



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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SPEECH BY KZN MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR CYRIL XABA, ON A VISIT TO IMBABAZANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Inkosi Mazibuko

Members of Parliament present

Mayor Strydom and Councillors

Officials

Members of the Community

Last year I visited Imbabazane but I was not able to visit all the communities, this is why I am here today to meet with you and hear about your challenges and successes when it comes to farming in this area that is richly blessed with good soils.

Agriculture is the future and government has recognized that this 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 have been busy with officials in my 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. For example, links and collaboration with the commercial sector can assist with access to markets.

I am aware that in this community, you are growing maize and beans and some have established home gardens. My department has helped to plough some areas and helped with seeds and fertilizers but this has not been enough and though we would have liked to help you much more, there has been budget constraints. This is why I am here to hear what you have to say so that we can review the situation and see what can be done as we move on with changing the way we carry on the business of agriculture.

Despite the challenges that are being experienced, there are encouraging signs of agricultural growth in the Imbabazane Local Municipality and we must build on these successes. During the past year, 657 hectares of white maize was planted in all Wards. Farmers were assisted with fertilizer, seeds as well as ploughing, discing, planting and agro chemical spraying.

More than 32 hectares of yellow maize were planted mainly in Wards 5 and 12. There is a demand for yellow maize by the South African Breweries for the production of beer.

Imbabazane has seen more than 399 hectares of beans, both white broad beans and red speckled beans planted in all Wards. In some sections of the municipality, farmers have been engaged in soya bean production and 52.5 hectares of soya beans have been planted this season.

An important aim of our provincial government is to encourage families to grow their own food. This is why the One Home, One Garden policy was introduced. This frees up money that would have been spent on fruit and vegetables to be used on other household needs. I was pleased to hear that in this municipality as a whole, 802 farmers were given training in seed bed preparation, seedling transplanting, as well as the correct methods in applying agrochemicals. Seed scoops and hand tools were also distributed under the One Home, One Garden project.

While much has been achieved, I know that much more can be done, especially within the ideal agricultural conditions of Imbabazane. Your municipality is situated at the foothills of the Central Ukhahlamba Drakensberg Park, which is a World Heritage Site with land available for farming. There are no big industrial developments in the area and this means that the only way to grow the economy is through agriculture.

The Imbabazane Municipality in its Integrated Development Plan (IDP) recognizes the agricultural sector as having huge potential for being developed and to stimulate economic development. The Agricultural projects that have been identified in the IDP include deciduous, berry and

citrus fruit plantations, large-scale production of vegetables, large-scale sunflower production, large-scale peanut production, poultry farming, goat farming, bee keeping and game farms.

The potential is right here; all we have to do is work together and remember that farming is the future. The African Union has adopted the slogan: "Do agriculture, it pays!"

In Imbabazane and here in your community, keep in mind the slogan adopted by over 2 million people on the African continent to do agriculture and that it will pay in terms of economic growth for this area and food security. We face our challenges but we are also entering an exciting phase in growing the agricultural economy. It will demand cooperation among all of us.