



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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SPEAKING NOTES FOR KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR CYRIL XABA AT THE 2ND CONFERENCE FOR WOMEN IN AGRIBUSINESS ORGANISED BY NEPAD AND ADA DURBAN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE 03 NOVEMBER 2015

Program Director

Minister in the Presidency Responsible for Women, Honourable,
Ms Susan Shabangu

The African Union Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture,
Madame Rhoda Peace Tumusiime

Chief Executive Officer to the NEPAD Agency, Dr Ibrahim Assane Mayaki

The Representative from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation,
Ms Bodi Maal

NEPAD Director, Ms Estherine Fotabong

Chairperson of the Agribusiness Development Board (ADA), Dr Martha Mbatha

The Acting CEO of ADA Ms Phumla Vilakazi

All Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me add my own welcome to our province. We are known for beautiful beaches, mountains, game parks and for being a cultural melting pot of African, Indian and European-influenced cultures.

KwaZulu-Natal has a beautiful landscape dotted with rolling hills and vast open spaces. Yet as government representatives who traverse the length and breathe **of this province, we know that hidden on this artist's canvas are deep** pockets of poverty. The provincial government has recognised Agriculture as a key game-changer of this scenario. As such, we have come up with a Strategy for Agrarian Transformation. The Strategy which is aligned with the National Development Plan and the Provincial Growth Plan, is aimed directly at growing the rural economy.

In other words, making those hills and dales thriving hubs of farming operations and agribusiness enterprises.

At the heart of the strategy for Agrarian Transformation, is the development of the small-scale farmer and unleashing their economic potential. If the statistics are examined more closely, it actually means unleashing the potential of women in agriculture. According to the last census, KwaZulu-Natal has the highest percentage of subsistence farmers in the country. Research done by the **President's office** revealed that 61% of these subsistence farmers are women.

A study commissioned by KwaZulu-Natal Premier, Mr Senzo Mchunu, as part of his Poverty Eradication Master Plan found that 28percent of all KwaZulu-Natal citizens live in extreme poverty and a further 29percent live in absolute poverty. The study found that KwaZulu-Natal has the highest gender based poverty incidence. In other words women are the face of poverty in this province. Given this background, Ladies and gentlemen, I can assure you that the development of women in agriculture is a key objective as we implement our Strategy for Agrarian Transformation.

The Provincial Government is grateful that you are holding this second conference on Women in Agribusiness in KwaZulu-Natal. We are particularly pleased that this event has been organised in collaboration with the Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA), which is an entity of the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

To be able to transform agriculture in this province, we have re-structured our operations. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, concentrates on primary agriculture, while our Rural Development arm, among its many tasks, is involved in the implementation of agri-**parks in the different districts**. **ADA's** brief is to focus totally on agribusiness. You will hear more about the work in the course of the conference, **but some plans going forward is to establish a women's desk**. ADA is also playing a leading role in developing young farmers. The Agency has been running a very successful program where young women and men from land reform farms are being sent to Denmark to train in modern livestock farming, running commercial farming enterprises and learning farming entrepreneurial skills.

This project is proving a huge success and it is heartening to meet these young people on their return and hear how they can now see the business potential and opportunities available in agriculture. These young people and students at our agricultural colleges are becoming real ambassadors for agriculture. Our plans going forward is to grow the numbers of our young farmers, especially our women farmers.

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Female Entrepreneur Awards, is proving hugely successful. This year the provincial winner for Exporter of the Year was a woman who developed as result of taking advantage of the support and training offered by Government.

Busi Lubanyane is currently exporting macadamia nuts to the United States, Europe and the Far East. She started off in 2008 at the bottom of the Female Entrepreneur Programme where she entered the small-holder category for tomato farming. She won in her category and invested her R75 000 prize money in her farm. Ms Lubanyane was assisted by the Department and the Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA) by being provided with intensive training through the Perishable Product Export Board Council. She also underwent training in financial management, agribusiness and marketing matters. This training allowed her to move into the commercial sector. In 2010 she entered the Female Entrepreneur Awards in the commercial category and came second. Once again, this enterprising woman farmer invested her prize money into her farm, this time to grow macadamia nuts. ADA assisted with infrastructure and today Ms Lubanyane is the first black woman farmer from KwaZulu-Natal to supply macadamias for the export market.

In September, the KZN Provincial Government started the process of launching another aspect of its strategy to transform agriculture in the province. The project is known as the communal estate pillar of our strategy. The aim is to develop smallholder farmers on communal estates, through support of cooperatives, so that they can become sustainable and commercially viable operations. Communal estates are established through communities clustering their small pieces of land into a minimum of 50 hectares up to 200 hectares so that they can plant large fields of crops that can be sold on the commercial markets.

As government we are well aware that to help our farmers on communal land to compete in the commercial world, our support will have to extend to building infrastructure and ensuring access to markets. In this regard, support for primary agricultural activity is accompanied by the provision of silos, maize mills or perhaps abattoirs in a particular district. Just over a week ago, we launched the communal estate program in the Zululand District where the Maphophoma Maize Mill built by ADA was also officially opened. The Mill offers the farmers the opportunity to process their own maize and control their own production. We want to **develop more Busi Lubayane's and create more jobs. More importantly our** landscape must not be blemished by the scars of poverty. There must be no difference when driving past a commercial farm and when driving past farms on communal land.

Although at present the current drought is taking its toll on all farmland in the province. The Province is grateful that National Government heeded its application to be declared a drought disaster area. The Department is finalising details with National government to roll out its drought relief scheme for farmers in the province. This will be the form of a drought subsidy which will be administered on a sliding scale with poorer farmers getting more assistance than more commercially successful farmers.

The drought is a reminder that climate change has become a reality of life In South Africa and that farmers and those in the field of agribusiness have to learn to adapt and to find ways to mitigate against these adverse weather conditions.

This brings me to my conclusion and I want to thank Nepad, who in partnership with the South African Weather Service, ran a course for KZN subsistence farmers on agro-meterology. Many of these small-scale farmers had little formal education but enthusiastically engaged with the science that looked at the effects of weather and atmospheric conditions on agriculture. They spoke easily on issues of climate change and how to adapt farming methods to the changing weather patterns. This brought home to me the fact that many of our subsistence farmers, here in KwaZulu-Natal and indeed in the rest of Africa are hungry for the technical knowledge to learn the science and business of agriculture. This conference on women in agribusiness will go a long way in addressing that need. I wish you the very best for a fruitful and successful conference.

I thank you



From left: FAO Representative for South Africa Dr Tobias Takavarasha, Director of NEPAD Agency Ms Estherine Fotabong, KZN MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Mr Cyril Xaba and Agribusiness Development Agency Board Chairperson Dr Tshitshi Mbatha during the official opening of the 2nd Conference for Women in Agribusiness



KZN MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Mr Cyril Xaba together with the Director of NEPAD Agency Ms Estherine Fotabong and Agribusiness Development Agency Board Chairperson Dr Tshitshi Mbatha during tour visit at the exhibition stands



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KZN MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Mr Cyril Xaba addressing the members of the media

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