



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
& rural development

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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SPEECH BY KZN MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR CYRIL XABA DELIVERED AT THE FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IMBIZO IN EMANDLANGENI, 7 APRIL 2015

Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Mr Senzeni Zokwana
Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Mr Bheki Cele
The Mayor of Amajuba District Municipality, Cllr Jabu Khumalo
Mayor of Emadlangeni Local Municipality, Cllr Joe Zikhali
Councillors, Municipal Managers, Senior Government Officials
Distinguished Guests and the people of Amajuba

I want to thank both the Minister and Deputy Minister of agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for fulfilling the undertaking they made to the community of Amajuba in December last year that they would return to follow-up on the resolutions reached. This visit is part of the second National Food Security and Nutrition Imbizo Focus Week from 7-12 April 2015.

The focus on food security is to remind us that there are still too many of our people living in poverty. According to Statistics SA, the number of South Africans living in poverty has increased since 2010 as 20 percent of South Africa's population fell below the poverty line. This had increased to 21.5 percent last year. A large part of the problem is high food prices with families struggling to afford nutritious food to feed their families. Minister Zokwana as a champion for promoting food security has consistently spread the message that people must not rely on government grants alone and that all of us must use our land and gardens to grow food.

Minister, during your last visit you emphasized these messages:

- The importance of agriculture as a Food Security and future job driver;
- The importance of youth participation in agriculture and the importance of agriculture as a subject in schools.

The KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has taken up these challenges with determination. Minister, since your visit the path has not been easy. The drought has "crept" on the Province slowly. By January we were reporting that the districts of eThekweni, iLembe, Umgungundlovu, Umkhanyakude and Zululand were at Level 4, which is one level down from being a serious disaster. So we started detailed farm-by-farm assessments in these Districts.

We were warned by the Weather Service that the months of February and March would also be dry. At the time (January), Amajuba was on a Level 3 and so was not included in the detailed assessments. However 2 months later, Amajuba, Uthukela, and Umzinyathi have now gone into Level 4 and so detailed assessments of affected farms are currently being carried out. Once all the assessments are complete we will apply to DAFF for financial assistance.

This challenge is not stopping us and the partnership with the South African Breweries (SAB) to provide yellow maize continues. The Waaihoek farm you visited this morning was badly affected by the drought. This year we planted 1433 ha of yellow maize but our harvest will be down. We are planning to plant 3900 ha for the next season. KZN DARD is assisting farmers with mechanization services while SAB is providing soft loans to farmers to buy production inputs like seeds, fertilizers and chemicals for weeds and fertilizers.

In a similar arrangement with the private sector, there is the Dake Investors Project for the production of Black-Eyed Bean by the Waaihoek Community Trust. KZN DARD provides mechanization and Dakes provides production inputs and mentorship. Future plans include the development of another portion of 265 ha of arable land with a centre pivot irrigation system.

These partnerships with the commercial sector are examples of how we in KwaZulu-Natal, are going forward in changing the way we conduct the business of agriculture in the province. Our new strategy for agrarian transformation says that agriculture in the province must be a collaborative effort. We will be working in collaboration with other government departments, commercial farmers, the private sector and commodity organizations to help community farmers both big and small to grow their farming business and so that together, we can solve our farming problems.

When it comes to food security and nutrition, Government has to be forward thinking and plan for the future. Our population is growing but the numbers of our farmers are declining. South Africa has a population of 52 million people and this number is expected to grow by over 12 million in the next 15 years to 64,4 million people. We're going to need more farms and farmers to provide food for our growing population. In this regard Minister, we have taken your message of youth participation in agriculture very seriously.

A month ago we held a very successful agriculture careers exhibition day here in eMadlangeni. The event was well attended by learners young and old, in school and out of school who were looking for opportunities for jobs and owning their own agricultural businesses in the farming sector.

The youth were told of agricultural opportunities in eMadlangeni with its vast open spaces and good soils to grow crops. eMadlangeni is recognized as a most important wool-producing area in KwaZulu-Natal. It is also a major cattle and mixed farming region where a wide variety of crops can be grown.

One of our key aims, was to change the attitude of young people towards farming. For a long time, being sent off to do agriculture as a subject was viewed as punishment. It was seen as a subject for the weak and unambitious. Many learners may have taken the subject as an easy option. However all of this is to change as agriculture takes center-stage to grow our economy.

Going forward doing maths, science and agricultural science are going to be important subjects to be able to gain entry into institutions of higher learning to pursue diplomas and degrees in agriculture.

My vision has been to take agriculture to our schools. A strategy has been developed around the revitalization of Agricultural schools. An aspect of this strategy is being piloted in eMadlangeni and that is the introduction of Agricultural Science as a subject in schools.

In addition, we are looking at extending the concept of the one school one garden to one classroom one garden. I am happy to announce that the educators and school governing bodies in the area have been willing partners and already six schools have agreed to introduce Agricultural Science as a subject.

KZN DARD has ploughed 14 school gardens in the municipality. It was agreed that to ensure food security even if a school does not offer agricultural science as a subject, it must have a vegetable garden. The plan is to eventually have a one classroom, one garden project.

We are also going to implement a Junior Land Care Program in eMadlangeni. The Land Care program is aimed at halting the degradation

of agricultural natural resources through promoting community participation in sustainable use and management. Projects include community-based soil conservation projects.

For learners no longer at school, the department is going to offer skills development opportunities. We have developed an eMadlangeni Youth Profile and an analysis reflects that the level of education in the area is not good. About 40% of youth drop out of school below Grade 12. Adult Education and Training Centres (AET) are to be established in the area. Partnerships will be established with Further Education and Training Colleges to offer artisan programs, skills training and learnerships.

To ensure capacity building, the Department's Cedara Agricultural College and the Oscar Sitole College of Agriculture are to train 28 educators on agricultural short courses. This is due to start next month. Extension officers will provide support for school gardens and be mentors to young learners helping them to become the future farmers of our country.

At the Agricultural Careers Exhibition Day, four eMadlangeni students who are studying agriculture and related fields, were awarded bursaries amounting to R75 000 each.

In his State of the Province Address our honourable Premier, Mr E.S. Mchunu also stated a commitment that the province has made to assist the eMadlangeni community to bring together all local stakeholders in a local structure to facilitate peaceful solutions to issues giving rise to tensions in the area. The Premier has also initiated a process to establish an Agri-Village in this area. At the heart of the village, will be a Training Centre where agriculture and business skills can be learnt.

Minister Zokwana, I want to thank you and your department for your ongoing support in all areas but more particularly on the food security front. In October last year, we held a World Food Day Celebration. PANNAR seed and DAFF came on board and sponsored KZN DARD with maize seed and fruit trees respectively. This gave rise to four food security projects which included one ha of maize being planted, the establishment of a vegetable garden and an orchard consisting of 20 apricot trees and 20 peaches trees. Thirteen beneficiaries were allocated to these projects and were identified through profiling which was conducted by SASSA and the Department of Social Development under the co-ordination of Operation Sukuma Sakhe. These projects will not only be for household consumption but 20% will be for consumption and 80% for sale. Maize will be sold to Ingogo Mill at R1 500/ton and the expected yield is 5t/ha.

On the "one home, one garden" front, 144 farmers were trained but so far they have not been able to establish their home gardens because of the drought.

Farming is about perseverance and we are happy to report that the following amounts of seedlings were distributed to various community gardens and School Gardens in all Wards of eMadlangeni

- Cabbages 37 200
- Onions 12 400
- Beetroot 37 200
- Carrots 2 800

In the Newcastle Local Municipality, we have managed to establish 315 home gardens this financial year using seeds and seedlings procured through our Food Security Section as well as inputs and tools we received from your Department Minister, after the Food security Event you held at Osizweni in December. The yield from these home gardens is an estimated 35 tons.

Through our projects, we have identified the challenges that we face such as the need for more extension officers and insufficient tractors. These are being ironed out as we move forward growing agriculture in KwaZulu-Natal.

Minister Zokwana, we have taken your message seriously that together we can move South Africa forward through food security, jobs creation and economic growth. Thank you once more for visiting us and we look forward to your message and encouragement to the people of Amajuba District.

I thank you!