



WE HAVE A GROUP OF AGEING FARMERS; WE NEED YOUNG ONES – KZN MEC

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While speaking to hundreds of students at the Mtubatuba Civic Centre during the local Municipality's Mayoral Excellence awards Ceremony, KwaZulu-Natal's Agriculture MEC Thembeni KaMadlopha-Mthethwa, called on matriculants to embrace farming careers

KwaZulu- Natal MEC for Department of Agriculture and Rural development Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa has called on young South Africans to consider agriculture as their career of choice, citing the urgent need to rejuvenate the sector's ageing workforce.

Speaking to hundreds of students at the Mtubatuba Civic Centre during the local municipality's Mayoral Excellence Awards ceremony, MEC kaMadlopha-Mthethwa emphasised the critical need for fresh talent in the agricultural sector.

"We have an ageing group of farmers; hence, we need young farmers to infuse the sector with their enthusiasm and energy," she told the gathering of post-matric students.

Modern Agriculture Appeals to Tech-savvy Youth

The MEC highlighted how agriculture has evolved to embrace cutting-edge technology, making it more appealing to the current generation of digital natives.

"The sector has grown so much that it uses modern technology such as diagnostic methods to detect diseases and it uses drones to spray chemicals on plants. That's something that the youth of today can relate to," she said.



Support Programmes Available

To support young people interested in agricultural careers, MEC kaMadlopha-Mthethwa outlined various opportunities provided by the department:

- **Bursaries** for agricultural studies;
- **Learnerships** offering practical experience;
- **Internship programmes** for graduates; and
- **Agricultural diplomas** through Owen Sithole College of Agriculture and Cedara College of Agriculture.

These programmes provide hands-on experience across various agricultural disciplines, including livestock production, crop production and agricultural business management.

The MEC encouraged students to specialise in agriculture to become experts capable of tackling the sector's most pressing challenges.

"We encourage you to consider specialising in this field to become experts and tackle challenges we currently face. Perhaps you [will] become leading experts in addressing pressing issues like climate change and fall armyworm, and developing solutions for animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease," MEC kaMadlopha-Mthethwa concluded.