



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR CYRIL XABA, AT THE GALA DINNER FOR STUDENTS FROM THE KWAZULU-NATAL/DENMARK YOUNG FARMER'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM 26 JUNE 2015

Program Director: Ms Karen Hippolite

Representatives from Dalum College in Denmark, Mr Niels Eric Jespersen and
Mr Martin Jakobsen

Chairperson of the Agribusiness Development Agency Board, Dr Tsitshi Mbatha

Deputy Chairperson, Dr. Edwin Ngidi

ADA Board Members

ADA CEO Dr Thulasizwe Mkhabela

Representative from the Office of the Premier, Ms Ntombifuthi Ndlovu

Chief Director Provincial Shared Services Centre Mr. Nhlanhla Mndaweni

HOD for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr Siphwe Mkhize

Our Graduates from the Dalum Academy of Agricultural Business in Denmark

Ladies and Gentlemen

Congratulations to our graduates, you have done your country and province proud. Thank you to Dalum Academy of Agricultural Business for training our students and for your generosity in becoming part of this project. My gratitude also goes to the Office of the Premier and the Agribusiness Development Agency for ensuring that this project became a reality.

We are holding this gala dinner in an auspicious month. June marks the anniversary of the 1976 student uprising and commemorates the role that young people played in the liberation struggle. It is also being held on a historic day. Sixty years ago today, the Freedom Charter was adopted at Kliptown in Johannesburg. The Charter expressed the vision of the future that oppressed

South Africans yearned for. On the issue of land, the Charter said: The Land Shall be shared among Those Who Work It!

The Charter goes on to say:

- *Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it to banish famine and land hunger;

- *The state shall help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers;

- *Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land;

- *All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;

- *People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labor and farm prisons shall be abolished.

The graduates here today, represent the hopes and dreams of the thousands of South Africans that were denied such opportunities and who contributed to the Freedom Charter sixty years ago. Please value the opportunities that you have today in a free South Africa and don't squander what you have been taught. Use your training to grow your farming enterprises. Share your knowledge by mentoring others and play your part in helping unleash the agricultural potential of our province.

I will be bold enough to say that the generation of young farmers that we as a province are helping to develop today can, like the Youth of 1976, become game changers. The future of agriculture in this province, indeed of the country depends on young farmers. South Africa has an ageing farming population with the average age of commercial farmers today being around 63. It is imperative that we as government in cooperation with the farming sector find ways to attract young people to farming and open up opportunities to them.

This project, has offered training not just in modern livestock farming and running commercial operations. The graduates were exposed to the possibilities of becoming agricultural entrepreneurs in their own right. The project is set to run for the next three years affording more young people agribusiness training in Denmark.

Mr Jespersen and Mr Jakobsen, I am well aware of the remarkable strides that Denmark has made on the agricultural front. In 150 years you moved from being a country that was unable to feed its population to producing enough food products for 30 million people; even though the Danish population is just five million. You are a leading exporter of food products as well as agricultural machinery and equipment.

In South Africa, to a certain extent, we are starting off on our journey to enhance our true agricultural potential. This is because until 1994, the majority of South Africans did not have access to land. You built up agriculture through education

and research. This is a route we are following. The foundation of KwaZulu-Natal's new strategy for Agrarian Transformation is that agriculture is science and that agriculture is business.

Taking agriculture to the Youth involves long-term plans of starting at primary school level to change the image of farming. Given our country's history, most young people view agriculture as work for laborers. Our plans involve career guidance to make the learner aware of the professional aspects as well as the business and scientific nature of the sector. The MEC for Education and myself, have agreed to collaborate on introducing agriculture as a subject to more schools. Earlier this year I introduced a revitalization grant for the four agricultural schools in the province. The grant will assist in the provision of equipment and other infrastructure to improve the quality of agricultural education and practical training. It will make provision for skills upgrading as well as for agro-processing and agribusiness management to be offered as courses.

Last week the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, General Bheki Cele launched an innovative legacy project in which 200 young people will be mentored to become part of the Forestry industry. Minister Cele called for a radical transformation in the sector and urged big business to support the new entrants, in ensuring that they become economically active in forestry. The project is part of the build up to the World Forestry Congress that takes place in eThekweni during September this year.

For South Africa to achieve food security and for agriculture to become a catalyst for economic growth in the country, young people are critical agricultural players. In KwaZulu-Natal, they will certainly be given special attention and support as we endeavor to grow our future farmers.

To the future farmers present here this evening, I say well done and continue to do us proud by becoming role-models and catalysts for change in the agriculture sector. This is your gala dinner to celebrate your achievements, please enjoy the evening.

I thank you.