

# Dialogue on land invasion concerns

Zimasa Matiwane

KWAZULU-NATAL'S Agriculture and Rural Development MEC Themba Mthembu is set to meet with farm owners to address their concerns over land invasions destroying their cultivated land.

Concerns about the stability of sugar-cane production were raised in recent weeks as land invasions escalated, affecting about 30 small-scale sugar-cane and vegetable farmers, around Inanda.

"We have had interventions where people are said to be building houses on sugar-cane farms. We will be meeting the owners of those farms. We have already met with traditional leadership in the area and we are confident that our interventions will bring resolutions," Mthembu said.

Yaga Govender, deputy president of the Natal Cane Growers' Association, said they had yet to hear from Mthembu but remained positive that his intervention would bring about an amicable solution.

## Intervention

"Perhaps a political intervention would help because the situation here is not getting better. Court interdicts do not make people stop building on private land. Police make them demolish the structures, but two days later they are back," Govender said.

He said farmers were open to dialogue.

Mthembu said the issue of access to land was complicated but called for calm and the rule of law to prevail. "It's a complex matter because it's a situation that has been building up over year. That is why the government, including the ruling party, has made numerous pronouncements on expropriation without compensation," Mthembu explained.

"Our people don't have land and access to water. I don't mince my words, I have no problem with expropriation of land, in fact we are late in implementing the policy," he said.

He said there were also challenges in the utilisation of land under the Ingonyama Trust. "That is why the premier has called for a land summit in July and the discussions will include the issue of the Ingonyama Trust, which will be addressed with amakhosi, izinduna and the affected people," he said.

Mthembu believed that reopening land claims will assist in dealing with the matter of land scarcity. He said the department recently visited areas where there was tension between farm owners and workers