



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

KZN Department of Agriculture & Rural Development
Private Bag X9059, Pietermaritzburg, 3200

Enquiries: Nalini Naidoo

Tel: 0832340475

Fax: 033-343 8255

Toll-Free: 0800 000 996

Email: Nalini.Dickson@kzndard.gov.za

SPEECH BY KZN MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT CYRIL XABA AT THE MEETING WITH COMMODITY ORGANISATIONS ON 27 JANUARY 2015 AT THE SASA AUDITORIUM, KWASHUKELA, MOUNT EDGECOMBE

Presidents,

Chief Executive Officers, Chairpersons, Vice Chairpersons, Executive
Committee Members, Directors, Managers and Representatives of
Associations and Organizations,

Media Houses present

Acting Head of Department,

Senior Management of the Department

Ladies and Gentlemen

One of the first tasks that I set for myself when I became MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) was to forge links with commercial agriculture. I was mindful of the fact that although we were playing on the same field, we were on different ends of the ground.

I did not expect an easy reception and was always pleasantly surprised at your willingness to engage with me. Those months of interactions with representatives of different agricultural commodity groups, farmers, farming associations and communities culminates in our meeting today.

I would like to call this a historic gathering. It is the first time that we are all gathered together in one venue working towards a common purpose - to grow the business of Agriculture in KwaZulu-Natal.

Government has identified Agriculture as a major driver of the economy of the country. Our goal going forward is to fulfil the mandate of the National

Development Plan (NDP) to contribute to the creation of one million jobs in the agricultural sector by 2030. **Let me remind you that we now have 15 years to achieve this.**

The NDP and the Provincial Growth and Development Plan also calls for comprehensive rural development and food security.

In our individuals sectors we all have ideas of what can be done, we are well aware of the obstacles and the challenges in our way and we are also aware of what the other is doing wrong. However, working in silos gets us nowhere when our aims are the same.

It is for this reason that **at the heart of the new vision for Agriculture and Rural Development in KwaZulu-Natal is a coordinated approach.** It involves an alignment with other departments – both national and provincial. It involves municipalities, local leadership, communities as well as commercial agriculture. This approach calls for integrated planning with commodity associations, strategic partnerships and the promotion of agricultural development. It is based on support for emerging farmers, agricultural villages as well as recapitalization and post-settlement support for land reform farms. **At the core of these activities is Agro, processing and running projects on firm business models.** Underpinning all of this, there will be scientific research, technology development and extension services.

Against the backdrop which will be spelt out in more detail as our deliberations proceed, you will understand where we are heading. In turn, you have been invited to talk about your sectors which will include the challenges you face and strategic proposals on areas of co-operation.

To extend my earlier metaphor, these deliberations will see us on the same team, playing on the same side of the field - our goals - job creation and growing the business of agriculture in our province.

Before I sit down, there is a need to address a concern that many of you raised in our individual meetings, namely the issue of land redistribution. Your concerns are that of the slow pace of the process, land being taken away from agriculture and the failure of post-settlement farms. The ANC as the

ruling party has committed itself to speeding up the process. This commitment was made in the January 8th statement which forms the basis for the ruling party's program for government for the next year.

In the statement, President Zuma emphasized two issues. He said there will continue to be a balance of the national interests of land restoration, economic development and food security. He also stated the ruling party's commitment to the improvement of farming as an economic activity. I am on record as saying the issue of land restitution needs to be approached in terms of a win-win situation for all stakeholders in the province. I am confident that starting today, together we can find those winning solutions.

Let me allay further fears that the new approach to Agrarian reform is not just another talking point. That it is not another blueprint that will gather dust. As we speak, work is being done to put the strategy into action.

We are in the process of preparing to conduct a census on the agricultural sector in this province. I am well aware that there is a time lag of some 14 years in terms of national agricultural figures. Further statistics resides within private research institutions and organizations and we have not sufficiently measured the input of emerging farmers. The census will give us productivity measures and guide the efficiency of the sector. It will help us understand what was, what exists now and what can be. Having reliable data will highlight factors affecting productivity and ways to improve that productivity. It will help us identify sources of economic growth – in other words those low hanging fruit that we can go after.

As we speak skilled staff are being employed to action the plan. Care is being taken that there is a match between skills and the different facets of the strategy that has to be implemented.

This gathering is historic, it is the start of a process. By the end of proceedings, you will have a detailed overview of our new vision for Agricultural and Rural Development in KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited not only to give your input but going forward to monitor our progress. Thank You!