



agriculture & rural development

Department:
Agriculture and Rural Development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

OWEN SITHOLE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE 2019 GRADUATION CEREMONY

VENUE: OWEN SITHOLE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

15 MARCH 2019

Programme Director, Dr. FN Mkhize

Mayor of UMhlathuze Municipality: Cllr MG Mhlongo

Mayor of UMfolozi Municipality: Cllr Mgenge

Members of the House of Traditional Leaders present

Ndabezitha Inkosi Mthethwa

Izinduna Zenkosi

Local Ward: Cllr T Khumalo

Acting Head of the Department, Mr S. Myeza

Members of the college Academic Council (UNIZULU & UKZN)

Strategic Partners (Tongaat Hulett, MTN, SASA)

Principals of Agricultural Colleges

**Colleagues from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries
(DAFF)**

Honoured Guests

All invited Guests

Academics, Parents, Students, Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director, it is an honour and privilege to be amongst you to celebrate the Owen Sithole College of Agriculture class of 2016. This achievement by the students to complete their three-year diploma is something we are proud of as the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

What makes us more proud is that this diploma had a special focus on agro-processing and agri-business which is one of the sectors identified by the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP), the New Growth Path and the National Development Plan for its potential to spur growth and create jobs because of its strong backward linkage with the primary agricultural sector.

As you are all aware, agriculture has been identified as one of the key sectors to turn our economy around. While delivering the State of the Nation Address, President Ramaphosa reiterated the importance of agriculture in South Africa. He said government will continue to focus on high value agricultural products with export potential such as our fruit, wine and vegetable industries, as well as poultry and red meat and I know that this class of 2016 will excel to make this a reality as I had the privilege to see some of the work they gained, especially in Agro-processing – Imbuzi Meat Processing.

Programme Director, the historical legacy of the agricultural sector has always been dominated by white males and having institutions like OSCA has assisted in turning this phenomenon. Even though there has been progress, a lot still needs to be done to transform the agricultural industry. We want to get to a point where black commercial farmers dominate the industry and the start to this is through our agricultural colleges.

As the Department, we are shifting our focus to youth, women and people with disabilities; institutions like OSCA will assist in empowering youth in society and will ultimately help fight unemployment, poverty and inequality and through our graduates this is possible.

My message to you today is and I quote **“Agriculture is always going to be a top priority, everybody's going to always need to eat and everybody's going to always need some help with that so as long as you're willing to put in the hours, there's a job there for you.”** You have been given the necessary skills and training, now it's up to you to use the knowledge you have gained at OSCA to shine in the agricultural sector and make us proud.

It was encouraging to learn from the college report delivered by the Principal, Mr Mazibuko, that OSCA is also offering short courses, skills programmes and learnerships that directly serves our communities even for those with no matric.

The location of Owen Sithole College makes it very critical in advancing the rural economy through agricultural production and skills. OSCA has a very rich history, the college was created to educate the daughters and sons of Amakhosi; hence it played a very important role in the economic development of Africans. During the establishment of the College, it admitted students from all over Southern Africa, this is something we take pride in. We were honoured to be part of the celebrations last year when the college celebrated 50th years since its inception.

The class of 2016 is quite close to my heart as this is the same year I joined the Department of Agriculture and Rural development as the MEC. A lot has been

accomplished in the past three years, we have faced some challenges but we have a lot to be proud of. During this period, we managed to accomplish the following:

- The Department developed an Agricultural Master Plan, which will serve as a blue print policy framework to be adopted by the provincial government of KwaZulu-Natal in its quest to drive and promote a thriving agricultural sector in the province which will ensure an inclusive rural socio-economic development.
- The College celebrated a 50th Anniversary, this was a remarkable moment and you should be proud that you were part of the college half centenary celebration
- Last year we officially opened the State of the Art library, sponsored by the Department.
- The College received the state of the art Multi-Media centre by the MTN Foundation
- We launched the Recognition of Prior Learning and learnership in order to redress the past injustices. The advert is out for the learnerships, visit the Department's Facebook page on how to apply.
- Graduate Placement Programme with more than 90 graduates from both colleges are already placed in commercial farms
- Introduced an Agriculture schools programme and promotion of agriculture in schools – I would like to acknowledge the contribution of OSCA to our strategy by training agricultural educators and non-agriculturalist employees of the Department.

We really take pride in the quality of education offered by our Colleges. The report by Mr Mazibuko indicated that there are a number of graduates that are already employed and others continuing further with their studies in Universities across South Africa, thanks to Mr Mazibuko and team.

We have seen a lot of improvements in the infrastructure over the last 3 years. I would like to thank the college for working tirelessly in improving the image of the college.

I would also like to acknowledge DAFF through the CASP funding which contributed to make the college what you see today thanks to DAFF Minister, Mr Senzeni Zokwana, DG and the team.

Our Sponsors, MTN, Tongaat Hullets and SASA who have been our strategic partners for some of the projects at the college, the work that has been done would not have been possible without your generous contribution, hence I would

like to express my gratitude for your generous contribution. I hope that these partnerships will continue in order for us to improve the lives of many.

And lastly Programme Director, I would like to appeal to the Owen Sithole College of Agriculture class of 2016 to ensure that they make their mark in the agricultural community, keep on knocking on those doors to ensure that you thrive in the sector.

Most importantly, don't forget to go back home and assist to uplift the agricultural sector in the rural communities. Be proud of being agriculturalists and be proud of what you have achieved and continue to make a difference wherever you go. Please make agriculture your culture and heed the call by the President Cyril Ramaphosa of **"Thuma Mina"** I thank you.