



## agriculture & rural development

Department:  
agriculture  
& rural development

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT (CSIRD), UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND, 21 JULY 2015.**

Program Directors, Dr Sipiwe Mkhize and Professor JD Thwala

First Lady of the Republic of South Africa, Mama Sizakele MaKhumalo-Zuma

Acting Vice Chancellor of the University of Zululand, Professor Xolisa Mtose

Task Team Member and Representative from the Office of the Premier, Dr ME Zungu

Representative of the University of the Free State Dr Johan Van Niekerk

Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders, Inkosi PDH Chiliza

Amakhosi Present

Mayors and Deputy Mayors

Councillors

University Staff and Government officials

Students

Ladies and Gentlemen

Less than a year ago, in October 2014 the collaboration between the University of Zululand and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development was initiated through the Office of the Premier.

The move was welcomed by all parties involved and this was evident in the numerous engagements held to get the partnership on track.

Once the initial memorandum of understanding was signed, four working groups were formed to see how the different partnership objectives were to be achieved.

\*Working Group one looked at formal and non-formal education and the development of agricultural schools programmes.

\*Working group two focused on Research and Technology Development.

\*Working Group three on technology transfer as well as outreach and capacity building.

\* And, Working Group four dealt with inclusive and integrated Rural Development.

All of these areas are the building blocks contained within the Provincial strategy to transform agriculture and the rural landscape in KwaZulu-Natal.

I want to thank everyone involved in bringing us to this stage. Thank you to the Premier, the Honourable Mr ES Mchunu and members of his team for initiating this partnership. Thank you to The Acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of Zululand, Professor Xoliswa Mtose and her team for enthusiastically embracing the project. My gratitude also goes to my own team, KZN DARD Acting Head of Department, Ms Jabu Majola, who was in charge at the time and the officials involved. I am certain that Program Director and our new Head of Department, Dr Siphwe Mkhize, will continue the good work that has started.

To the Technical Task Team, all members of the working groups the secretariat and everyone involved, congratulations on a job well done. Your hard work has culminated in today's function. We are formalising our partnership between the Department and the University of Zululand with the launch of the Centre for Sustained Integrated Rural Development (CSIRD).

This Centre, could not be better placed than at the University of Zululand, which in its own publications describes itself as rural-based and as the only comprehensive tertiary educational institution north of the Tugela River. We also know that north of the Tugela lies a rural hinterland with vast potential for development.

The importance of the Centre for Sustainable Integrated Rural Development, however, has a far wider reach. My address this morning will focus on the significance of the CSIRD and the potential it has to transform our rural landscape. The CSIRD, has been born out of collaboration and partnership and according to multinational tax and finance company, Deloitte collaboration is the crux to South Africa's future development and competitiveness.

Deloitte has what it calls an Insomnia index. The company tells us that the index measures at regular intervals the issues that bother the company CEO's and what keeps them awake at night. The 2012 index showed that the country's lack of innovation and competitiveness were areas of concern. As a result of the index, solutions were explored and it was found that away forward was the need to explore more collaborative opportunities with government, academic institutions and the private sector.

Mike Vincent, a director for Strategy and Innovation at Deloitte said at the time that there was not enough communication on research and development between government, academic institutions and business bodies and that there

was huge scope for improvement in this area. He pointed to examples in other countries where collaboration among these institutions lead to new products being introduced and innovative business solutions. Mr Vincent went on to say that the historical role that universities played in South Africa in supporting mining innovation helped establish that sector as a world leader.

This is precisely what we are aiming at with the establishment of the Centre for Sustainable Integrated Rural Development. To work in partnership not just with the University of Zululand but with other academic institutions, as well as the private sector to nurture new ideas and find innovative ways to tackle rural poverty and build an inclusive economy.

I am glad that Dr Johan Van Niekerk from the University of Free State's Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, Rural Development and Extension is present here today. The next step will be to formalize a partnership between the two centres.

Dr Van Niekerk, I believe the CSIRD will mirror your course structure in the education and training that will be offered. This will extend from basic skills training up to a Masters and Doctorate level. An integral part of both Centres is Research and Development as well as outreach work. Through vehicles like the CSIRD we are developing our human capital - our future crop of farmers as well as agricultural and rural development experts.

Mr Vincent of Deloitte reminded us that collaboration between the private sector, government and our academic institutions put South Africa at the forefront of mining innovation. Similar collaboration can make us leaders in rural development. I urge the Centres both here at the University of Zululand and the University of Free State to strive to become institutions of excellence and expertise in the field of sustainable integrated rural development.

We are currently living through an interesting period in South Africa when government policies and plans on agriculture and rural development are being translated into action. The National Development Plan which calls for inclusive economic development that will see a reduction of rural poverty and inequality forms the basis of many of our activities. In KwaZulu-Natal, we are moving on all fronts to implement the provincial Strategy for Agrarian Transformation. The aim of the strategy is to promote through partnerships, sound agricultural practices that promotes economic growth, food security and the advancement of rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal.

All of this offers fertile ground for ideas and activities to flourish to truly change the country's rural landscape. The challenge is about how the millions of our people living in rural areas can be incorporated and connected to the mainstream economy.

The Agrarian Transformation Strategy will be neatly underpinned by the roll out of the national strategy of Agri-parks in each of the ten Districts in our Province, which was announced by President Jacob Zuma in his State of the Nation Address.

Agri-parks are a system innovation of agro-production, processing, logistics, marketing and training as well as extension services located in District Municipalities. As a network, it enables a market-driven combination and integration of various agricultural activities and rural transformation services. Agri-parks allows for networks of contacts between producers, markets and processors. They also provide the physical infrastructure required for the transforming industries. In KwaZulu-Natal, work is already underway in this regard through collaboration across all three spheres of government and across departments.

Agri-parks offers huge potential for innovative and action-orientated research and development on expanding rural livelihood opportunities. The CSIRD and partnership between the Department and the University can be a vehicle to drive this aspect of the Agripark strategy.

We know that we are on the right path in recognizing the critical need to develop our human capital and strengthen agricultural research and innovation. Earlier this month, I welcomed back 15 of our students from Denmark. They had been sent on a ten month training course to learn how to run commercial farming operations and also received training on agricultural entrepreneurship as well. The three-year program, which saw a second batch of students leave this year, was arranged through a partnership between KZN DARD entity – the Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA) and Dalum Academy of Agricultural Business in Denmark.

We learnt that Denmark had moved from a country that was unable to feed its population to a country that has become a leading exporter of food products and agricultural machinery and equipment. This was done through dedicated programs including building up agriculture through education and research.

Closer to home, Ethiopia was a country that was once synonymous with famine. It is now among Africa's fastest growing economies. Kanayo Nwanze, the President of the United Nations International Fund for Agriculture Development said this was achieved through investment in rural development and agricultural transformation. According to a report by the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture key components of their strategy moving forward was collaboration, capacity building and at a higher level, the government had invested extensively in the establishment of new universities and in strengthening the existing ones. Students were encouraged to conduct research for their Masters and doctorates within districts and on topics that could assist in developing a more market orientated development.

This is precisely what we have set out to achieve with our own strategy for agrarian transformation. Partnerships, Education and training, research and development form the foundation for growing our agricultural sector.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that we are at a critical juncture in South Africa. Our actions going forward can change the face of our economy.

South Africa is a country with a dual economy – in agriculture we see this duality very clearly there is the commercial sector operating in the first economy and the small-holder farmers barely make a living within the informal or second economy. A challenge we have set out to address is to bridge the gap between these two economies.

This duality is unsustainable and has made our country one of the most unequal societies in the world. In South Africa 40% of the nation's poor live in rural areas and in KwaZulu-Natal more than half of the provinces population – 54% - are rural dwellers. This is another challenge we seek to address - to recognize the poverty that exists outside of the urban areas and what impact it will have on the country as a whole if we do not implement the National Development Plan to build an integrated and inclusive rural economy.

Today's Official opening of the Centre for Sustainable Integrated Rural Development and the partnerships that are being forged, are steps towards tackling these challenges. It is in fact, the Strategy for Agrarian Transformation being put into action. This is the beginning and I urge all of us as custodians of the Centre to ensure that it succeeds and moves forward to fulfil the long-term goals of changing lives and helping shape the future of rural South Africa.

I Thank You