



**MEDIA STATEMENT
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AGRICULTURE MEC UNVEILS HEMP SEED MULTIPLICATION PROGRAMME TO BOOST RURAL ECONOMY

The MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Hon. Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa, has officially unveiled the KwaZulu-Natal Hemp Seed Multiplication Programme and declared the 2026/27 Hemp Planting Season open.

The launch is a major step toward the National Cannabis/Hemp Master Plan approved by Cabinet in 2021, which identified hemp as a strategic crop for economic growth, job creation and poverty alleviation. KwaZulu-Natal is one of only three provinces with high potential for hemp production.

MEC Ka Madlopha-Mthethwa highlighted hemp as a game-changer for the provincial economy. Hemp plants can produce over 25 000 products that include food, oil, animal feed, clothing, construction material, biodegradable plastics, paper, cosmetics and medicine. The crop is already used globally by major manufacturers, including automotive companies, for fibre production.

"Hemp is a multi-billion rand industry. This is about moving our farmers from subsistence to commercial, high-value agriculture and unlocking new value chains for our youth and women," said the MEC.

To address challenges faced by farmers, the MEC kaMadlopha-Mthethwa said the Department has assisted farmers to obtain legal hemp permits. "To date, 500 permits have been issued across all 11 districts, with District Coordinators and farmers trained on compliance requirements where (Tetrahydrocannabinol) THC must remain below 0.2%," said MEC. The Hemp Seed Multiplication Programme will produce clean, certified, low-THC seed locally in KZN, ensuring seed security, reducing costs, guaranteeing legal compliance and improving yields.

The MEC added that the Department is linking the permit holders to processors through off-take agreements to ensure sustainable markets. "This is how we take our people out of poverty by practical programmes that give them the tools to farm commercially. The future of farming is here. The future is hemp," the MEC said.

One of the hemp growers, Ms Thobekile Mbotho from Umshikilane Traders, who owns 50 hectares of land with nine other people, with five hectares already cultivated with hemp, said the hemp permit application process was easy.

"I received my permit after getting assistance from our agricultural advisors, which was an easy process, and the training also helped us to know what exactly we are into and the benefits thereof," said Mbotho.

Farmers who wish to participate are urged to visit their nearest Department of Agriculture local office where extension officers will assist with permit applications free of charge.

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Issued by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development