



## R1.8M INJECTION FOR PONGOLA FARMERS AS KZN DRIVES RURAL REVIVAL

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Agriculture MEC Thembeni KaMadlopha Mthethwa said the investment reflects government's commitment to supporting communities that are actively working the land.



**Agriculture MEC Thembeni KaMadlopha Mthethwa during the handover of fencing materials in Pongola Photo: Supplied**

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture has poured more than R1.8 million into emerging farmers in Pongola, handing over fencing materials to protect crops, boost production and secure livelihoods in rural communities.

The fencing covering 125 hectares was officially handed over to the BiyelaMashobane farmers' cooperative on Wednesday, in what the provincial government says is part of a wider push to revive agriculture and make farming activity visible across the province.

Agriculture MEC Thembeni KaMadlopha Mthethwa said the investment reflects government's commitment to supporting communities that are actively working the land.

"This is one of the areas we are proud of as a department because it is clear that the people here are passionate about the land," she said.

"When I took office in June 2024, Premier Thamsanqa Ntuli emphasised that we must work hard to ensure our fields are green and productive — something that should be visible even when driving along our roads."

The department said the fencing will help shield crops from stray livestock and wildlife, while also tackling theft — a persistent challenge that continues to undermine rural farming efforts.



Mthethwa stressed that the success of the project now rests with the cooperative, urging members to treat it as a business venture.

“This is a cooperative that must be run like a real business — with proper governance, planning, risk management and a clear focus on profitability,” she said.

The fencing forms part of a broader package of agricultural support rolled out in Pongola. In wards 1 and 14, the department facilitated the planting of 42 hectares of maize using tractors provided through its Multi-Planting Season programme launched in October last year.

A further 265 hectares have been planted by farmers who received inputs such as fertiliser and seed, signalling growing momentum in the area’s agricultural output.

At the same time, the department is ramping up its livestock vaccination campaign as it battles the spread of foot-and-mouth disease in parts of the province.

Mthethwa said the Harry Gwala District is currently a key focus area, where more than 170 000 cattle are expected to be brought to dip tanks across four municipalities — Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Greater Kokstad, and UMzimkhulu.

“So far, we have vaccinated 70 994 livestock in the Harry Gwala District, including 343 commercial cattle from three private farms, with the vaccination drive still underway,” she said.

In the uGu District, 54 846 cattle have already been vaccinated across uMuziwabantu, uMzambe, Mdoni and Ray Nkonyeni municipalities.

The department is using the Dollvet vaccine from Türkiye, designed to target the strains of foot-and-mouth disease prevalent in KwaZulu-Natal.

Mthethwa called on communities to work with government to protect livestock and curb the spread of the disease, warning that outbreaks pose a serious threat to both emerging and commercial farmers.

The intervention in Pongola is expected to not only safeguard crops but also strengthen food security and economic activity in rural KwaZulu-Natal.