

Agriculture MEC Cyril Xaba, Deputy Minister Bheki Cele, KZN Premier Senzo Mchunu and Agriculture Minister Senzeni Zokwana at The New Age Business Briefing in Newcastle yesterday. PICTURES: HERBERT MATIMBA

Planting the seeds of success

PG 20 | THE NEW AGE - BUSINESS BRIEFING

Minister says it is critical that government intervention be placed on agriculture and food insecurity

KARABO MOLOI

A TOTAL 14.7 million South Africans go to bed on an empty stomach, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Senzeni Zokwana said at The New Age Business Briefing at the Amajuba Berries Farm in Charlestown, Newcastle, yesterday.

Zokwana said it was critical that intervention be placed on agriculture and food insecurity.

The discussion during the briefing also centred on social protection and agriculture. It was also the launch of the planting season and food security in KwaZulu-Natal.

"At the centre of our programme is also farmer development, among other matters," he said.

Zokwana said a number of people had moved to towns and left their land vacant and unused.

KZN's agriculture MEC Cyril Xaba and Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Bheki Cele both emphasised the promotion of youth farming.

Cele acknowledged they were failing the youth but said the department could see light at the end of the tunnel.

"This sector has not transformed. Young African farmers are still surprised when they go to farms as farmers and not as workers," Cele said.

Project manager of the Amajuba Berries Farm, Peter Liefeldt, said he was proud to see 80 to 100 people who did not have anything a year ago but now were working on their own farms.

"This is not my farm. It is a partnership between private enterprise and the government and I am proud of our progress."

Liefeldt said the farmers had planted raspberries within a year over 15ha of land.

"It is possible for us to succeed because of the way we farm."

Julia Shungube, a facial and skin oil farmer from Mpumalanga recalled how she struggled to sell her products to communities who did not understand them.

"I used to be a security guard but now I am the overall winner of the Female Entrepreneur Award," she said.

Having won R880 000 prize money, Shungube said she was planning to go national with her products that were currently being supplied only in Mpumalanga.

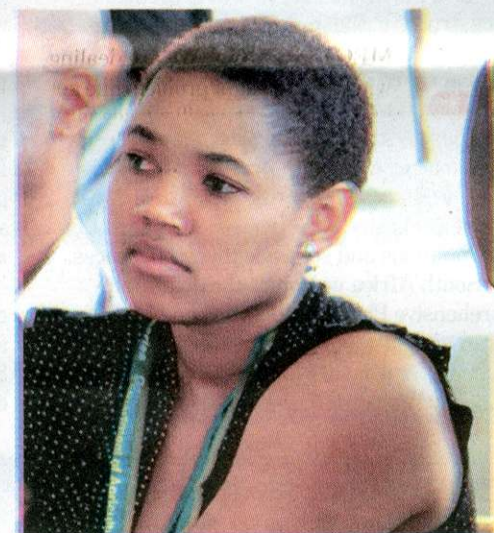
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Sibonisiwe Khumalo and Vuyisile Mwandla.



Busisiwe Mavuso, Octavia Matlala, Betty Mdluli, Willy Lukhele and George Xaba.



Siyabonga Langa.



Eric Ndou, Kingstone Mashingaidze, Lieketso Moremoholo and Godfrey Kubayi.



Ntokozo Zulu, Zwelihle Madiba, Nonjabula Hlongwane and Zamokuhle Sabelo.