



agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH BY DEPUTY MINISTER: GENERAL BHEKI CELE

**YOUTH AND FORESTS – TOGETHER UNLOCKING THE
GREEN ECONOMY**

(CEDARA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, PIETERMARITZBURG)

19 JUNE 2015

Programme Director

MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Cyril Xaba

Honourable Mayor,

Group Executives of 1 Source Group, Messrs Logan Shaw and
Bongani Skundla

Treated Timber Products, Messrs Howard and Lloyd Holley

The leadership of the CT Organics: Messrs Chris McCathie and
Tyrone Reynolds

The leader of Ennovation, Mr David Cilliers

The MD of SAPPI, Dr. Terry Stranger in absentia

The DAFF feeder schools and bursary holders

Forestry youth entrepreneurs

Teachers and learners

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

We are gathered today here today in pursuit of an important national discourse as coined through the theme: Youth and Forests – Together Unlocking the Green Economy. During his

State of the Nation Address, the State President, His Excellency Jacob Zuma on 12 February stated that:

“2015 is the year of investing more in our future, by educating our children and the youth about the rich heritage of this country”

He further stated that: *“Our youth is our future and their success fills us with immense pride”*

Ladies and Gentleman, I cannot help but thank our sponsors, particularly 1 Source Group, our main sponsor for partnering with us in making this event to happen. We are here to officially launch the first ever group of 200 young pioneers of the legacy programme aimed at promoting youth participation in the formerly white dominated sectors. This launch further serves as a build – up to the Fourteenth (XIV) World Forestry Congress which will be held for the first time on the African soil since 1926. The congress is scheduled to take place from 07 to 11 September 2015 in Durban. The 200 legacy programme pioneers present here this morning consists of: youth in school doing grade 11 and 12, youth at tertiary institutions pursuing forestry and agriculture careers and most of them funded by DAFF and youth out of school involved in forestry and environmental activities.

The presence of the industry and forestry business in this legacy programme launch speaks volumes about our vision of Public Private Partnership in developing young entrepreneurs and forestry youth owned businesses. We are as strong as our partnerships. Once more, thanks to the forestry industry and businesses, those that heeded our call and joined us this morning, let alone their contribution in terms of sponsorship.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our forestry assets represent one of the major economic, social and environmental assets we need to preserve. Compared to countries with favourable climatic conditions, South Africa's forestry resources are limited hence the need to protect and preserve them. Compared to countries such as China, Brazil, Russia, commercial forestry plantations in South Africa cover a total of approximately 1.2 million hectares of land translating into 1% of the total land cover of the country. Of importance to note though is that forestry contributes to agriculture, forestry and fisheries GDP about 25.5% .and It further supports mining and manufacturing sub-sectors. In KwaZulu – Natal alone, commercial forest plantations (state and non – state) cover a total of 503 000 hectares with investment estimated at R9 billion per annum in terms of its gross value across the forestry value chain. The province is the home to approximately 1000 commercial timber farmers and 25 000 small scale timber growers. Talking of dependencies, it is estimated that about 300 000 people in the

province depend on the forestry industry for their livelihoods. It is worth noting that, the forestry and forest products industry in Kwa Zulu Natal contributes 3.9% of the province's Gross Geographic Product (GGP).

To sustain and improve this profile, it is important that the role of youth and women be elevated and encouraged in Forestry programmes. To this end, the National Development Plan (NDP): Vision 2030 highlights the role youth will play in the country's advancement. It emphasises that a youthful population presents an opportunity to boost economic growth, increase employment and reduce poverty. I think I am at the right place to talk about this vision because I am surrounded by 200 young pioneers of our legacy programme. If I was young myself, and had an opportunity like this, where I am not only told about an opportunity but the opportunity is brought to me, my first question will be "what will make me turn my back on it?" To this end, the department and the forestry industry at large would like to share the following offerings available for the youth.

1. Career Awareness Strategy

The strategy is administered by my department in collaboration with sector partners aiming at promoting agriculture, forestry and fisheries as careers of choice. Learners at high school and universities are exposed to a range of careers in the fields of

agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Learners who choose to follow careers in these study fields are offered bursaries at high school level. When these learners complete matric, they are further offered bursary to enrol at Universities. I must inform you that since the inception of this programmes in 2004, schools in KZN benefitted more than the rest of other provinces. Of the 277 high school learners who benefitted from the programme, 143 are from KZN. We have a total of 60 graduates who were supported through this programme. Of the 60, about 46 come from KZN as well. It is totally understandable seeing you are home to some large forest resources. Forests are not foreign to you. If you were born and grew among the forests why do you not take advantage to study them and make the best of your forests.

2. External bursary scheme

In order to realise the dream of eliminating skewed participation of the previously disadvantaged groups in the sector and bridging the skills gap, our department has since 2004 introduced an external bursary scheme. The scheme targets young people in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors with good grades in Mathematics and Physical Science who wish to pursue careers in agriculture, forestry and fisheries; by the way, agriculture and forestry are sciences!

The aim is to create a pool of researchers, scientists, skilled professionals and technicians in areas classified as scarce and critical within the sector. The following have been identified as critical skills in forestry: Forest Genetics, Wood Product Engineers, Wood Mechanists, Furniture Designers, and Production Managers. This is the skills base we want to build in the next 15 years in line with NDP.

We have over the years funded deserving students to follow careers in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Since the inception of the scheme in 2004, a total of **1002** young people have benefitted to study various study fields. Of this total, 101 benefitted in forestry related qualifications. A total of 42 registered for a Bachelor of Science in Forestry at the University of Stellenbosch have completed their studies. About 32 students registered for National Diploma in Forestry at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University of which 16 completed their studies. A total of 17 registered at Fort Cox College of Agriculture of which 2 completed and are serving on DAFF internship programme.

We are however, not oblivious of the gap that still exists in terms of ensuring that youth not only take agriculture, forestry and fisheries as a career but they also become active in the whole value chain. That is the reason we brought in the

industry today, to model and expose you to the opportunities in the sector.

3. Young Professional Development Programme

This is a postgraduate initiative aimed at developing forestry researchers. Young people are attached to the industry and Institutions of Higher learning to get exposure to their research areas. A total of 10 young people benefitted from forestry focused research areas. Of these 10 students, 4 are employed and 6 are still furthering their studies. Yes we need more research to bring technology solutions through research. How gratifying would it be if we have our home grown researchers and solutions.

Key messages for our youth and the industry players

To our Grade 11 and 12 learners

To all the learners doing grade 11 and 12, if you want to pursue a career in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, I want to encourage you to consider following the fields of agriculture, forestry and fisheries as these fields are the cornerstone of the food security and nutrition for our nation. . While you need to balance your points, what is required of you is good scores in Maths and Physical Science. Should you achieve this, and meet our bursary entry requirements, we will cover your tuition, accommodation, meals and monthly allowance at University.

The bursary advert is done already in national newspapers and is also posted in our website: www.daff.gov.za with a closing date of 30 September 2015. All the details about the scarce and critical skills we fund are provided in the packages you received. It is therefore important that you cease this opportunity!

To the Forestry Industry

The government is well aware of the critical role the forestry sector plays in sustaining rural economic livelihoods. We are also aware of the critical ecosystems services forestry offers more so in the face of climate change and variability. The government further appeals that; we need to respond collectively to the socio – economic conditions impacting on our sector and the communities depend on it. To this end, it is my appeal that we join our hands and resources to leave a legacy worth remembering by these young people as our future leaders. As we jointly launch this legacy programme, let us expose our youth to existing youth owned and/ or managed enterprises, role modelling programmes, showcasing and competitions that will entice them to stay in the sector.

The contribution of the DAFF line function Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs)

Through the signed Service Level Agreements with our 3 line function SETAs (Agriculture Sector Education and Training Authority (AgriSETA), Fibre, Processing and Manufacturing Sector and Training Authority (FP&M SETA) and Food and Beverage Manufacturing Industry (FoodBev SETA) we receive Discretionary Grants to offer Learnerships, short skills programmes and Adult Education Training (AET). For 2015/16 all training funds sourced from our SETAs will be focused to youth empowerment programmes. The legacy programme concept document will be shared with them as a reference point so as to be informed in order to make a contribution in empowering these 200 young people and their peers.

Support from the Department of Higher Education and Training

I cannot reiterate the support we need from you in developing curriculum for critical skills in forestry that local Universities do not offer. There are only two Universities and one college in the country that offer forestry i.e. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan, Stellenbosch Universities and Fort Cox College of Agriculture in George (Western Cape), Stellenbosch (Western Cape) and Alice (Eastern Cape) respectively. Some of the agrarian transformation programmes are not achieving their intended

results due to the limited capacity of the drivers of such programmes owing to insufficient expertise in the field. We need more and more skills. We need more veterinarians, we need more engineers, we need more fish biologists and we need more foresters. The opportunities are before you South African Youth, please do not miss them.

To ground truth our training interventions, we will further appreciate tailor made vocational programmes that can provide rural youth with skills and insight needed to engage at entrepreneurial level and contribute meaningfully to the objectives of the sectors namely: food security, growing the economy and the creation of jobs.

In conclusion Ladies and Gentleman, I declare the youth legacy programme officially launched and I further invite you to join me for excursions to Sappi plantations, Agro forestry project and the Treating Timber plantations.

I also invite you to the XIV World Forestry Congress 2015 in the Durban ICC from 07 – 11 September conducted under the theme: Forests and People: Investing in a Sustainable Future.

Thank you