



MEDIA STATEMENT

DATE: 17 DECEMBER 2024

MEC KAMADLOPHA-MTHETHWA CALLS ON YOUTH ENTREPRENEURS TO BE THE AGENTS OF TRANSFORMATION IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa, believes that the youth have the potential to be game-changers in transforming the agricultural sector. She was addressing hundreds of young people who converged at eMasosheni Sportfield in Jozini in the northern part of the province as part of the 'Youth in Agriculture' programme on Tuesday, 17 December 2024. KaMadlopha-Mthethwa's call stems from her firm belief that youth, as the future leaders, have to be at the centre of every agricultural development to sustain the sector to ensure food security.

"Our youth can serve as levers of the economy, driving economic growth and innovation, and with their energy, they bring along fresh ideas and creativity to the sector that we need. Youth can also start businesses and create employment and develop innovative solutions to the agricultural challenges that we face. We are also calling for the youth, Africans in particular, to ensure they are part of the commercialisation in the agricultural sector because, as a government, we are opening up opportunities for the small-holder farmers and youth to grow in the sector. We want to see the face of the agriculture industry change to include young farmers and those in rural areas. "Farming is not a business for old people only," commented kaMadlopha-Mthethwa during the programme.

In the current financial year, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has sought to help 1492 young people through various agricultural programmes. Working with the Cedara and Inkosi Owen Sitole College of Agriculture, the Department has allocated R3.5 million to provide training opportunities to approximately 1772 youth farmers in different agricultural production to deal with the scourge of unemployment. Furthermore, R6 million has been set aside to provide 120 Learnership to unemployed youth within KZN. The Department will be equipping them with agricultural skills and knowledge.

During the event, the MEC shared a number of opportunities for the youth to tap into. These include bursaries, Learnership and young farmer programmes:

- Red Meat Value Chain
- Communal Beef Improvement Programme
- Goat Production
- White meat production
- Piggery production.
- Grain Value Chain



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- Horticultural Value Chain
- Vegetable production
- Subtropical fruits
- Sugarcane production
- Cotton production

The MEC highlighted a number of challenges faced by the youth, especially in the uMkhanyakude District. Chief among them is Foot and Mouth Disease which has forced strict movement control measures of animals in the region. According to the recent information, the outbreak was reported in Mtubatuba and has spread to Pongola. She has further called for the farmers to ensure their cattle do not roam around.

A Disease Management Area (DMA) declared in July 2024, remains in effect. Movement of animals into, through, or out of this area is restricted and permitted only with authorisation from the State Veterinary office.

No new cases have been reported since 19 September 2024, signalling that the virus circulation is declining. Farmers in the region are reminded to strictly adhere to biosecurity measures and movement restrictions to support the containment and eradication of the disease.

For more information, please contact:

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