



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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PRESS STATEMENT ON KZN DARD'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOING FORWARD

Food Insecurity, described as the biggest social challenge facing our country, will become the over-arching focus of the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (KZN DARD).

MEC Themba Mthembu said this was not just a matter of planting more crops and raising more livestock, but dealing with issues of making nutritious food affordable to the poor. He said there was a need to see food as a health and social justice issue, before it is business.

The Department outlined its strategic plans going forward at a Media Breakfast held at the Moses Mabhida Stadium on Monday, 19 December 2016. MEC Mthembu said KZN DARD will work towards ensuring that no household goes hungry and that **nutritious food** is affordable and available to households. "We are challenged on this front by rising food prices. We know from health experts that as a result of not getting adequate proteins and vitamins, one in five children suffers from malnutrition and learning disabilities," he said.

MEC referred to author Tracy Ledger's book, titled, "Empty Plates," which traces the link between childhood malnutrition and violence in later life. He said the well-being of our nation will be compromised if we do not find ways to provide nutritious food for the poor.

According to MEC Mthembu the Department will look at nutrients to see how this determines the type of food produced. "We need to look at how we can measure our success according to the healthy foods we produce. Research, especially collaborative research with other institutions, will form an important part of this programme," he said

The Department's plans going forward will also incorporate the extensive growing of a diversity of food crops including indigenous crops and fruit trees. MEC Mthembu added that Arbor Day for the Department will revolve around the planting of fruit trees. He said they will also be looking at the categorisation of agricultural space and how to balance forestation and food crops.

"There is not going to be a one size fits all approach. Instead, budget planning and agricultural production will be district and municipal sensitive. It will take into consideration poverty disparities and District Competitive Advantages" he added.

MEC outlined a number of innovative changes set to take place, saying that while the Department will work directly with subsistence farmers, the plan going forward is to develop an agency that will largely be concerned with commercial

farming. "There is a plan to collapse all our entities such as ADA and Mjindi Farming into one and commercial farming will become the domain of this new single entity," MEC Mthembu said.

The Department's strategy will also involve the development of an intensive urban farming programme. This will be aimed at reviving the township economy and aggressively addressing poverty and unemployment.

Other changes will include an emphasis on livestock production and a vigorous programme to establish a **"New Generation of Agriculturists and Commercial Farmers"** with a specific focus on youth and women. "We want to be aggressive on this programme in terms of funding and giving technical support to young farmers," said MEC Mthembu. He said young people must be encouraged to be involved in various agricultural value-chains up and down stream such as seeds, fertilizers, machinery and related businesses as well as the development of agricultural products.

He added that KZN DARD has not been aggressive on its Rural Development mandate. This branch of the Department will be drawing up a comprehensive strategy that speaks to material conditions on the ground and one that takes into consideration the texture and social make-up of rural KZN. He said the plan going forward is to format what will be known as an Agriculture and Rural Development Council for the Province, where different stakeholders in this arena will work together.

According to MEC Mthembu, the aim going forward is to change mindsets about agriculture in the province. This is why the slogan adopted to drive the strategic plan is – "Let's Make Agriculture our Culture."

Among the various initiatives under this slogan is one where every departmental official starting from level 09 up to the HOD level must be ambassadors of agriculture. The Officials will adopt two schools in the province as part of their social outreach job to at least visit them twice or more in a year to promote and inspire learners about agriculture. They will have sessions with learners and promote agriculture as an activity and career options available within the agricultural space. Clear reporting on this social outreach by our officials will be developed by the Monitoring & Evaluation Unit.

As part of the drive to make agriculture our culture, there will be a revival of Agricultural Expos and the Department plans to engage with the Royal Agricultural Royal Show in this regard. The aim is to also have Expos in each district working with Amakhosi and the local municipalities.

MEC Mthembu concluded by saying the strategic vision that focuses on food security as a social justice issue will require a certain type of governance within the Department. "There will be no place for corruption. We cannot say that we are engaged in uplifting the poor when we are stealing from the poor." he added. The MEC said that this is why he welcomed the Presidential Proclamation that the Special Investigation Unit will be probing corruption within the Department. He said the Department will cooperate fully with this investigation.

For further details on the KZN DARD's Strategic Plan Please refer to the full text of the MEC's Speech



KZN MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Mr Themba Mthembu addressing members of the media on agricultural issues



MEC Themba Mthembu addressing member of the media on agricultural issues



MEC Themba Mthembu together with KZN DARD Head of Department Dr Sipiwe Mkhize and KZN DARD Media Liaison Officer Mr Khaye Nkwanyana during the media briefing breakfast



Dr. Themba Fakazi of 1KZNTV interacting with the panel at the Post Strategic Planning media briefing



Attendees at the KZN DARD Post Strategic Planning media briefing in Durban

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