



agriculture  
& rural development

Department:  
Agriculture and Rural Development  
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE MEC OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT IN KWAZULU-NATAL, THE HONOURABLE THEMBA  
MTHEMBU ON THE OCCASION OF THE KZN FEMALE FARMER OF  
THE YEAR AWARDS CEREMONY – CAPPENY ESTATES, BALLITO**

**14 AUGUST, 2018**

**Programme Director,**

**Cllr M D Shandu**

**Dr Nonhlanhla Mkhize, DG: Office of the Premier**

**The Acting HOD, Mr Sibusiso Myeza**

**All members of the Portfolio Committee**

**All mayors present**

**Our sponsors**

**All stakeholders**

**Farmers**

**Departmental Officials**

**Distinguished guests**

**Our guests of honour**

**The nominees of the provincial Female Entrepreneur Awards**

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is that time of the year again where we celebrate the phenomenal women of our country. We want to show gratitude and appreciation to the women who have excelled in the Agricultural sector and have managed to prosper in our Province.

And this year's ceremony coincides with the centenary celebration of Albertina Sisulu; who was a stalwart of our struggle for liberation. We remember her and many other remarkable women activists of her generation.

With the theme '**A woman of fortitude**' we recognise her courage, discipline, integrity and her love for her country. Mama Sisulu as she was affectionately known was indeed a woman of fortitude through her strength, resilience and the will to carry on in the darkest days of apartheid.

Throughout her life she worked tirelessly to ensure all people of South Africa enjoy the benefits of freedom and democracy.

As we celebrate the women of South Africa, we must also refocus our attention to the plight and rights of women and to assess the progress we have made towards women empowerment, emancipation and gender equality since 1994.

There is no doubt that in the twenty-four years of our democracy, government has made significant progress and strides towards the restoration of the dignity of women. Through the Constitution and an array of other measures introduced since 1994, on the whole, the position and conditions of women in our country has improved significantly.

Women now have access to services and positions that were a dream only a mere twenty-four years ago. The living conditions of the majority of ordinary women have undergone significant qualitative change.

We are encouraged by these developments, but also believe that more still needs to be done. Even though strides have been made to empower women and promote gender equality, women still bear a disproportionate burden of the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

The rural profile of South Africa continues to be one of female-headed households, growing poverty, human rights abuses and increased gender-based violence, unemployment and high prevalence of HIV and AIDS. Women continue to be marginalized and discriminated against in terms of economic opportunities. In short, they are a coalface of the adversity.

Hence as government, we have created programmes aimed at empowering women in South Africa.

Director-general, Programmes like the Female Entrepreneur Awards helps the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to reward the efforts and contribution of women, young women and women with disabilities in creating and sustaining food security, job creation, economic growth and poverty alleviation in the sector.

Since its inception in 1999, the programme has seen over 2 000 women farmers participate in the awards.

Through programmes like these awards we as the Department hope to upscale women entrepreneurs from being subsistence and small-holder producers to commercial entrepreneurs who will also venture into the export markets.

As a government whose agenda favours agrarian revolution and agric export, we use institutions and facilities like the Dube Tradeport which has a fantastic and dedicated AgriZone to enhance agric trade. This augers well for our efforts in augmenting export for the fresh produce and women should grab these opportunities that come with such state support.

With a theme **“Women economic empowerment: a priority in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries sectors”** FEA is in line with the National Development Plan which makes reference to the empowerment of women and their involvement in the country’s economic transformation.

Michelle Bachelet who is the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women once said "When women are empowered and can claim their rights and access to land, leadership, opportunities and choices, economies grow, food security is enhanced and prospects are improved for current and future generations"

Ladies and gentlemen,  
I cannot over-emphasize this that women are the backbone of the development of rural and national economies. They comprise 43% of the world’s agricultural labour force, which rises to 70% in some countries. In Africa, 80% of the agricultural production comes from small farmers, who are mostly rural women.

Women comprise the largest percentage of the workforce in the agricultural sector, but do not have access and control over all land and productive resources.

As the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in KwaZulu-Natal we have made a commitment to supply people in the Province with seedlings, mechanisation, indigenous goats and chickens, education and support for them to start the journey towards owning agricultural enterprises.

Women, youth and people with disabilities are the core beneficiaries of all these Departmental programmes to ensure growth in the Agricultural sector.

Last week I met 61-year-old Ncamisile Buthelezi in Sgedlane near Kranskop, who worked at Aussicht Farm since she was 12 years old. She still suffered a great deal when her human rights were violated numerous

times and was eventually forcefully removed from the farm even though both her and her family worked tirelessly on the farm with nothing to show.

I would like to call on all the winners to pass the baton forward by utilizing the skills, education, experience and technological know-how to empower other women, particularly those who have become invisible and powerless like Ncamisile Buthelezi to develop and uplift themselves from the grips of poverty, abuse and inequality through agriculture.

I also would like to take this opportunity to call private sector partners, including our sponsors here, to work with us as government in promoting and supporting women in agriculture.

The summer season will soon be upon us, let's gird up our loins and head for the fields to plough and prepare a good harvest next year. In isiZulu we say: "**Phezu komkhono!**".

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate all the winners today, runners up and all those that have been nominated for the role you have played in the Agricultural sector.

I thank you