



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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SPEECH BY MEC FOR KZN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR CYRIL XABA, AT THE WORKSHOP: PARTNERSHIPS ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN KWAZULU-NATAL: STRUGGLING FOR FOOD SECURITY DUBE TRADE PORT, eTHEKWINI, 28 JULY 2015

The Program Director

Amakhosi Present

Our partners in this endeavour, the Ingonyama Trust

Farmers

Members of the Academic and Research Communities

Representatives of Civil Society

Officials from all levels of Government

Ladies and Gentlemen

My apologies for not being able to join you yesterday. I trust that proceedings went well and that on this second day, we are well on our way to looking at areas of collaboration in this critical area of climate change and food security.

Many of you will know by now that the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (KZNDARD's) new **Strategy for Agrarian Transformation** is based on working in partnerships and collaboration. Our vision and mission statements talks about an agriculture sector in balance with nature. We state our aim as **being: "To promote** through partnerships, sound agricultural practises that promotes economic growth, food security and advancement of rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal.

This gathering is very important to us as it brings different sectors together to deal with an issue that is critical to our development. While climate change is a global problem influenced by an array of interrelated factors, the current drought has shown us that it is also a local problem with serious impacts foreseen for our Province.

In view of this, the KZN Department of Agriculture had commissioned a Climate Change Provincial vulnerability study. It provided information for the planning and development of a Climate Change adaptation and mitigation implementation strategy for KZN.

To date, the study has been shared with municipalities in the Province to enable them to craft their action plans in response to climate change. Two district municipalities, iLembe and uMgungundlovu, are using the vulnerability study as a basis towards the development of the district climate change action plans.

The material has also been used as a basis for information sharing packages that are distributed to learners, educators and communities at large during Climate Change Awareness campaigns conducted in the form of workshops around the Province.

Many of you may be familiar with the findings of the assessment, but it is worth reminding ourselves that it found the following:

- Noticeable changes in climatic trends over the KwaZulu-Natal region are being observed. These trends are consistent with climate change projections and include warming trends in the north-eastern parts of the province, over the Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal, and over the KwaZulu-Natal south coast. Wetting trends over the region, especially during February, have also been observed.
- KwaZulu-Natal has the highest flood hazard in South Africa. The KZN south coast is the most exposed and vulnerable area.
- An apparent increase in extreme weather events is already affecting the **province's people and economy** negatively. An increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme events is expected and this will exacerbate the situation.
- Climate projections for KwaZulu-Natal include continued warming, changes in precipitation patterns and a likelihood of an increase in extremes.
- Provincial modelling shows that an increase in temperature may make the midlands and Drakensberg areas sensitive to change. The coastal belt may become more tropical and sub-tropical conditions may move inland.
- As an adaptation initiative, the Sugar Cane Burning policy has been developed with the intention of promoting Green Harvesting instead of burning the cane and releasing significant concentrations of carbon into the atmosphere.

It is also worth reminding ourselves that although **Africa and South Africa's** contribution to greenhouse gas emissions is small compared to the rest of the world, the region is the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. This is **particularly due to our continent and our country's high dependence on** rain-fed agriculture; the poverty levels that exist in the rural areas and the fact that the majority of our farmers are small-scale subsistence farmers who operate within a second or informal economy. We are well aware that if we are not pro-active Agricultural yields will drop, food security will be under threat and we will lose

our fight against poverty. This is why this workshop and the follow-up work that will ensue, are of critical importance.

The Premier and the Provincial Government are well aware of all these factors. This is why the Cabinet established a Provincial Climate Change Council. It is chaired by the Premier and includes a wide range of stakeholders including MECs, Heads of Departments, Mayors, academics, business, non-government groups, traditional and church leaders. The Council meets regularly together with Technical Committee and Working Group.

The main task of the Council is to finalize and implement a new KZN climate action plan and serve as a provincial platform to ensure regular dialogue and consultation on climate change issues, policies, plans and projects.

There will be a pre Cop 21 Seminar which will be held in Durban shortly, to **discuss South Africa's negotiation position at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** which will be held in France at the end of this year.

KZN DARD will be participating in the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs project to compile a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory. Agriculture has been identified as one of the five sectors that needs to be studied. The information on the emissions will also play a major role in planning mitigation actions for the country.

However, it is the devastation of the current drought that reminds us of the cruel hand of climate change. The KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is fortunate to have a well-established research base within the Department. A decision going forward, is that all research has to be under-pinned, where possible, with looking at mitigating the effects of climate change.

For example, there is exciting research work being done on indigenous Nguni cows, goats and sheep and developing these breeds which are less disease-prone in their current habitat and can better adapt to drier conditions. Similarly, work is being done on testing drought tolerant crops as well as evaluating crop models and developing dryland cropping models. This is so that we change what we grow in different districts to adapt to the changing weather and rainfall patterns.

As an interesting aside, we have no doubt about climate change and this is because of detailed evidence from Cedara itself. The College and the Research Unit are a hundred and five years old. During that time, daily weather and rainfall readings were taken. Douglas Chapman from our Risk and Disaster Management Unit has been analysing this data. He has found that the climate in the area has definitely shifted to become half a degree warmer. This may not sound much, but it makes a big difference to crops and cattle and what can be grown going into the future. He also found that during the winter months over the past few years, there are more days that are closer to 30 degrees centigrade. This means that farmers are having to rethink what they grow in

winter. Farmers in the Midlands are finding that annual rye grass grown during the winter months to feed their cattle are no longer doing well because it is not cold enough. They have to now look at changing the winter feed crops that they grow.

In the end, it boils down to building resistance in our crops and in our cattle, and we are confident that we are on the right track with our new Strategy for Agrarian Transformation. Dealing with climate change and its effects means that we need good science, good management and above all good education and awareness among our people. These are all key elements in our Strategy, as well as the need to work in partnerships.

Working together is the only way we are going to deal with the devastating effects that our changing and unpredictable climate is having on our food sources. It is also the only way we are going to deal with the fact that water is a scarce commodity in South Africa and we need to work together to conserve this precious commodity. I wish all of us the best in forging this partnership and creating a framework for collaboration in responding to the crisis of climate change and its effects on food security.

I thank you



MEC for KZN Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Cyril Xaba, addressing the delegates who attended the Colloquium on Climate Change



MEC Cyril Xaba addressing the delegates at who attended the colloquium on climate change



KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership at the Colloquium on Climate Change from right: Inkosi Shinga, Inkosi Mthuli, Inkosi Molefe and Inkosi Dube



Some of the delegates who attended the Colloquium on Climate Change

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