



agriculture & rural development

Department:
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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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Women have a major role

Agriculture is set to be a key game changer

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WOMEN have a major role in the agricultural sector, which is set to become a key game changer with the potential to contribute significantly to job creation and poverty eradication in the province.

That was the message from agriculture and rural development MEC Cyril Xaba to attendees of the second annual conference for Women in Agribusiness under way in Durban.

“At the heart of the strategy for agrarian transformation is the development of the small-scale farmer and unleashing their economic potential. If the statistics are examined more closely, it actually means unleashing the potential of women in agriculture,” he said.

According to the last census, this province has the highest percentage of subsistence farmers in the country.

Research done by the president’s office has revealed that 61% of these subsistence farmers are women.

Director of programmes at the New Partnership for Africa’s Development Agency, Estherine Lisinge-Fotabong, said it is expected that by the year 2018, 9.72 million small, business-related jobs will be created and female entrepreneurs will contribute more than 50% in this job creation space.

“Women starting up in business tend



EYEING POTENTIAL: Agriculture MEC Cyril Xaba with Nepad Agency director Estherine Fotabong and Agribusiness Development Agency Board chairperson Dr Tshitshi Mbatha at the exhibition. PICTURE: MBLIVISELO NDLUYI

to provide a more immediate contribution to the economy: Around one-in-five women come into self-employment from unemployment compared with around one in 15 for men,” she said.

The event conference is organised in collaboration with the Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA), which is an entity of the department.

The agency has been running a programme where young women and men from land reform farms are being sent

to Denmark to train in modern livestock farming, running commercial farming enterprises and learning farming entrepreneurial skills.

ADA chairperson, Dr Martha Mbattha, said women were still the major producers of food in Africa, producing between 60 and 80% of the food output. “It is important to take heed of women’s voices in agribusiness, whose humility is at times mistaken for ignorance.”

The drought that has left farmers

in the province counting the costs will also be a key topic, after the province was declared a disaster zone. Xaba said the department will be finalising details with the national government to role out its drought relief scheme for farmers.

“This will be in the form of a drought subsidy, which will be administered on a sliding scale with poorer farmers getting more assistance than more commercially successful farmers,” he said.

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