



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

25 MARCH 2025

OWEN SITHOLE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE 2025 GRADUATION

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Honourable Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa, has challenged the current cohort of agricultural colleges to devise solutions to the myriad challenges confronting the sector. kaMadlopha-Mthethwa made these remarks at the Graduation Ceremony of students of Inkosi Owen Sithole College of Agriculture, held at eMpangeni. Key amongst these challenges are climate change, fall army worms, and the Foot-and-Mouth Disease, which is currently affecting four districts - uMkhanyakude, Amajuba, King Cetshwayo, and Zululand. Vaccination efforts are underway in these areas, as well as in recently declared infected areas, particularly along the R74 in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands. Efforts are also being made to establish a protection zone around these areas to safeguard the integrity of the Free Zone.

"As you embark on this new chapter, you have the potential to address various challenges facing the sector, including the issue of hunger in the district of King Cetshwayo, as reported by the Human Sciences Research Council. Despite the abundance of arable land in the area, many households struggle with food insecurity. I urge you to leverage your expertise to combat this issue, as well as other challenges such as the Foot-and-Mouth disease, and climate change, all of which have had devastating effects on our economy."

"In KwaZulu-Natal we have the land which is necessary to effect change, including land under Ingonyama Trust that can be leased, and we are currently in discussions with traditional leaders to explore this option for our communities and cooperatives who are without land. I encourage you to seize this opportunity to make a meaningful difference and be the solution to a variety of challenges facing our agricultural sector."

Fifty-six students were conferred with diplomas in a formal graduation ceremony style. The Department continues to provide valuable financial assistance to students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. Agricultural Diplomas are offered through Inkosi Owen Sithole College of Agriculture and Cedara College of Agriculture, while also providing financial support to needy students through bursaries from AgriSeta, having allocated R500,000 for students. The Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform has also contributed R700,000, while the Sugar Industry Trust Fund for Education sponsors 10 students annually.

In efforts to retain and attract talent to the agricultural sector, the department has sought to organise agricultural career expos to draw in prospective students.