities and the country. The attainment of personal goals and enrichment

come secondary because you find fulfilment in seeing a family in Nquthu successfully cultivating their backyard garden so they are able to enjoy a nutritious dinner on the table.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Batho Pele principals embrace the fundamentals of being an African child, they speak to Ubuntu. Umuntu umuntu ngabantu, my child is your child. It was Mohammed Ali who said, "Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth."

Being here today, means we're able to appreciate and recognise the efforts by public servants who continue to go beyond their call of duty. Public servants who are exemplary to all their colleagues and peers, in the behaviour they should mimic in the public sector.

We are a country that still harbours various scars from the past. Africans particularly black South Africans, were placed at the bottom of the food chain. We were placed under systematic oppression, enslaved and dehumanised by the government of that time. It is therefore fundamental to the development and betterment of our society that we continue to tirelessly dedicate ourselves to serving without expectations or gains.

We're about to celebrate 23 years of Democracy on the 27th April, we cannot ignore that there are many people still languishing in poverty in our country.

Omama abakwazi ukubeka ukudla ematafuleni, izingane zihamba amabanga amade ukuya esikolweni zingadlanga, intsha ayitholi misebenzi.

As the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, we are strategically placed to address most of these societal issues. Our strategy has been modelled to place the poorest of the poor at the top of the pyramid, with Food Security as the driving force.

Attaining food security, means that our people are able to meet their basic food needs at all times. Food Security in South Africa is constitutionally enshrined by section 26/27 of the constitution which says that everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water," and that the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of this rights.

Ladies and gentlemen, internationally the development of subsistence and small-holder farming has been viewed as critical to addressing food insecurity.

As a Department we need to create an enabling environment for small-holder farmers and subsistence farmers. We need to place ourselves in a position where we're able to couple science and technology with indigenous knowledge to create sustainable farming practices. Further, we must provide access to markets and market incentives that will enable job creation and economic stimulation.

Key to the Departments strategy being implemented successfully and achieving its goals, are the employees. You have the knowledge, skills and expertise required to transform our province through agriculture. You the staff are in control of how far we are able to impact the lives of people in this province.

Your failure in successfully implementing your duties means the failure of your colleagues, the failure of the department and the failure of our government to better the lives of the overwhelming majority of our people. Further failure to perform diligently, efficiently and effectively is considered silent corruption.

As a communist and an advocate for workers' rights, I will never oppress or devalue the contribution workers have to the betterment of society. I will never allow that your rights as human beings, and as workers be compromised.

During my visits to the various Departmental offices in the past weeks, I was made aware of the many challenges you deal with every day, which hamper your ability to function efficiently.

I am dealing with these promptly and will continuously ensure that I interact with you and have an open door policy where you can raise issues respectfully and openly.

I have already indicated that the issue of matching and placing, that was an area of hostility and contentment in the department has been dealt with. Once finalised, I will send the final programme report to the Public Service Commission for quality assurance purposes.

Basebenzi, I will not tolerate civil servants ill-treating the public and robbing them of their rights to access our services.

We recently engaged in a Cabinet OSS at Umziwabantu, community members had complaints of defunct community gardens in Agricultural offices. Disadvantaged schools that remain without gardens and issues around receiving mechanization and seeds to enable community enrichments projects to take place.

Public servants should not behave like speed humps to service delivery. You cannot be party to the complaints of our people who view public service offices as a place where they are ridiculed, disrespected and mocked.

Corruption is also a seething trend in this Department. I will resolutely deal with the footprints of organised corruption that filters from the bottom to the top in the department. I am aware that there are people inside and outside the department who run a syndicate and control the department, from jobs, to farm allocations and tenders. We need to push for a system of clean governance across all units and structures of the department.

Batho Pele, people First, abantu kuqala, are words that guide your deliverables in government. The employees whom we have come to celebrate are an example of Batho Pele principals, they embody them and are ambassadors of virtuous service delivery.

Continue in your path, do not be misled or lose sight of the greater good of our people. As said by Archbishop Desmond Tutu: "far too often people think of themselves as just individuals separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out, it is for the whole humanity.

Together beating the drum for service delivery because we belong, we care, we serve to make a better life for all.

Again congratulations to all the winners,

I thank you.