



agriculture
& rural development

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

KZN Department of Agriculture & Rural Development
Private Bag X9059, Pietermaritzburg, 3200

Enquiries: Nalini Dickson
Tel: 033-3438254 or 0832340475

Fax: 033-343 82551 not
Toll-Free: 0800 000 996
Email: Nalini.Dickson@kzndard.gov.za

**SPEECH BY MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT,
MR CYRIL XABA, AT THE MPOFANA AGRICULTURAL AGM
19 JUNE 2015**

Mayor of Mpfana Local Municipality

Councilors present

Inkosi Mchunu

Chairperson Mpfana Agricultural Association

Chairperson of the Upper Midlands Agricultural Transformation Initiative

Representatives of the Kamberg Valley, Nottingham and Mpfana
Agricultural Association

Thank you for inviting me to your AGM and giving me the opportunity to re-connect with farmers that I had met on my previous visit.

I am also pleased that the partnership agreement between the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and the Upper Midlands Agricultural Transformation Initiative (UMATI) is to be signed shortly. Representatives from both sides have been meeting to iron out terms of reference and other aspects of our working relationship.

While the formal processes of our working relationship were being sorted out, UMATI demonstrated the spirit of our collaborative partnership by coming to the fore and assisting a Land reform project in the area. Thank you for the feed you had provided for the Inkululekhu piggery project and for the support in helping this initiative sustain their project in the short term. I am also aware that UMATI is trying to coordinate support to

develop a sustainable plan for the future. Your actions are in keeping with the provinces new approach towards agriculture which calls for, "A united sustainable and vibrant agricultural sector with thriving rural communities in balance with nature."

It is a simple enough statement and may not even sound all that different to statements of the past. However, there is a key addition to this revised version and that is the word, "united."

South Africa is often described as a country with a dual economy – in agriculture we see this duality very clearly there is the commercial sector operating in the first economy and the small-holder farmers operating in the informal or second economy. A challenge we have aimed to address in putting forward a new strategy for agrarian transformation has been to bridge the gap between these dual economies

Sociologists tell us that this duality is unsustainable and has made South Africa one of the most unequal societies in the world. In our province there is the further divide between urban and rural with more than half of the provinces population – 54% - living in rural areas. This is another challenge we seek to address. To recognize the poverty that exists outside of the urban areas and what impact it will have on the country if we do not implement the National Development Plan of building an integrated and inclusive rural economy.

This is why I am excited by the developments here in Mpofana and the Upper Midlands Transformation Initiative. You have recognized what can be done through partnerships to change the face of rural poverty in the area. You are bridging the divide between the two economies and giving back in terms of your mentorship programs and initiatives to grow agriculture and tourism in the area. It is also gratifying to see the unity in purpose with commercial and small-scale farmers, the local council, civil society and government coming together with a common purpose. This is an initiative that can lead the way and show other districts how it can be done. As provincial government and in terms of our soon to be partnership, you have my full support. The last time I was here, I said that my dream was to promote an inclusive agricultural sector and ensure that all role-players are committed to this process. I said that if this fails, then we all fail.

Since that visit I have developed a more optimistic outlook. This is as a result of interacting with agricultural commodity associations, farmer organizations, the private sector and a host of other role-players. Our meetings have been about partnerships and collaboration in implementing

the province's new strategy for agrarian transformation. I have been overwhelmed by the levels of support and enthusiasm for the strategy and I believe that if we continue as a united front in the sector, we can unleash the economic potential of agriculture in the province. We will be able to ensure food security and the advancement of rural communities.

The strategy is about maximizing the utilization of agricultural land in the province and ensuring support for land reform agricultural projects so that valuable agricultural land does not lie fallow. It is about bringing in more farmers into the commercial sector by integrating small-holders into value chains with strong institutional support by way of access to finance, skills and technology. Most important, it is about support in terms of storage, transport and access to markets. All of this can be achieved at a district level by the partnerships that are formed.

I am well aware that this is easier said than done, the agricultural sector has occupied a difficult terrain and distrust still lurks. However, I am bolstered by the goodwill that is being demonstrated and by such initiatives as UMATI. Please be assured that my door is always open to you and when problems arise we can work together to find solutions.

It has been said that true transformation can only be achieved through goodwill, innovation and cooperation of all the players concerned. In the Mpfana district, the UMATI initiative has all of these ingredients, which is a definite recipe for success. Please stay the course and show other districts in the province what united action can achieve.

I thank you



MEC for KZN Agriculture and Rural Development Mr Cyril Xaba, together with Mooi Mpofana Local Municipality Mayor Ms Mauren Magubane and Inkosi Mchunu at the 122nd Annual General Meeting of the Mooi Mpofana Agricultural Association



MEC Cyril Xaba addressing members of Mooi Mpofana Agricultural Association



From top left: Dudley Anderson Chairman of Mooi Mpofana Agricultural Association, Angus Williamson Vice Chairman, James Kean Chairman of UMATI, Gram Armstrong Trustee of Mooi Mpofana Agricultural Association and Richard Adamson Outgoing Chairman