



**MEDIA STATEMENT
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GREEN NIGHT FOR AGRICULTURE AS DARD SCOOPS TOP HONOURS AT PREMIER'S EXCELLENCE AWARDS

It was a glittering night of stars hosted by the KwaZulu-Natal Premier Mr AT Ntuli, but it turned green as the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), led by MEC Hon. Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa, walked away as big winners at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre in Durban last night.

The Department's commitment to service delivery, farmer support, and rural development was recognised with multiple awards, cementing its role as a key driver of food security and economic growth in the province.

DARD proved to be the Alpha and Omega of the Premier's Excellence Awards from starting strong to ending with a bang. The Department opened the night by winning Best in Service Delivery and closed it with Mrs Abbey Mchunu receiving the award for Best Effective Food Security and Agricultural Programme. Although Mrs Mchunu is not a department employee, her programme is agricultural-related.

In a further show of leadership and excellence, the best Head of Department to KZN DARD.

The Department's Mrs. Thamoney Naidoo (Soil Conservation and LandCare) also received the award for Best Implemented Programme of the Year. For Integrity & Ethical Leadership the Department's Ms Sibonokuhle Nkosi from Pongola office was awarded while Ms Hlengiwe Zondi, the Acting District of uMzinyathi walked home with Rural/underserved communities Impact Award. This award recognises her tremendous work done by her in uMsinga office.

In her congratulatory remarks, MEC KaMadlopha-Mthethwa took to the stage to celebrate the achievements of her team and expressed her satisfaction with the Department's commitment to putting farmers first and fulfilling the Premier's mandate to make the province green with crops and vegetable fields.

"This is about the work in our fields, our communities, and in the lives of our people. To our extension practitioners, our farmers, and our rural communities, you are the true partners in building food security and a green KwaZulu-Natal, as called for by the Premier when the 7th Administration took office," said MEC kaMadlopha-Mthethwa.

ENDS.

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