



**agriculture
& rural development**

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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**SPEECH BY MEC FOR KZN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT, MR THEMBA MTHEMBU AT THE
2016 FEMALE ENTREPRENEUR AWARDS**

DATE: 16 AUGUST 2016

VENUE: MSUNDUZI CITY HALL

Programme Director

Rural Development Champion and First Lady MaKhumalo Zuma

Members of the Agriculture and Rural Development Portfolio Committee

Outgoing Mayor of Umgungundlovu District Municipality, Mr Yusuf Bhamjee

Mayors and Councillors present

Chairperson of Women in Agriculture and Rural Development (WARD),
Ms Makhosazana Xakaza

Members of WARD

Representatives from the National Department of Agriculture, Forestry and
Fisheries

Head of KZN DARD, Dr Sipiwe Mkhize

All Officials Present

Our Special guests, the nominees for the Provincial Female Entrepreneur Awards

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me start by telling you a story which has valuable lessons for this competition, the Female Entrepreneur Awards and how we can change the face of farming in this province.

As you know this month we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the event when 20 000 South African women of all races marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest against African men and women having to carry Passes, which became known as the Dompas.

What is often left out of the story is how this march came about. It all started two years before in 1954 when a great trade unionist by the name of Ray Simons, began speaking to other women about forming a women's organization. They started organizing and by 17th April that year, one hundred and forty six delegates, representing 230 000 women from all over South Africa attended this conference and pledged their support for programmes of the ANC and the Congress Alliance. They formed the Federation of South African Women, known as Fedasaw. The organization agreed that their main task was to work towards the liberation of the country, but they said this would not be achieved without the full participation of women.

It was the hard work of these women who went out into the rural areas and all over South Africa educating other women on the struggle for freedom and how the Pass laws were restricting their lives. This resulted in 20 000 women arriving in Pretoria two years later to march to the Union Buildings. If you see photographs of that time you will see there were women who were both young and old, many arrived in buses, taxis and trains with their babies on their backs, because there was no one back home to look after their children.

The March was one of the biggest protests by women at the time. It showed what a powerful force women could be in society. As a result, today we have a public holiday to commemorate the event and August is known as Women's Month.

The march was an event, very much like the event we are holding today. It is clear that events don't just happen there is a lot of organization and hard work behind the scenes as well as months, even years of preparation.

I want to thank all the nominees who have worked hard on their plots of land, farms and small-holdings. A valuable lesson from FEDSAW is that if you want to make gains in life you have to get organized. You also cannot do it alone, we all need each other to succeed. I was impressed to read that some of the nominees have already started mentoring other young women. Going forward, it would be good to see women who are successful giving back by helping to empower other women.

The story is not finished. After the march the women did not go back home and just continue with their lives. They began organizing in their communities. In 1957 the women in Pietermaritzburg organised an anti-pass protest which was led by a nurse, Sister Ida Shange. The women were arrested by the police and because the women's prison was not big enough to keep all of them, they were held in a warehouse near this City Hall in Langalibalele Street.

With all this organization, women, many of whom did not have an education were becoming empowered. When the apartheid government tried to force women in the rural areas to fill and maintain the dipping tanks for cattle without payment. They reacted against this form of exploitation by burning and destroying the dipping tanks. The protests spread throughout Natal and three-quarters of the tanks were destroyed. In Ixopo, the police arrested the entire crowd of demonstrators, nearly 400 women, and they were given the option of a fine of 35 pounds or four months' imprisonment. They all chose prison, many taking their babies with them to the jails.

I have related these incidents to show you that organizing, educating and hard work continued long after the August 9th March. This is what we want to achieve with the Female Entrepreneur's Award. This must be the start of a journey where the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development can offer you after-care and help you to improve your farming skills so that you can move on to greater heights in your farming enterprises.

At the same time, we want to reach out to as many women as possible who are doing good work, but who are going unnoticed in the rural areas. They too must have the opportunity to improve their lives and that of the communities around them. By next year we must have many more entrants for this competition. We can do it if we follow the example of the women of FEDSAW and go back to our communities and help empower other women.

This is precisely what the Government wants to achieve. It has been stated very clearly in the Medium Term Strategic Framework, which says: and I quote: "In the second phase of our democratic transition (2104 to 2019) we take bold and decisive steps to place the economy on a path to eliminate poverty, create jobs as well as sustainable livelihoods, with special focus on women. The over-arching objective is radical economic transformation and improved service delivery."

We cannot do this alone, we need to work with you the female farmers and our communities. Together we can ensure that this Female Entrepreneur Awards is not a once-off event, but is part of a process that truly empowers women. In this regard I would gladly welcome suggestions, ideas and any opinions that you may have on how we can improve this process.

To all the nominees here today, I say well done and we hope to see you here next year telling us how you benefitted from after-care and how you have grown your farming enterprises. This will inspire other entrants to the competition.

To the officials in the department and partners from the agriculture sector who have been involved in the adjudication process and the organization of this event, I thank you for your hard work and for your dedication in ensuring that the process in choosing the winners was rigorous and fair. This is not the end, but must be the start of our own commitment as a Department to ensuring that women empowerment remains a key aspect of our service delivery agenda.

We have no choice as Siphso Moyo, the Africa Director of the Development organization known as One has said: and I quote: "We ignore the gender gap at our peril and ultimately at great social and economic cost. It is a real injustice to Africa's women farmers and their families that women make up nearly half of the labour force in agriculture but, on average, produce less per hectare than men. This absurd gender gap further undermines the sector's potential to drive inclusive economic growth, improve food security and create employment and business opportunities for millions of young Africans entering the job market every year."

If I had my way, everyone here would be a winner, but unfortunately, that is not how competitions work. Good luck to all of you, especially as you go on to compete at a national level.

Well done to all the nominees here today, if you do not walk away with a prize, this is your journey and you can always try again. Like the FEDSAW women, remain steadfast in achieving your goals. Remember this is not a once-off event, but a process to greater women empowerment.

I thank you.