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

SUMMIT CONFRONTS URGENT CLIMATE CHALLENGES IN KZN

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https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/summit-confronts-urgent-climate-challenges-in-kzn/

Global leaders and experts converged to tackle KwaZulu-Natal's pressing environmental crises. They explored ground-breaking initiatives aimed at securing our future amidst climate uncertainty

KwaZulu-Natal's Thembeni Madlopha-Mthethwa, MEC for agriculture and rural development, addressing the EnergyWaterFoodClimate Nexus Summit. Photo: Supplied/Food for Mzansi

Amidst KwaZulu-Natal's ongoing battle against climate change, the EnergyWaterFoodClimate Nexus Summit convened, addressing urgent environmental challenges.

Hosted jointly by key institutions including the Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), South African Energy Development Institute (Sanedi), and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (Famu) from the United States, the summit aimed to tackle issues exacerbated by recent devastating floods, such as infrastructure damage and loss of lives.

Climate change focus

Newly appointed agriculture and rural development MEC in KwaZulu-Natal, Thembeni Madlopha-Mthethwa, said the summit was critical to give government ideas and insights for combating climate change as the provincial government was rebuilding from the floods.

“We are indeed pleased that the partnership between Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and Mangosuthu University of Technology has resulted in the groundbreaking summit that brings experts for solution-driven ideas to deliberate on critical issues,” he said.

The MEC said it was an important platform for government to be at as it brings together global leaders, experts, and stakeholders to address the interlinked challenges of energy, water, food, and climate change. Madlopha-Mthethwa said it was critical for stakeholders to promote integrated solutions that ensure resource security and environmental sustainability.

High school learners attentively listen during the “Why hack” initiative, gaining insights into water quality, greenhouse gas emissions, food security, and climate-resilient agriculture. Photo: Supplied/Food for Mzansi

Empowering youth through intersectional learning

Meanwhile, the summit focused on the availability of food and the myriad challenges associated with it, against the backdrop of significant climatic changes observed over the last four years.

Dr Victor Ibeanusi, founder of the summit and dean of the school of the environment at Famu, led a delegation of about 30 students and academics to the event.

“All these programmes underscore the essential role that young people must play as we implement them,” remarked Ibeanusi.

Acknowledging the involvement of local schools, he added, “The participation of high school learners in ‘Why hack’ will deepen their understanding of how water quality, zero greenhouse gas (ZGG) emissions, food security, and climate-resilient agriculture intersect.”

Climate change solutions

“Emphasising this intersection, it was crucial to include big data, artificial intelligence, microbial and bioinformatic systems, and achieving soil carbon goals as key themes of the summit. We aim to foster a new mindset in scientific enterprise,” he said.

Mbali Mkhize, senior director of marketing and communications at MUT, highlighted the importance of collaboration with international universities to bring experts who can innovate and offer new ideas in combating climate change.

“For FAMU to include the department of science and innovation’s four societal grand challenges (SGCs) – climate change, future-proofing education and skills, re-industrialising the modern economy, and the future of society – has greatly enhanced the summit’s impact,” Mkhize noted.