



agriculture & rural development

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agriculture
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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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SPEAKING NOTES FOR MEC CYRIL XABA'S VISIT TO AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS IN MTUBATUBA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

I would like to congratulate Inkosi Mkhwanazi and the farmers in his community for taking the bold step to organize yourselves and get farming projects off the ground. The province and the country needs more people like you.

I understand that you approached the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to assist with mechanization and inputs on bean planting. This has been a relationship that has carried on successfully for the past three years.

Your progress has been outstanding and your projects must be highlighted as good news farming stories that must be publicized to show what can be achieved and to encourage others who want to get into the business of farming.

In the first year of the project, beans were planted on 300 hectares of land and the average yield was 1.5tons per hectare. In the second year, 200 hectares were planted and a yield of 1.2tons per hectare was obtained. You went on to establish your own packaging system and linked up with the Schools National Nutrition Program.

I am happy to report that this year my department is assisting you with mechanization and inputs for planting 250 hectares of beans.

In addition, the department has budgeted R7million for the installation of irrigations systems to a further 100 hectares of land.

Your area has a high potential for bean production and if you carry on with your successes you could be supplying beans not only to the rest of the country but for the export market as well.

I was inspired when I learnt that the purpose of your project was in order to address food security and to sell the surplus to generate an income.

As a community, you are putting into practice government's message that agriculture is an important sector to grow the economy and create jobs. More importantly through farming, we are able to provide food to feed our nation. Like other countries throughout the world, we find that the land available for farming is not increasing and yet the population of the country is growing. This means that we must double our efforts on the land we have to increase production to keep up with the increased demand for food.

I am running out of words of praise for your commitment to developing agriculture here in Mtubatuba. The Mayenzeke Goat Project is another good news story.

This is also a project under Inkosi Mkhwanazi where five members of the community – two female and three males are involved in a goat-farming project that was established in 2013. You sell goats directly to the community and officials from my department report that the project is showing strong potential for growth. Goats are being sold at R1100 each and you sell an average of 60 goats per month generating an income of about R66 000 a month. I am pleased to see that my department has assisted you with funding for the construction of a goat shed and for fencing and there is to be assistance with the purchasing of goat stock to boost your livestock production.

In addition, four livestock dams have been built in the area at a cost of R1 million and I believe a total of 200 families are benefitting from these dams.

The agriculture sector is one of the biggest employers in Mtubatuba and with more projects like - the Nyalazi/Hluhluwe bean project and the Mayenzeke goat project - agriculture could become the backbone of the economy of the town creating much needed jobs.

Already, there is important work being done where my department is working in cooperation with the South African Sugar Association (SASA). This project involves the revival and rehabilitation of communal sugar cane farms. You are fortunate that you have a Sugar Mill in the town and sugar cane farmers in the area can save on transport and other overhead costs.

The cooperative work between my department and SASA is an example of the new direction that agriculture is taking in our province. I have been

busy with officials in the department working on a Strategy for Agrarian Transformation. This strategy will see more support for farmers in terms of advice and training and working with the commercial farming sector to grow agriculture in this area. Links and collaboration with the commercial sector can assist with access to markets and skills development – we can see the success of this way forward in the revival of sugar cane production here in Mtubatuba.

An important part of the new strategy is for joint ventures to build the business of agriculture. Projects must be based on sound business models and must be run as business entities. Here in Mtubatuba, you are already leading with your successful bean project. And, you are not walking alone on this path but with the support of the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The Agrarian Transformation Strategy is based on support. There will be backing for crop and livestock production as well as help for potential farmers no matter how small the operation. Help will be on hand for households on communal land to emerging farmers and for claimants who have accessed land through the land reform program.

The strategy involves support from government on various levels. This will range from the provision of basic services and social amenities for rural communities to food security support. In terms of provision of services my department will play a coordinating role with the Provincial Government to ensure that the gains in agricultural development are accompanied by access to schools, health, transport infrastructure, housing and social amenities.

Mtubatuba could lead the way in showing how this strategy works in practice. Keep up the good work and you could become an example to the rest of the province and the country that farming pays and that agriculture is the future for economic growth.