



## agriculture & rural development

Department:  
Agriculture and Rural Development  
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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COORDINATORS  
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

Honorable Premier, one of the noblest calls you have ever made in your current term is to hold the Agricultural Summit. In this Summit, we are converging under one roof to do diagnosis of the challenges faced by agriculture in the Province and government in particular. We are expected to decide together on the most adequate and curable solution for the benefit to all.

Agriculture sector and the department in the Province has been travelling through turbulent seas for over a decade. In the next two days all of us here have the responsibility to steer this ship to calm seas. For a long time, agriculture has been preserved for the few including those selected few to receive assistance from the department at worst, turning the department into a paradise for tenderpreneurs and the political scrupulous. In this summit we all need everything to put a stop to everything bad in the department.

By hosting this summit, we want to seek support and get input for the Agricultural Master Plan. By so doing, we don't want the department to be dependent on the

incumbent MEC to succeed or not but to have a full plan that will be put together by all of us which will be used for years to come. The success or failure of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in KwaZulu-Natal will be based on the decisions we will be making together in finalizing this Master Plan.

The Agricultural Master Plan will provide a comprehensive plan and give a clear indication on the state of agriculture and provide scientific research, information which will enable us to effectively manage agricultural activities and provide solutions on how to stimulate the sector.

Earlier this year we held Agricultural Development Masterplan stakeholder consultation meetings where it became evident that the agricultural sector in general in our Province, is experiencing many challenges. The continuous change in political and policy environment within the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has had a negative impact on the overall performance of the sector.

The idea behind having a Master Plan is a beginning of an ongoing practice of participatory approach on matters affecting agriculture in KZN.

One other area that will need our attention is the roll out of the planting season. There has been an outcry on the overall performance of the planting season, some of the issues raised include:

- Assistance on planting inputs which are often late and sometimes out of season, this has worsened in the last few years
- Assistance to farmers appears to be selective
- Planting season restricted to cooperatives who have more than 50 hectares or more of land to plough
- Departmental assistance on planting season is usually received by the same people year on year

The summit is expected to discuss all these issues and propose solutions that the government needs to consider to ensure that all citizens of our Province benefit from the Planting Season.

Honourable Premier, there are many other developments in the field of agriculture, one which has taken the country by storm such as the planting of Macadamia nuts and cannabis to farming of rabbits. The question is how do we exploit this opportunity in the Province?

Early this year we visited China to attend a conference on Juncao Technology and the technology that was demonstrated during this conference could assist farmers even when there is drought. Sugarcane is one of the produce farmed in KZN and it contributes significantly to the economy. I can say with confidence that Juncao Technology can easily multiply the benefits over sugarcane numerous times which could potentially grow the economy of potential in this province.

The summit also needs to pay serious attention of access to natural resources for all, particularly land and water. The big question that we must answer is how do we attend to the matters of Agrarian Transformation or more correctly, Agrarian Revolution to the intended beneficiaries that have no access to land and water.

Our country is in recession with Agricultural production falling by 29,2% in the second quarter of 2018, following a 33,6% slump in the first quarter. These figures by Stats SA are alarming since agriculture is one of the sectors that drives our economy. Unemployment rate has also increased to 28% and those affected by these stats are youth and women.

In order to uplift our economy from recession, President Cyril Ramaphosa has identified agriculture as one of the sectors to stimulate growth which will benefit from the R50 billion stimulus package. This stimulus package will re-prioritise funding towards investment in agriculture, as well as economic activity in townships and rural areas. We want our farmers to understand that **"Farming is not just a job, it's a way of life"** and the only way to eradicate the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment is through agriculture.

In order to improve our social and economic outlook, we need to develop the performance of small-holder farmers through access to markets. Unfortunately, honourable Premier, our small-holder farmers especially those coming from rural areas, still have a long way to go to compete in the markets. Some of the constraints faced by small and consistence farmers include:

- limited access to capital
- under-developed infrastructure
- and inability to conclude contractual agreements and failure to meet market standards

Hence as government, we have decided to intervene and give assistance to these farmers and through programs such as RASET, we are able to help them compete in the market place. Our social and economic outlook can only improve once small-holder farmers are able to access markets and improve their livelihoods.

Another key challenge faced by small-holder farmers is access to funding, poor financial status and lack of owning assets negatively affects creditworthiness. We need to increase attention to small-holder farmers with an intention to expand their base.

This summit will serve as an epitome in soliciting and consolidating inputs from all interested and affected parties in our sector and by the end of day two, we will have a strategic vision for the attainment of a thriving and sustainable agricultural sector.

It is expected of all of us not to turn the summit into a mourning session or platform to raise grievances. Let us concentrate on solutions which will grow our sector by paying attention to growing subsistence farmers into commercial farmers. Through working together, we can make KwaZulu-Natal a better Province to live in, I thank you.