



agriculture & rural development

Department:
Agriculture and Rural Development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

SPEAKING NOTES FOR MEC MTHEMBU DURING THE LIVESTOCK SUMMIT

VENUE: TONGAAT TOWNHALL

DATE: APRIL 9, 2019

Let me take this opportunity to welcome you all to the Livestock Summit. This engagement is long overdue and it serves as a platform to engage the livestock associations and livestock farmers on some of the challenges they are faced with in the sector. As the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in KwaZulu-Natal we wanted to create this platform to engage with livestock farmers, our strategic partners to derive solutions which will transform the agricultural sector.

Livestock Farming is a form of farming that has been practiced by communities in rural areas for generations and has played a major role in creating food security for small-scale farmers. We are aware that some of the major problems faced by emerging livestock farmers is lack of land, lack of investment and working capital and limited access to credit. These issues extends to poor veld condition, highly variable climate, insufficient farm size, inadequate or damaged infrastructure and under-resourced, poor knowledge of pasture, animal management and a highly competitive industry. As government, we are hard at work to give necessary support to our livestock farmers to tackle some of the challenges they face.

In KwaZulu-Natal there is 9.44 million hectares of land which is extent and 82 percent of this land is suitable for livestock production. One of the reasons we decided to hold the Summit is because we understand the importance of livestock farming in the Province and its contribution of up to 46.5 percent to the total agricultural value in KZN.

In the past few months I have travelled around the Province and in each conversation I hold with livestock farmers, I have been confronted with the same issue of not having sufficient communal land for their livestock and challenges when it comes to access to water. This is one of the reasons as the Department, we have been concentrating on implementing the Big Five Projects which was one of the pronouncements I made during the 2018/2019 Policy Budget Speech. The

Big Five Projects include **FENCING, BOREHOLES, DIPTANKS, DAM SCOOPING and GRAZING CAMPS**. In the past financial year, we have been rolling out these projects in various districts across the Province.

KZN is now experiencing a “green drought.” Rainfall across the province has not been equal/evenly dispersed everywhere and unusual weather patterns have been experienced. There have been isolated storms with heavy downpours but the water table, farm dams and the provincial dams are not being replenished.

Severe heat waves with high discomfort values were experienced through September to November as well as in December and the first half of January resulting in high evaporative demands on vegetation, soils and dams. The effects of these weather conditions have affected most farmers who have suffered a loss of crops and livestock.

We also are aware of the frustrations that farmers experience daily especially when it comes to extension services, as government we still need to do more to ensure that the extension services reach our farmers, especially livestock farmers.

Our vision is to have **“an inclusive, sustainable and radically transformed agricultural sector that builds thriving communities in balance with nature.”** By working with Livestock Associations we believe this is possible and through our interventions as the Department, we can unlock the potential of livestock farming and create food security in KZN.

The mandate for the Department is clear, we want our small-scale and emerging farmers to grow and become commercial farmers. As we stand, 40 percent of African Farmers are cattle farmers with only five percent find their way to abattoirs and as government we need to have a concrete plan to ensure that this problem is addressed. This is the reason as the Department we want to promote livestock associations, build auction facilities and abattoirs to assist livestock farmers especially the previously marginalized. Our aim is to:

- Improve genetic potential of communal livestock and avoid inbreeding
- Improve veld condition and supplementary feeding of the communal areas
- Improve beef production in the Province and supply Abattoirs
- Improve animal health status through PAHC
- Promote commercialization of cattle through auctions, feedlot and value adding (operationalization of the abattoir and ternary development)
- Empower livestock farmers, association to be self-sustainable
- Transform beef industry in communal areas
- Improve financial status of communal farmers

We also want to urge livestock farmers to also look at the entire value chain when it comes to farming. There is a high demand for red meat overseas which we need to take advantage of. The market is there but what we found is that some of the farmers who have entered this space are struggling to meet the demands by international markets. Livestock farmers also need to take advantage of

governmental programmes such as RASET which will create market opportunities for livestock farmers.

Farm dwellers are still one of the groups that suffer the most when it comes to livestock farming. Most farm dwellers who own livestock still face challenges in keeping livestock because of issues with land ownership. We have witnessed a lot of human rights abuses where farm dwellers lose their herd because they don't have land. This is one area that we as government still need to concentrate on and come up with proper solutions to address this once and for all.

As the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, we have invested a lot into our Veterinary Services which plays a major role in supporting and development of animal health production and welfare. They ensure human health by controlling zoonotic diseases in order to provide quality and safe animal products for the local and international markets. In terms of the DARD's new Agrarian Transformation Strategy, this sub-programme is critical to providing animal health and meat safety support to the implementation of Agro-processing and Communal Estates initiatives.

In all districts, all our offices have a state vet who is permanently placed to assist livestock farmers, and all these services are offered for free. We urge all livestock owners to take advantage of these services. Some of the services they offer include:

- Disease control - Animal vaccinations (Anthrax, Rabies, CA, Newcastle disease)
- Primary Animal Health Care
- Animal diseases Surveillance and Diagnostics
- Export certification
- Veterinary public health
- Livestock farmer empowerment

We are aware that there have been challenges in some districts such as Ugu, Harry Gwala and Pietermaritzburg where there have been shortages of state vets. As the Department, we have begun to address this issue and have advertised these positions which will be filled soon. We are also working together with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries through their Compulsory Community Service Programme for vets which started in 2016, where young professionals are placed at our offices for a year to give clinical services to communities. These young professionals have made a major impact in our communities through the services they offer.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you are all aware that as the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, we have developed the Agricultural Master Plan of which livestock farming will also be part of. The aim for the Master Plan is to have a plan which will work as a guide. We have consulted all our valuable stakeholders

including livestock associations in developing this Master Plan to ensure that all the sectors within agriculture are included.

As I conclude, I know one of the main challenges faced by farmers is stock theft. We have invited the South African Police Service to come and present and share ideas on how to address this issue. Through DAFF we are assisting livestock farmers with animal identification, the Animal Identification Act is clear, all animals need to be legally identified to ensure that if an animal is lost or stolen it can be returned to its rightful owner. Once your mark is put on the National register of Animal Identification system no one may use your brand or brand your animal without your permission. Hence we urge all animal owners to invest in this system to curb animal theft once and for all.

With winter upon us, I want to remind all livestock farmers to take advantage of our vaccination programme and make sure that their cattle get the Doraject AD3E. It is a three in one supplement and also assists with deworming.

With the theme **“Commercializing communal Livestock to unlock hidden wealth in the value chain”** together let’s come up with resolutions which will make livestock farming thrive in KwaZulu-Natal and better the lives of our people, especially in rural areas. The ANC government led by president Ramaphosa has identified Agriculture as one of the sectors to boost the economy and that can only be possible by us working together as stakeholders in the agricultural sector. I thank you.