



KZN DARD'S NEWLY ANNOUNCED MEC SUPER ZUMA OUTLINED THE DEPARTMENTS PROGRAMMES AIMED AT ASSISTING FARMERS IN POST FLOODS AND DEVELOPMENT OF AGRARIAN REVOLUTION IN KZN

I am honoured to address this press briefing to outline the major plans by the Department and how we intend to execute our mandate.

It is a privilege to have this opportunity availed by my organization, the African National Congress and the confidence shown to me by the Premier, Honourable Mrs. Nomusa Dube-Ncube to serve as the MEC of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

I can say I am humbled by this deployment. I have accepted this responsibility with humility. We are truly ready to serve.

Since my appointment, I have spent the past few weeks engaging with the management of the Department, led by the Acting Head of Department Mr. Zibusiso Dlamini.

I have been fortunate to attend both the Cabinet Lekgotla led by the Honourable Premier and that of my movement, which has given firm outline of the expectations from all us in the Executive and the respective Departments we lead.

Following in the footsteps of the President's State of the Nation Address last week, the Premier also gave clear marching orders in the State of the Province Address that informs our approach. *Kanti noBayede naye uphinde wasikhumbuza ngokubaluleka kweZolimo emizameni yokulwa nendlala.*

Let me take this opportunity to thank my predecessor, whom I have also met, Comrade Bongive Sithole-Moloi for the good work she has done with this Department.

Programme of Action- 2023/24

With the benefit of the introductory engagements I have had, I am now confident that we are ready to hit the ground running.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is at the centre of government efforts to drive sector growth; building rural economy and ensuring household food security.

We will be traversing the province of KwaZulu-Natal promoting agricultural development and ensuring there is synergy in terms of plans to develop rural areas.

Starting this weekend, on Saturday 4th March 2023, we will be hosting the Provincial Agriculture Indaba to be addressed by the Honourable Premier, Dube-Ncube. We invite all of you to join us as well interact with the stakeholders from the sector and farmers.

Household Seed Distribution Programme

Government has identified poverty eradication as an apex priority. This is why you will see more emphasis from this Department on the issue of Food and Nutrition Security. On this particular pillar of our programmes, we will be extending greater support to impoverished households and subsistence farmers.

There, we will ensure provision of mechanisation services, extension services and production inputs to ensure stability in food security for these households.

There's no doubt that if we want to respond to the needs of our people, we need to "quicken the Tempo", in delivering the service to our people. The language we would like to reiterate is to accelerate our pace to deliver services to our people.

I have asked the Acting HOD to develop a Programme of Action linking it with Amakhosi. The reason we want to always work with Amakhosi is because they are custodians of land and if we want to grow agriculture and develop rural areas we have to work together at all times. We will work with other governance structures as well through the District Development Model and Operation Sukuma Sakhe.

Township Agriculture

As part of mitigating the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality, very soon we will be launching a township agriculture which will intertwine with our One Home One Garden programme. This programme will boost township agriculture whilst fighting the scourge of poverty facing our people.

The department seeks to strengthen food security programmes in collaboration with other sector departments and stakeholders to promote increased access to food especially by vulnerable groups in our community.

We need to drive agrarian revolution in the province. Seeds and seedlings will now be available for community consumption on our Districts and Local offices. We will continue with the distribution of seeds and seedlings on different platforms including government events, community centres etc.

Impact of Load-shedding to the sector

We have received complaints from different farmers across the province complaining about load-shedding. This has a serious negative bearing on agricultural production.

As a result, many of them are losing millions of rand whilst the industry runs a risk in terms of shortage of food supply and therefore, the food price escalations.

I have also had the opportunity to attend an engagement with our Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms. Thoko Didiza,

when she met with all provincial departments and captains of agriculture industry to discuss the impact of electricity load-shedding in our sector.

We welcome the announcement by the Hon. President Cyril Ramaphosa on measures to address load-shedding during his State of Nation Address. Our Premier Hon. Nomusa Dube-Ncube also highlighted on the issue of load-shedding and its impact on Provincial economic growth last week in the State of the Province Address.

We are pleased that the National Minister of Cooperative Governance, Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, has included food security amongst the key considerations of the national State of Disaster gazette on the 27th February 2023.

We are awaiting further guidance from our national Minister with respect to the relief that the sector will provide to farmers. In the meantime, we will continue engaging with the farmers in KZN to explore solutions to deal with the problem.

Livestock Theft

We have a serious challenge engulfing our farmers, which is livestock theft. Our District offices are inundated with reports of livestock theft from our livestock farmers. Livestock associations have raised this matter sharply with us.

We are also concerned about this matter which is why, we will unveil livestock branding amongst other preventative measures. We will continue to work with the police and all other security structures to shine the spotlight of this menace.

Our Veterinary staff will join the police in different road blocks throughout the province to ensure that the cattle movements have the necessary legal permits.

Community Investment Programme

Good agricultural infrastructure is a requirement for achieving higher levels of agricultural productivity and profitability. Through this programme, the department is going to establish physical communal infrastructure for the purpose of improving agricultural and rural development. The beneficiaries of this programme are the farming communities and agricultural projects.

This programme mainly focuses on the following infrastructure establishment and rehabilitation across the province: **dip tanks; boreholes and grazing camp fencing**. Beyond this, the Department will continue to support the establishment of infrastructure such as animal handling facilities, livestock dams, fencing, irrigation schemes, among others.

Distribution of Breeding Stock-Cattle and Sheep

The Department will unveil a Cattle and Sheep Breeding programme to commence in the new financial year of 2023/24. In this programme, we will select breeding cows that will be distributed to communal farmers, thereby improving the genetics and quality of the communal heard.

Unlocking Agricultural Potential Through Agri- Hub

The Department was duly mandated by the Provincial cabinet to drive agricultural development and economic recovery. Therefore, we have decided to start Agri Hubs in different Districts. The total cost all five agri-hubs is estimated at over R3 billion.

The following agri-hubs are planned:

- Fresh produce hub at RBIDZ in King Cetshwayo District.
- Dairy hub- in Harry Gwala District.
- Grain Handling Facility 1- Harry Gwala District
- Grain Handling Facility 2- uThukela District
- Red meat hub (beef) in Zululand.
- Red meat hub (Pig and Sheep facility)
- Red Meat Hub (Hide, skin & Wool)- uThukela District
- White Meat Hub- eThekweni Metro

Seed and Seedlings Multiplication Programme

In the coming weeks, I will be visiting the Departments Makhathini, Dundee, Cedara and Kokstad Research Stations where they are undertaking the Seed Multiplication Programme and nursery. From this programme, we are developing our own maize and beans seeds to distribute to farmers as part of our food security initiatives. It's also an attempt to reduce costs in the procurement of these inputs from markets.

Implementation of Cannabis Masterplan

We need to discuss the implementation of the Cannabis Masterplan. Undoubtedly, Cannabis focus should be on assisting farmers with application for licenses and permits including reporting on farmers supported. We should set a fund to assist farmers making application supporting vulnerable groups.

Agri-business Development Agency (ADA)

In line with its mandate, ADA will continue to develop farmers and entrepreneurs for agro-processing, in order to achieve a more competitive, equitable and sustainable agriculture sector. ADA will continue implementing agro-business projects in various commodities, such as goats, macadamia nuts, vegetables, poultry, medicinal plants, herbs and spices.

In terms of value-chain development projects, ADA will focus on mobilising funding through development of finance institutions. The investment initiatives are expected to play a critical role in implementing ADA's strategy to commercialise agriculture through value chain programmes.

Way Forward

I will be meeting with the management team of the Department in our Strategic Planning session from the 8th-10th March 2023 to further deliberate on our plans for the upcoming year. I will also bring more details to our stakeholders and the KZN farming community during our upcoming Budget Vote in the KZN legislature.







