



agriculture
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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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**MEC CYRIL XABA'S COMMENTS AT THE KZN YOUTH IN
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (KZN YARD) EVENT
DURBAN ICC, 30TH APRIL 2015**

Program Director

Honorable Minister of Finance, Mr Nhlanhla Nene

Honorable Mayor of eThekweni, Cllr James Nxumalo

Deputy Chairperson of the National Youth Development Agency, Mr Kenny Morolong

KZNYARD Provincial Chairperson, Mr Noah Nyawo

Senior Office Bearers of KZNYARD

Aspiring farmers here this evening young and old

Ladies and Gentlemen

I congratulate the current leadership of the KZN Youth in Agriculture & Rural Development (KZN YARD) for persevering and getting the organization off the ground. It is impressive that members like the chairperson Mr Noah Nyawo, are successful farmers in their own right and are mentoring other young farmers.

KZN YARD has travelled a difficult road to reach this afternoon's event where you are launching your 2030 Vision. The organization goes back to 2007 and interestingly enough you owe your existence to the women of South Africa.

In 2007, Women in Agriculture and Rural Development (WARD) held their 4th World Congress in South Africa. A motion to form YARD was proposed

by the young women at the Congress and it was accepted as a Congress resolution.

Provincial launches were subsequently held with a KZN YARD interim structure launched in Ndwendwe in 2010. I believe this structure never functioned properly for a number of reasons including divisions and turmoil.

Since 2013, the process of re-building KZN YARD began with the assistance of the Youth, Women and Cooperative Development of the Department of Agriculture and Environment Affairs, as the Department was known at the time. By 2014, the current leadership took over and the organization has moved from strength to strength

Mr Nyawo, I thank you and your team for staying the course and re-building the organization. Promoting agriculture among the youth is key to both the future economic growth of this province and to ensure food security so that we are able to feed not only our own children but future generations of South Africans.

In this country we are also faced with the difficult situation of having an ageing population of farmers. I believe that the average age of commercial farmers in South Africa today is 63. If you travel in the rural areas of our province you will also see that most of our subsistence farmers are much older. Younger people are leaving to seek their fortune in the cities. We need young people to remain in the rural areas to help build the local economies and they can do this by farming.

We therefore need to sell agriculture to the younger generation to show them as President Zuma said in his budget speech that it is a catalyst for economic growth. We know from the big commercial farms that farming can be profitable and this is where we need to take our young people into the business of farming.

In this regard, your Vision 2030 Strategy is very exciting. It is practical, with good business ideas and has synergy with the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's own new strategy for Agrarian Transformation in the Province. There is no doubt that KZN YARD and the Department can explore working together on common projects.

Yes farming is business, but it is also science. Farmers of the future will have to be up to date on the latest farming techniques in such aspects as livestock management, fertilizer use and understanding the climate. The province is currently caught in the grips of a drought and with issues of climate change the situation is not going to get easier. Future farmers will

have to learn about drought tolerant varieties of crops. They will have to understand the soil.

A major focus of KZN DARD's plans ahead is to improve the image of agriculture by making young people aware of all the professional aspects of the sector.

We are going back to basics – growing agriculture from primary school level. From your strategy document, I see we share common plans in holding career guidance days and promoting one classroom one garden in schools. The MEC for Education and myself are jointly working on a project to introduce more schools in the province that will offer agriculture as a discipline.

Training and development is also key to our plans. In this regard, I have introduced a revitalization grant for the agricultural schools in the province. The aim is to assist in the provision of equipment and other infrastructure necessary to improve the quality of agricultural education and practical training. For unemployed youth, skills development opportunities are being rolled out. Under our Youth, Women and Cooperatives Development unit, young people have already been trained in mixed farming and are participating in various learnerships.

Your vision for agricultural hubs in each district fits in with the development of Agri Parks that President Zuma called for in his State of the Nation address. KZN is to have ten district Agri Parks. The park will center on the dominant commodity of the area and a key component is an agro-processing unit where primary products can be processed to add value and bring in more revenue into the area. I was pleased to hear that your vision includes the aspect of agro-processing. Your plans on fertilizer plants are particularly exciting, as you mention only three companies manufacture fertilizers in the country and we also import fertilizers.

To the aspiring farmers who would want to turn to the department for financial assistance, you are welcome to visit any of our district offices with your plans and for advice. Please note however, that projects will have to show that they are based on sound business models and that they can be sustained. The aim is not to throw money at projects but to first assess whether they are viable and to see if government is getting value for the money it is investing.

This is what we have to do to ensure that agriculture becomes a catalyst for economic growth in the country. Going forward, it is business unusual. I thank you!



MEC for KZN Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Cyril Xaba, addressing KZN Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development members



Finance National Minister Mr Nhlanhla Nene together with MEC Cyril Xaba and the Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development Provincial Leadership



MEC Cyril Xaba together with Finance National Minister Mr Nhlanhla Nene and KZN Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development Provincial Chairperson Mr Noah Nyawu



MEC Cyril Xaba having a light moment with KZN Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development Provincial Chairperson Mr Noah Nyawu