

EXTRACTS FROM KZN PREMIER E.S. MCHUNU'S STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS (SOPA) PERTAINING TO AGRICULTURAL ISSUES

On a New approach to Agriculture in the Province:

“Significant progress has been made in reviewing the agricultural policies and approaches of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. There is a much stronger realisation of the need to focus on processes and programmes that will promote commercial agricultural outcomes.

It is well understood that the agricultural sector is key to ensure food production and security in our Province. We also realise that if these agricultural food security and community upliftment programmes are not commercially oriented, they will not be viable in the long run, and thus they will just not be sustainable. This calls for a rethink of our existing mechanization programme, which will now see the transfer of government's fleet of tractors to established communal estates where communities will group themselves into cooperatives or community business entities.

Our new focus as expressed in our Provincial Agriculture Policy Action Plan is to grow the economic contribution of agricultural sector to the KZN economy and to create new employment opportunities in the process. The targets we have set in this regard is to increase the value of agricultural contribution to the provincial economy (Real Rands, 2005) from R 11.8 billion in 2010 and the current contribution of about R 18 Billion to R 23 Billion by 2020. We have also set a target of creating 10 000 new jobs in the agricultural sector over the next five years.

These targets will be pursued vigorously through programmes that will provide intensified support to the beneficiaries of land claims and land redistribution processes to become viable agricultural entities. This can be achieved by the state focussing increasingly on facilitating engagements between existing commercial agricultural enterprises and these new entrants to the agricultural sector. Not only will this open up space for increased private sector investment and build on the expansion of established markets, but it will also reduce the state's spending on unsustainable support programmes.

We are pleased to indicate that we have already started piloting this approach and that it is proving to render positive results over a very short time. In the case of the Waaihoek Community in the

eMadlangeni municipal area, a transaction has been concluded between a private sector agricultural entity and the local community, which has already seen the first crops on the field. The target is to have at least 30 000 Ha of land covered under this new approach in eMadlangeni alone within the next two years.”

On Communal areas involved in agriculture:

“As was stated in the previous State of the Province Address, we will continue our endeavours to have more communal areas, in particular those under the control of Traditional Leadership engaged in commercial agricultural ventures. The Tugela Estate project in the Indaka municipal area is already a pilot initiative and is intended to produce a replicable model that could then be rolled out throughout the Province.”

More Labour intensive farming:

“In tandem with the approach outlined above, we will encourage a radical shift to more labour intensive agriculture through the development of new irrigation schemes wherever arable land is found adjacent to rivers and streams.”

Revitalising the Agriculture value chain:

“At the same time we will focus on the full agriculture value chain to ensure that all key links in this chain are supported and that opportunities for local entrepreneurial development and local business participation are optimised.

We also need to be aware that the National Agriculture Policy Action Plan is encouraging the production of red meat, poultry, fruit and veg, wine, wheat, forestry, fisheries, biofuels (sorghum, sugar cane), all of which, maybe with the exception of wheat, are commodities that can be successfully produced in KwaZulu-Natal. It is therefore important to leverage on the opportunities that will arise from National processes to enhance and support the value chain in respect of each of these commodities.”

Developing the Makhathini Flats area into a good news story:

“Noting the need for intensified action in the agricultural sector, as well as slow progress that has been made with the development of the Makhathini area in the Umkhanyakude District, the Provincial Executive Council undertook a two day in local inspection of the area in June 2014 and subsequently initiated and conducted the Makhathini Lab in September 2014. This Lab, which was also framed along the same line of approach as the Operation Phakisa Ocean Lab.

A Team of senior officials was deployed to Makhathini for five weeks to identify opportunities and interventions and develop execution plans to stimulate economic development in the area. During this period, the team engaged a wide range of stakeholders including sector departments, local government structures, public entities, traditional councils, farmers and local enterprises.

This Lab process has resulted in the development of detailed and fully integrated implementation plan for the development of the Makhathini area. The two main focus areas of this plan are agriculture and tourism, and it then also deals extensively with a range of transversal enablers, such as supportive infrastructure, issues of land rights, water and water use rights, electricity and transportation.

This time around, Makhathini appears to be heading towards a real good direction. We know that the owners of the land will play a critical role to this end.

Substantial progress has also been made with proposals for the establishment of an ethanol plant in the Makhathini area, which will not only contribute to our energy needs, but also has the potential to create a further 2, 000 jobs. We will soon be embarking in a process to attract private sector investment for this development, which is now the only impediment.”

Foot and Mouth Disease:

“There has also been a rigorous process to improve our ability to control the occurrence and spread of foot and mouth disease in the far northern area of our Province. This disease has had serious implications for our red meat industry in the Province, well beyond the area directly affected and it is therefore a high priority for us to ensure that we prevent similar occurrences.”

Developing agriculture as part of the Province's Poverty Eradication Master Plan (PEMP). This will be done by:

"...adopting, adapting and fast-tracking the Fetsa- Tlala approach to ensure household food security, linking mechanisation to entrepreneurship, commercialisation of livestock on communal land; revitalisation of land reform farms; promotion of agriculture cooperatives and agribusiness youth empowerment."

On Peaceful solutions to agricultural issues:

"The Commitment we have made to assist the eMadlangeni community to bring together all local stakeholders in a local structure to facilitate peaceful solutions to issues giving rise to tensions in the area, as well as to initiate a process to establish Agri-Villages in this area. The purpose of this project is firstly to ensure that relationships between communities, commercial farmers, land claim trusts, institutions of traditional leadership and other local structures are strengthened, and secondly to guide settlement patterns to protect high value agricultural land.

We are pleased to report that this process is well underway and that the first two sites for potential Agri-Villages have been identified and supported by the local stakeholders. We have also facilitated private sector support for local emerging farmers and the first 500 Ha of land has been restored to productive commercial agricultural processes, with full participation of local beneficiaries."

Land Reform:

"We will fast track cases on restitution to unlock agricultural potential of land, thereby impacting positively on issues of food production and food security."

Farm Security:

"We are equally concerned about the escalation of farm murders and tensions between commercial farmers and farm tenants/labourers. This is an extremely destabilising factor. It places our people and the rural economy at risk. Issues related to stock theft is further exacerbating this situation. We therefore call for

intensified action from policing and criminal justice structures to stem the tide of such crime.”

Agriculture and new sources of energy:

“We have engaged with and have firm commitments from the sugar, as well as the paper and pulp industry this province to contribute up to 2 00 Mega Watt (MW) new renewable energy within a relatively short space of time. As a matter of fact, this potential contribution is already well covered in the PGDP. We have a target set of contributing 5 000 MW new renewable energy by 2030 with 2 400MWto be online by 2020.

In the longer term, we are also engaging the Department of Energy and Eskom to complete the National Energy Master Plan and to review current legislation and regulatory framework to cater for greater potential for in particular the sugar industry in this Province to contribute to the production of ethanol. We are also keen to see amendments to facilitate processes of own generation of intensive energy users so as to reduce demand on the grid.”

Neighbourly Cooperation:

“We are well advanced in discussions with both the Free State and Mpumalanga Provinces and we already have draft Memoranda of Understanding prepared to formalise these relationships. In this process we are keen to inter alia pursue issues of improved transport linkages, **cooperation in agriculture** and other commonly shared economic sectors, as well as cross boundary cooperation in combatting crime. “

Environmental sustainability:

“We do value and respect our environment. We fully understand our responsibility to ensure that we leave our Province to future generations in a better condition than we found it.

Fertile agricultural land as a commodity is under pressure from a variety of other land uses, the threat of alien and invasive plant species and poor soil management practices.

Climate Change is considered to be one of the most serious threats to sustainable development with adverse impacts expected on the

environment, human health, food security, economic activities, natural resources and physical activities.

Through the Climate Change Council, we undertake to intensify the implementation of the KwaZulu-Natal Climate Change Response Action Plan. The Provincial Disaster Management Centre has also developed a guideline for the development of District Climate Change Response Plans, which are to be incorporated into the 2015/2016 IDP reviews.

It is evident that storms are becoming more severe and that extreme weather conditions are going to affect us more and more in the future. We need to be ready to reduce the negative impacts of these incidents as far as is practically possible.”

Drought:

“Recent droughts have increased the risk of severe water shortages for human, commercial and agricultural. This situation is being addressed in a number of ways. But most importantly by investigating options of desalination as well as augmenting storage capacityHowever, we must all realise that water is increasingly becoming a scarce resource and just like in the case of electricity, we will have to learn to reduce our consumption and avoid wastage.”