



agriculture  
& rural development

Department:  
agriculture  
& rural development  
**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

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**SPEECH BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT MR CYRIL XABA AT THE OWEN SITHOLE  
GRADUATION CEREMONY, FRIDAY, 27 MARCH 2015**

Program Director

Mntwana Musa Zulu (Representing His Majesty the King)

Mayor of Umhlathuze Municipality: Cllr E.F. Mbatha

Mayor of Umfolozi Municipality: Cllr Mgenge

Amakhosi Present

Members of the college Academic Council

Principals of Agricultural Colleges & Agricultural High schools

Representatives of Strategic Partners

Representatives from the Department of Agriculture Forestry &  
Fisheries (DAFF)

Officials of Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Management, Staff and Students of the College

Parents and Guardians

Graduates

Owen Sithole College of Agriculture (OSCA) has come a long way since it first opened in 1968. The road has not been easy but with endurance the College survived and prospered beyond expectation. The Principal's report on the progress made is outstanding. The College, staff, students and graduates before us deserve a round of applause. Thank you for your hard work and dedication in not only uplifting OSCA but agriculture as a whole.

It seems to me the history of the College reflects the ups and downs of agricultural development in the country.

The College was established in 1968 with the aim of educating in particular the daughters and sons of Amakhosi, as such it played a role in the economic upliftment of the African community.

With shifting focus and other priorities emerging, agriculture took a back seat. By 1990 the management of the College was taken over by Technikon Mangosuthu. It was run as a satellite campus. Due to rationalization by the Technikon, the College was closed to students in 1991. Five years later in January 1996 the College re-opened for the training of students in agriculture.

Against this backdrop, the achievements spelt out by the Principal are truly remarkable. Being granted full accreditation status without conditions speaks volumes on the quality of education on offer. There is also the fact that OSCA is leading quality assurance development for all colleges in the country.

I was particularly struck by the success of your work integration and graduate placement program. It is astounding to learn that most of your students are absorbed by the industry before they complete their studies. This shows the importance of collaboration and how far we can go in the farming sector by working together.

So many of our aspiring farmers in the province did not have the educational opportunities afforded to the students of today, OSCA's work on skills development must be commended. The College can indeed feel proud at having trained over 2000 farmers in short courses and over 200 on accredited skills programs and short courses.

Like OSCA, agriculture in the province is on a new trajectory. It is emerging out of the shadows to take its place at the forefront of economic development in the country.

National Government has identified agriculture as a key economic driver. Previously when one thought about economic growth mining and industrialization came to mind. The National Development Plan (NDP) has shown the way how agriculture can become the catalyst for economic development, particularly in the rural areas and more importantly to ensure food security in the country.

Food security in general is the concern of governments' across the world. This is because populations are increasing but the land available for farming is decreasing. All of this happen while facing challenges of diminishing productivity on agricultural land, scarcity of water and the effects of climate change. Many experts say that the current drought that has affected this area as well as most of KwaZulu-Natal is because of climate change. There is also the additional challenge of growing the numbers of our future farmers. Many young people associate agriculture with manual labour.

Given this scenario ladies and gentlemen, I've been hard at work with officials within my Department and we have come up with a strategy for Agrarian Transformation in KwaZulu-Natal. Going into the future there is going to be a whole new way of carrying out the business of agriculture in this province.

The new strategy recognizes farming as a scientific and business enterprise and places agricultural education at the very foundation of what goes on. The strategy recognizes that the only way to grow agriculture is through scientific research that will show us how best to use our limited resources and deal with the consequences of climate change.

Farmers of the future will have to be up to date on the latest farming techniques in livestock management, fertilizer use and sound understanding of the soil. Helping to keep them up to date will be trained agricultural extension officers. This is why I say that education is at the heart of the new strategy. Since January last year, it has become compulsory for agricultural extension officers to undergo training and to be registered with the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions. This means that no agricultural advisor can give advice to any farmer if he or she is not qualified and registered. Going into the future Agricultural Colleges like Owen Sithole will have an increasing role to play in the province.

This is critical as the next level of the new strategy is that agriculture is a business and has to be run on sound business practices. Agro-processing has also been built in to add value to primary agricultural production. Our Colleges will have to expand on the business component in their curriculum. OSCA seems well prepared on this front, given its links with commercial farmers and its strategic partnerships with business entities.

Collaboration is at the heart of the new strategy and the aim going forward is for smallholder farmers to develop partnerships and expand links with commodity organizations and the commercial farming to share market access, technology and knowledge.

The strategy also introduces different models of farming and advocates post-settlement support for land reform farms. There will

be the development of Agri-Villages, river valley farming and communal agricultural estates. There are exciting developments on this front, ladies and gentlemen. An Agri-Village is a concept in which the residents have equal shares in the village and its activities. Each family has land to grow its own household food as well as a share in the village commercial agricultural system. A start to pilot this approach is currently underway in the eMadlangeni Municipal area.

Similarly, as was stated in the KZN Premier Senzo Mchunu's State of the Province address, the provincial government will continue in its endeavors to have more communal areas, in particular those under the control of Traditional leadership, to engage in commercial agricultural ventures. The Tugela Estate Project in the Indaka Municipal area is a pilot project that if successful will be rolled out throughout the province.

Right here on your doorstep, are the massive agricultural developments in and around the Makhathini Flats area.

So you can see that under the new Strategy for Agrarian Transformation in the province opportunities abound for young graduates and my appeal to you is to go out and become ambassadors for agriculture.

I am aware that at present training facilities are limited and part of our plans includes a boost to Agricultural Education and Training.

OSCA is already benefitting from this with a massive renovation and refurbishment project that will see new dormitories built so that the student intake can be increased.

The second phase of the project with a funding from National Government will see an R18 million sports complex built at the College. This will include two soccer fields, two tennis courts, two netball courts, a swimming pool and a Pavilion. The development will

also include the fencing of the complex, landscaping, ablution facilities and internal roads.

OSCA, which is at the center of the KwaMthethwa Traditional Authority is here to stay and to continue to contribute to the development of the area. My appeal to Inkosi and councillors in the area is to work together to increase the role that the College can play in the community, especially in working with the youth and showing them the benefits of agriculture. I understand that there have been problems such as the tearing down of fences, animals being stolen and issues around security. I appeal to the College and the Community to work together to sort out these challenges in the spirit of collaboration.

The College is also well situated to play a role in enhancing rural economic development and I understand work in this regard is underway in partnership with the University of Zululand with the aim of setting up a Centre for Rural Development.

There is more good news for OSCA from my recent meeting with the Eastern Cape MEC for Rural Development and Agrarian Reform, Mr Mlibo Qoboshiyane. Agreements reached between our provinces include bilateral visits to strengthen interaction between colleges of agriculture in both provinces. There was agreement that students from KZN will be given the opportunity to be trained as animal health technicians at the Tsolo Agriculture and Rural Development Institute in the Eastern Cape. There was also discussions on the longer term aim of offering the animal health program at OSCA. In turn, KZN will offer Eastern Cape farmers and students training in sugar cane production.

In addition, in response to the President's call for action – Operation Phakisa – The MEC for Education and myself have agreed to

collaborate in introducing more schools that will offer agriculture as a discipline with the aim of growing more future farmers.

Going into the future ladies and gentlemen, the sky's the limit and to the graduates I say go out and do your alma mater proud by making your mark on the agricultural sector. Be proud of what you have achieved and in particular be proud of being agriculturalists and inspire others to follow in your path. In the spirit of Owen Sithole College go on to become champions of rural upliftment!

## **INTRODUCTION OF UMNTWANA MUSA SABELO ZULU**

I am certain uMntwana Musa Zulu will be even better at motivating you as he has also been involved in the field of education. One of the many projects that he was involved in was to get youth to choose agriculture as a career choice.

uMntwana Zulu completed his National Diploma in Education at Eshowe College of Education in 1980. He also holds a BA Degree in Education from the University of Zululand. He taught Agricultural Science and Afrikaans at Charles Sabelo High School in Umbumbulu and Ndlavuso High School. In 1993 he was appointed Principal of Ekuphileni High School where he served for 22 years until his retirement in January 2015. During his time as Principal he recorded many achievements including the improvement of the school's enrolment from 200 to 1000 learners. His former students are doctors, pharmacists, engineers and agriculturalists.

Umntwana Musa Zulu has for many years, played an important role in Umkhosiwomhlanga and Umkhosiwoswelo.