



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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SPEECH BY MEC FOR KWAZULU-NATAL AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR CYRIL XABA, AT THE PROVINCIAL FEMALE ENTREPRENEUR AWARDS FOR 2015 CEDARA CENTENARY HALL, 11 AUGUST 2015

Programme Director and Acting Senior Manager for Rural Coordination,
Ms Z. Masuku

The First Lady of South Africa, Mama MaKhumalo-Zuma

Deputy Minister for Telecommunications and Postal Services,
Professor H. Mkhize

Mayor of the Umgungundlovu District, Councillor Yusuf Bhamjee who presented
the welcoming remarks and all Mayors present

Head of the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development,
Dr S.F. Mkhize

General Manager for Rural Development and Coordination, Ms L. Del Grande

All officials present

Our special guests, the nominees for the Provincial Female Entrepreneur Awards

Ladies and Gentlemen

The South African Government declared August 9th as National Women's Day to celebrate the contribution of women to the struggle for liberation. It is also a day and a month to remind us that we still have to work at improving the situation of women in our country and continent.

In South Africa today, there are more women than men. Of the total population of 51,8 million, about 25,2 million are male and 26.6 million are female. Studies

have also shown us that women in South Africa are still the face of poverty. Despite the gains made since 1994 in improving the social and economic standing of women, challenges still persist. According to a report compiled by Oxfam into hunger in South Africa, the most food insecure households are those headed by women and children. As Government and communities, we cannot rest until this picture is drastically changed.

We also know from studies and evidence from Africa, Asia and Latin America that lives improve and families benefit when women are empowered. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that if women had the same access to resources worldwide, their yields could increase by up to 30%, which could result in up to 150 million fewer people going hungry.

The Africa director of ONE, an international campaign to end poverty and preventable diseases, said and I quote, "If governments and partners invest in agriculture, and, in particular, its women farmers today, they can be assured of a legacy of greater equality and boundless opportunity that will benefit Africans for generations to come and may usher the beginning of the end of aid dependence for our people."

As the South African government, this is precisely our aim, to unleash the power of our women farmers. To give you the support you need and to recognise your important contribution to our sector. The Female Entrepreneur in Agribusiness Awards is an important event not just to honour women, but to hold you up as mentors for a younger generation of female farmers. To all the nominees here today, I say well done, you are trail-blazers who are showing what can be achieved by hard work, courage and determination. I salute you.

I am reminded of the words that was chanted by women who marched to the Union Building 59 years ago to protest the extension of pass laws to women. Their rallying cry was Wathinta abafazi, wathinta imbokodo - "you strike a woman, you strike a rock."

The nominees have demonstrated the rock-solid power of women to change lives, particularly in our rural areas. Our veterans of the liberation struggle which include such leaders as Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa and Sophia Williams De Bruyn, must be looking on with pride.

As MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development here in KwaZulu-Natal, I must say that you have also given me hope and encouragement that we are on the right path with our new strategy for Agrarian transformation in this province. While I was not part of the adjudication panel, I was kept informed on the processes and was given insight on the entrants for these awards.

I found it very encouraging that the women who succeeded were those that followed the foundations of the strategy. The strategy says that agriculture is science and business and that education is at the basis of all that we want to achieve. All of you see your farms as opportunities for job creation and actively employ members of the community.

I was also encouraged that our government programmes are working and that many of you were able to grow your farming enterprises because of support from the Department.

While I cannot touch on all your stories, let me give our audience a few examples. I was struck by the story of Ms Busiswe Zulu, a nominee for the KZN best subsistence farmer award. Ms Zulu has taken to heart the message that agriculture is science. She combines both modern scientific knowledge and indigenous knowledge systems in her farming practices. I understand Ms Zulu that caring for the environment is the basis of how you farm. You monitor water during irrigation to prevent erosion and you also practice the modern scientific method of no-till to prevent soil degradation as well as crop rotation and mulching to keep the soil moist. You combine this with traditional and indigenous knowledge, for example by using traditional herbs for pest control, instead of chemicals.

Ms Zulu also demonstrates that education is the basis of farming. She not only mentors members of her community in farming methods but has lectured to students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Ms Zulu was asked by Professor Albert Modi, Dean and Head of the School of Agriculture at UKZN to lecture his students about organic farming methods.

All the nominees here today have been successful because they have taken to heart the message that farming is a business enterprise. I was struck that all of you have plans of how you want your farming businesses to grow. You also see that financial management and book-keeping are very important in how you manage your businesses. For example the Sofoco farm, which breeds ornamental fish, does not have access to computers or any modern technology but records all their transactions in two quire exercise books and files all their receipts and other paper work.

This year, we have added a new category to our list of top achievers and that is for top entrepreneur in the sector for export markets. At this stage we only have one nominee, but I have no doubt that this category is going to grow.

For me, Ms Busi Lubanyane's story is most inspiring. It once more demonstrates that we are on the right path with our Agrarian Transformation Strategy and that we can move people from subsistence farming to becoming commercially

successful on the international market. It also shows the success of these awards and the Female Entrepreneur Programme.

Ms Lubanyane has grown her farming enterprise to the point where she is now 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 and the Ugu District to supply macadamias for the export market.

From her story it is worth noting that success does not come overnight. It takes hard work, passion, sacrifice and dedication. It took six years for Ms Lubanyane to graduate from being a subsistence producer to a qualified export farmer who meets all the requirements and standards of exporting agricultural products to the USA and European Union markets.

The good news from all of this is that the awards are not a once off event, but there is commitment from the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide after-care support to the winners for a period of six years. This support includes:

- *training on agribusiness management as well as training to enter the export market;

- *Support to access infrastructure, capital and markets as well as

- *networking opportunities

Once more, I salute all the entrants and wish all of you the best of luck in the awards ceremony. Those who win, will have the opportunity to be entered into the national awards. This year, the national awards will be taking place in our province later this month on August, 27th.

If you do not walk away with a prize today, do not be disappointed as you are all winners. You have been selected as finalists from more than 90 entrants, to reach this stage is an achievement on its own. Support will still be at hand for all of you from the Department and through our district offices. This is because of

our commitment to grow agriculture in this province and unleash the potential of our small-scale farmers, particularly among our women and our youth.

To all the women here today, I honour you and wish you the very best in all your endeavours. Please enjoy the rest of August – your special month.

I thank you!