



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SUCCESSFULLY HELD ITS MAIDEN POST-BUDGET CONSULTATIVE ENGAGEMENT.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development recently held its maiden Post Budget Consultative Engagement in Musgrave, Durban, following the tabling of the Department's Budget Speech Vote 3 last week.

This groundbreaking engagement served as a vibrant platform where the Department, industry leaders, and key agricultural stakeholders came together not just to reflect on budget priorities but to plant the seeds of a shared vision and cultivate a unified roadmap for the future of agriculture in KwaZulu-Natal.

The forum was graced by a panel of esteemed industry leaders, including Dr Siyabonga Madlala, Executive Chairman of the South African Farmers Development Association (SAFDA); Mr. Mbongeni Sikhakhane, Chairperson of the African Farmers Association of South Africa (AFASA); Ms. Sandy La Marque, Chief Executive Officer of KwaNalu; Ms Ntobeko Mthethwa, Chairperson of the Provincial Livestock Association; Mr. Ntuthuko Mahlaba, Chairperson of the Cannabis Association; and Mr. Dave Durham, Chairperson of the KwaZulu-Natal Milk Producers Association.

Speaking during the engagement, Dr Siyabonga Madlala, who represented sugarcane growers in KwaZulu-Natal, expressed gratitude to the Department for its continued and responsive support. "We truly appreciate the Department's commitment to supporting sugarcane growers in the province. Whenever we raise concerns, the Department listens and responds. They are making great efforts to uplift the sugarcane industry," said Dr Madlala.

Dr Madlala highlighted that the industry has benefited from approximately R30 million in this financial year, aimed at helping farmers plant new and improved sugarcane varieties. “This kind of support is critical as we work towards strengthening and growing the sector. We are an industry that is moving forward, and we cannot afford any more setbacks. We have already been hit hard by floods and now face additional pressure from rising tariffs. This year alone, we have seen a significant increase in imported sugar, and the impact of tariffs is being felt throughout the industry.”

Meanwhile, the CEO of KwaNalu, Ms. Sandy La Marque, commended the Department for its continued efforts in supporting farmers. 'We are grateful for the good work being done by the Department,' she said. "However, there is an urgent need to priorities the revitalization of rural infrastructure, as it is fundamental to unlocking the full potential of agriculture in the Province."

One of the voices that resonated powerfully during the engagement was that of Ms. Ntobeko Mthethwa, Chairperson of the Provincial Livestock Association. Reflecting on her participation, Ms. Mthethwa shared that she initially thought she was attending the session simply to listen to the MEC's budget vote. To her surprise, she was invited to take an active role as a panel member, given the platform to reflect on the day-to-day challenges faced by livestock farmers — such as stock theft and the scarcity of dip tanks, dipping chemicals and vaccines.

“I was under the impression that I was here to listen, but I'm truly honored to contribute to this important conversation. As livestock farmers, we face real and pressing issues daily — from rampant stock theft to the urgent need for functional dip tanks and a consistent supply of chemicals. I truly appreciate the Department's unwavering support throughout our journey. Knowing that our voices are heard and that more meaningful engagements like this are on the horizon gives us hope and strength to keep pushing forward.” Ms. Mthethwa

In her keynote address, the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Hon. Thembeni KaMadlopha-Mthethwa, emphasized the importance of unity and resilience in the face of adversity. “Our agricultural sector is the backbone of food security and rural development. We cannot allow recurring disasters to derail our progress.

This engagement marks the first of its kind; we are hoping that we have more of these platforms where our farmers can voice out their opinions to the Department with the intent of driving comprehensive and equitable agricultural growth. We promise that through this initiative we are going to improve the government of KwaZulu-Natal, particularly the Agriculture Sector.

Furthermore, MEC KaMadlopha-Mthethwa reiterated the government's commitment to developing actionable solutions that address both current challenges and future risks. "We are here today because we recognize the urgency of our situation; most importantly, we are here because we believe in the vision of our people and the potential of our land. This engagement is not the end, but the beginning of real, inclusive transformation," stated MEC KaMadlopha-Mthethwa.

Other stakeholders in attendance were also granted the opportunity to share insights and propose strategies to improve the agricultural sector.

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