



agriculture
& rural development

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agriculture
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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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**SPEAKING NOTES FOR MEC FOR KZN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT, MR CYRIL XABA FOR THE
FARMER'S DAY AT MAKHATHINI GIN**

Programme Director

Deputy Minister for Rural Development and Land Reform, the honourable
Mr Mcebisi Skwatsha

Umkhanyakude District Mayor, Cllr Vilane

Mayor of Jozini, Cllr Mthethwa

Chairperson of the Umkhanyakude District Council, Inkosi Tembe

Traditional Leader Inkosi Gumede

Vice-President of Agri-SA, KWANALU and Chairperson of the KZN Cotton
Growers Association, Mr Phenias Gumede

President of KWANALU, Mr Mike Black

CEO of Cotton SA, Mr Hennie Bruwer

Ubongwa Chairperson, Mr MM Mhlongo

Chairperson of the Mjindi Women Farmer's Association, Mrs M. Simelane

Head of the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development,
Dr SF Mkhize

Officials Present

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honour of introducing our Deputy Minister for Rural Development and Land Reform, Mr Mcebisi Skwatsha. Deputy Minister, before I introduce you to the cotton farmers and their guests present here today, I want to assure you that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (KZN DARD), is fully behind cotton production in Makhathini.

We join you and the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in supporting this very important sector. Cotton farmers are spread out in almost all municipalities within the Umkhanyakude District and they offer ongoing much needed job opportunities in the area. This being women's month, it is also important to note that most of the cotton farmers are women.

The KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, has identified cotton as a key commodity in Umkhanyakude District. This is re-inforced in the Makhathini Integrated Master Development Plan and more recently, in the Operation Phakisa Lab.

Through Operation Phakisa there has been intense interaction with farmers and stakeholders looking at how cotton as a commodity, can play a pivotal role in economic development in the area. The Operation Phakisa Report will go to the Provincial Cabinet shortly and thereafter, it will be formally presented to the cotton farmers and other stakeholders.

The Department has also been interacting with the Cotton Growers Association of KZN and with Cotton SA with the aim of entering into a partnership with these commodity organisations so that we can work in collaboration to grow the sector.

As a result of KZN DARD's long association with the cotton growers in Makhathini, we are well aware that the Gin stands need to be either refurbished or replaced with new ones. The current stands are old and have long reached their lifespan. We understand that their parts are also no longer easily available.

Since the GIN re-opened, the Department has assisted cotton production in the area through maintenance of the centre pivots in the irrigation systems. We have also supported the farmers with mechanization at a budget of R1,4 million – this included assistance with planting, discing, ploughing and spraying. Our support in terms of inputs and mechanization will continue during this planting season.

Deputy Minister, along with your Department and Government's approach in general our aim is to grow the farming sector so that it becomes a catalyst for economic development and job creation.

I thank you for taking the time to address us today. Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr Skwatsha was elected to the Western Cape Provincial Legislature in 2004 where he served as MEC for Transport and Public Works between 2004 and 2005. Thereafter he was the Deputy Chief Whip of the Provincial Legislature until 2009. He has served in the Rules Committee and the Health portfolio committee. He is currently a member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC.

Deputy Minister Skwatsha has a long political career, having started as an activist while still at High School in the Western Cape, he went on to take on a leadership position in the United Democratic Front before joining the ANC underground in 1981. He served as Provincial Chairperson of the ANC Youth

League in the Western Cape and later as a member of the League's National Executive Committee.

In between his political activities, Deputy Minister Skwatsha found time to study. His studies were disrupted while at the University of Fort Hare and he went on to complete his BA degree at the University of Western Cape, later qualifying as a teacher. He taught for a while before becoming a full-time politician. He went on to strengthen his political know-how by completing a Legislative Sector leadership course at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I present to you Deputy Minister Mcebisi Skwatsha.



From left Makhathini Cotton Gin Project Leader Mr Phineas Gumede, MEC for KZN Agriculture and Rural Development Mr Cyril Xaba, Deputy Minister for Rural Development and Land Reform Mr Mcebisi Skwatsha and Makhathini Cotton Gin Manager Mr Charles Kekota at a cotton process plant



Deputy-Minister for Rural Development and Land Reform Mr Mcebisi Skwatsha together with MEC for KZN Agriculture and Rural Development Mr Cyril Xaba harvesting cotton in Makhathini



MEC Cyril Xaba, Deputy-Minister Mcebisi Skwatsha and Makhathini Cotton Gin Project Leader Mr Phineas Gumede in one of the butternut gardens in Makhathini



A Cotton Tree

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