



**SPEAKING NOTES OF THE ACTING HOD FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

MR SIBUSISO MYEZA

**DURING THE GRADUATION OF STUDENTS FROM THE AGRIBUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY DENMARK PROGRAMME**

Date: 21 June 2018

Programme Director, Mr Zibusiso Dlamini

ADA Board Chairperson, Dr. Ngidi

ADA Acting CEO, Mr Carlos Boldogh

Ms Lisa Mthethwa & Lona Mnguni, of Frutee Belliez

Past Denmark Students, Ms Nokukhanya Nxumalo & Mr Kwandokuhle Ximba

Ms Rechi Dlamini

DARD EXCO

All officials

All representatives of Dard Entities

Stakeholders

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

And last but certainly not least, our special guests, the Graduates

This graduation takes place during a month that is synonymous with young people. We commemorate and celebrate the thousands of young people who took the bull by the horn and fought against a ruthless and brutal apartheid government in June 1976. The Soweto

Student Uprising reminds us all that young people united with one cause can conquer any government and social-ill.

In the words of Former President and a world icon whose centenary birthday we celebrate on 18 July, Nelson Holihlahla Mandela, I say, ***“Young people are capable, when aroused, of bringing down the towers of oppression and raising the banners of freedom.”***

It is the same spirit of youth that was able to ensure that free education becomes a reality for the millions of young people who cannot afford tertiary education in this country. The #feesmustfall campaign of 2015 displayed that young people are a crucial segment of society and that they are the basis for future development, and indeed as was said by former British Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, ***“the youth of a nation are the trustees of prosperity.”***

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before me tonight I see young people who have used their spirit of fight, their spirit of will, their spirit of unity to fight a struggle similar to that of the youth of 1976 and that of 2015. They have taken the opportunities presented to them and used them to educate themselves to build a prosperous life for all who live in our Province and the Country at large.

They have heeded a call made by our president, his Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa to work hard and achieve outstanding results. Therefore, it is now time to use the skills gained to contribute to building a new society.

You have come back to the country of your birth at a time when there is vast hope. This is not withstanding the challenges you and your peers are faced with. Unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, inequality, poverty and underdevelopment. All these struggles you must confront as you strive for economic freedom.

The choice you have made in pursuing Agriculture as your profession of choice is one which I must commend. Agriculture as a sector, carries with it great potential.

In the past year the agricultural sectors contribution to the economy and the Gross Domestic Product played a significant role in lifting the country out of a technical recession. In the fourth quarter of 2017, South Africa recorded a high growth rate as the economy expanded by 3.1 percent quarter-on-quarter. The contribution of agriculture to this growth was 0.8 percent. Moreover, in the same period the agricultural sector was able to create 39 thousand jobs as reported by the Quarterly Labour Force Report released by StatsSA.

It is among others the reason why Government led by the President of the Republic has taken a decisive decision to realise the enormous economic potential of agriculture.

During the 2018 State of the Nation Address President Ramaphosa said, and I quote, ***“Agriculture presents one of the greatest opportunities to significantly grow our economy and create jobs.....We will accelerate our land redistribution programme not only to redress a grave historical injustice, but also to bring more producers into the agricultural sector and to make more land available for cultivation.”***

As the Department responsible for Agriculture and Rural development in the Province, we remain committed to ensuring that young people play a leading and significant role in the growth and reconstruction of rural areas and all previously disadvantaged communities through agricultural development.

This commitment was visible in our elevation of the Sub-Directorate for Youth, Women and Persons with Disabilities into a Directorate in 2017/18. Work has begun to capacitate the Directorate so it is able to fulfil its role of enabling the greater participation of these groups in all our agricultural programmes.

We continue to ensure that there is a biasness towards the youth and women in the projects we support and fund. We want young people to lead our programmes of aquaculture, in-land fishing, the production of sub-tropical fruits, nuts and traditional and indigenous crops.

The world is changing at an increased speed as we move into the fourth industrial revolution. As we gather here today, many of us young and old have access to social media, be it, twitter, facebook, Instagram, snap-chat or whatsapp. All of which have given us an opportunity to communicate and function amongst a global world and economy. Statistics reveal that today more than 30% of the world's population use social media services to communicate and stay on top of world events.

Furthermore, we're shopping online, using biomedical sciences to live longer, healthier and create babies. Digital technology is giving workers more autonomy and freeing them so they are able to concentrate on addressing more complex business issues and in Agriculture, a movement has begun to change the way we grow our food from farm to table.

In an attempt to address labour shortages and an aging population, Japan has established the world's first robotic farm. On this farm, robots do everything from re-planting young seedlings to watering, trimming and harvesting crops.

In the UK it is reported that manufacturers of robotic milking and feeding systems anticipate half of all dairy cows in north-west Europe will be milked by robotic systems by 2025.

In Nigeria, scientists have created a pest-resistant black-eyed pea, whereas in Ghana, farmers have the Esoko app which helps farmers identify markets in which their products will receive the best prices.

What becomes clear is that the fourth industrial revolution will bring about significant change to how we as a country, practice agriculture and agro-processing. And while all this technology comes with various challenges we must look at how we cultivate it to ensure greater opportunities of growth and development in the sector.

In an article written by Mthuli Ncube in 2017 he said, ***“According to 2010 McKinsey figures, 60% of the world’s uncultivated, arable land is located in Africa. However, Africa suffers from low productivity levels in comparison to other regions. Consequently, improvement of agricultural productivity is considered a priority in the African Union’s Agenda 2063, a vision to banish the hand hoe and ensure that African agriculture is characterised by science, technology and innovation. Combined with an abundance of youthful labour, Africa has the means to achieve this vision.”***

It is then you, as young people who must lead us in this revolution. The skills and expertise gained during your time in Denmark must be used to ensure that agriculture becomes relevant, accessible, developmental in its role, and that you lead in assisting small and emerging farmers, particularly those in rural areas to build sustainable Agricultural businesses.

As we speak the MEC of the Department, the Honourable Themba Mthembu, is out of the country visiting the People’s Republic of China and exploring various ways of adapting technology to our farming methods particularly the use of Junciao Technology, to support our programmes of food and nutrition security and land care.

The MEC recently delivered the 2018 Budget Policy Speech, which I trust you will all get hold of as it crafts the Departments trajectory for the year. This will enable you to tap into the various projects we have prioritised to grow in your respective fields of specialisation.

What you will also find in the Budget Policy Speech is the Departments continued focus on Livestock Production. We remain committed to support small-holder livestock farmers to

increase production and the quality of their animals so they are able to compete in national and international markets.

As detailed in the 10 month vocational-level management programme you have just undertaken, you are all adequately equipped to assist farmers or initiate projects of livestock production, book-keeping, finance and budgeting, conducting market analysis and crop production. These skills are skills we need in the Department and in the different communities of this Province, skills that will go a long way towards creating a sustainable and tangible livestock industry in the Province and the country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a Department, we are the first to admit that our graduate programme has not taken off as was envisioned. We are currently working hard to build this programme for unemployed graduates to ensure we are able to create synergised opportunities for young graduates to be trained and employed.

I encourage you all to take inspiration from Ms Nokukhanya Nxumalo and Mr Kwandokuhle Ximba who is still to speak that you have now entered into an industry filled with great hope and potential, it is in your hands to change any reality and make with it what you have re-imagined.

As this is a night of celebration and not long speeches which will dim our mood, allow me to say, as a nation and a youth we can all learn and take lessons from our past and how young warriors shed their blood for this country. Let us take the baton handed to us and pass it forward, by leading an agricultural revolution that will build sustainable rural and urban communities for future generations.

Let's make agriculture our culture

I thank you