



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

COMMUNICATION SERVICES

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Thumbs up to farming plan

Farming and agriculture can play a major role in rejuvenating the economy in the province

MHLABUNZIMA MEMELA

FARMING and agricultural organisations are poised to join forces to realise KZN's dream of using agriculture as a catalyst for rejuvenating the provincial economy.

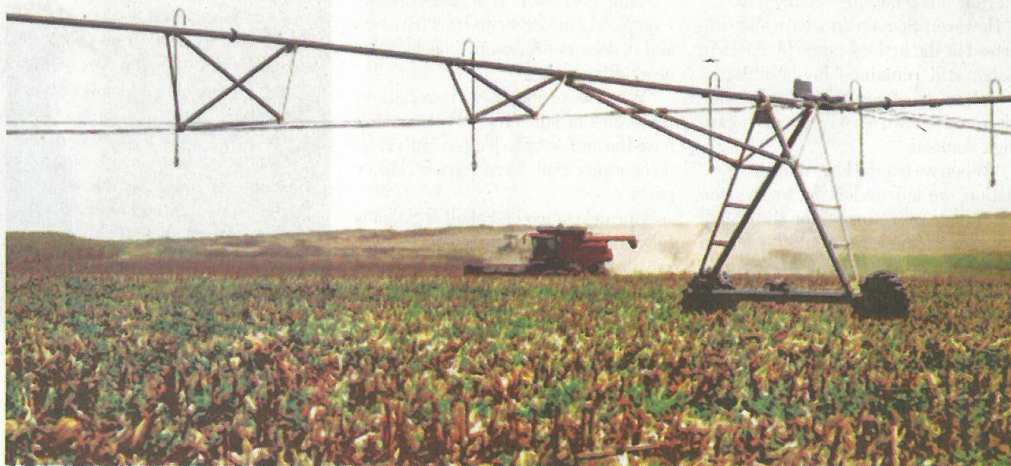
Entrant and commercial farmers are expected to align themselves with the department of agriculture and rural development's new strategy of agrarian reform and transformation.

Members of different farming organisation this week agreed to play their role to push for the department to realise the province's economic growth and job creation in the sector.

Provincial agriculture and rural development MEC Cyril Xaba met with farming bodies at Dube City north of Durban on Monday to present his department's plans for this sector.

Xaba outlined how entrant and commercial farmers can align themselves with the new strategy of agrarian reform and transformation to boost the province's economy.

The agricultural sector in the province has faced several constraints which led to a significant decline in production, job losses and decline in commercial farming and rise in the cost of production inputs. Xaba said the collapse of land reform farms, increased competi-



WORKING THE LAND: The agricultural sector in KZN has agreed to work closer together to improve and rejuvenate the provincial economy. PICTURE: GETTY IMAGES

tion due to international subsidisation and little support towards agricultural production in rural areas had a serious impact in the economy.

Now the department is addressing some of these challenges in line with the new strategy and is set to maximise utilisation of available land for agricultural production, promotion of a labour intensive agricultural subsector, improve performance of the agricultural sector, increase support for

existing smallholder farmers.

"An expanding number of producers, improved access to markets, improved access to finance and improved agricultural research and training and development are our primary focus. We are concerned about some of the challenges faced by the farmers," Xaba said.

The MEC said the entrant primary farmers were experiencing a challenge where programmes designed to benefit them, benefits the implementing agents.

"We must not delay its implementation by trying to reach perfection, rather let us implement as the strategy will be reviewed on implementation" he said.

National African Farmers Union member Mandla Buthelezi gave the thumbs up to the new strategy. He said the strategy is clear and will enjoy 100% support. Mkhize said that there was a need to support basic farming in parallel with the implementation of the strategy.

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