

# Centre for sustainable rural development launched

MACK MAKHATHINI

**A** CENTRE for Sustainable Integrated Rural Development (CSIRD) at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) was officially opened by KZN MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Cyril Xaba last week.

It was launched after a partnership was forged between the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and UNIZULU.

In his address Xaba said the CSIRD would be an important vehicle to help achieve the province's Strategy for Agrarian Transformation. The centre will be offering education and training from skills development up to a masters and doctorate level. A key component of its work will be research and development as well as outreach work.

"Through the CSIRD we will be planting the seeds to develop our human capital to positively change the province's rural landscape," he said.

UNIZULU acting vice-chancellor Prof Xoliswa Mtose said: "As a rural-based university not only is Rural Development a subject that is close to our hearts but it is something we live and



KZN MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Cyril Xaba and University of Zululand acting vice-chancellor Prof Xoliswa Mtose officially opening the Centre for Sustainable Integrated Rural Development

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breathe."

Mtose said that as the centre also aims to formulate institutional policy on rural development this would ensure that we all sing from the same hymn sheet as we realise that when it comes to

such important areas of development we cannot afford to work in silos but require clear policy to guide us. "It is however our hope and vision that those who will gain the most from this initiative are the multitudes of rural poor

not only in this region but throughout the whole of Africa," said Mtose.

The gathering heard that the curriculum offered will mirror that of the University of Free State's Centre for Sustainable Agriculture,

Rural Development and Extension. According to Xaba the next step was going to be the forging of a partnership between the two centres.

"This is precisely what we are aiming at with the establishment of the centre. To work in partnership not just with the University of Zululand but with other academic institutions, as well as the private sector to nurture new ideas and find innovative ways to tackle rural poverty and build an inclusive economy," he said.

Besides the theme of working in partnerships, Xaba emphasised the importance of education as well as research and development in growing a country's agricultural sector. He pointed at how such an approach had helped South Africa become a world leader in mining innovation.

He said that innovative ideas were needed to deal with the challenges of rural poverty and building an inclusive rural economy. He urged both the Rural Development Institutions at the University of Zululand and the Free State to work towards becoming centres of excellence, innovation and expertise in the field of sustainable integrated rural development.

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