



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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KZN MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR THEMBA MTHEMBU'S SPEAKING NOTES AT THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMME, ALFRED DUMA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

VENUE: KWAMTHANDI COMMUNITY HALL

DATE: FRIDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2016

Program Director

Amakhosi

The Mayor of uThukela District, Councillor A.S. Mazibuko

The Mayor of Alfred Duma Municipality, Councillor N.V. Madlala

All Councillors present

The Chairperson of the Agriculture and Rural Development Portfolio Committee,
Ms Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu

Members of the Portfolio Committee

The Head of Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr S.F. Mkhize

The District Manager, Ms T. Gayi

Community Leaders

Farmers

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good luck to all the matriculants and learners in the community as examinations get underway. I also bring you the well wishes of the Provincial Government.

As Government, we would like to remind our communities of one of the values embraced by our ancestors, which said that your child is my child and my child is your child. Let us all support our learners during this time of exams.

It has not been an easy year for the community because of the challenge of violence. As we move forward, let me remind you of another deep-seated African value that we seem to be forgetting and that is Ubuntu or respect for each other. Remember uMuntu uMuntu ngabantu.

Ladies and Gentlemen as MEC for KZN Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), I am painfully aware that you face yet another hardship and that is the daily struggle to put food on the table. Just yesterday, I was reading the newspapers and found out that potato prices are set to sky rocket, they will be going up in November and again in December. Already we are paying more than R15 a kilogram for tomatoes. The prices of other basic foods like maize meal, sugar and flour have also more than doubled. Most households spend 64 percent of their wages on food with very little money left for other expenses. Currently wages are not increasing, yet food prices are rising, how do families cope?

As a caring government, this is not a situation we can ignore, especially as we find that families are being forced to cut back on healthy nutritional food. The experts tell us that as a result of poor nutrition, one in five children suffers from malnutrition and learning problems. How can we expect our children to do well in their exams when they do not have access to nutritious food to feed their bodies and brains.

To build our province and make it stronger economically and socially, we need healthy citizens. As the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, we are also getting back to basics and to the wisdom of our elders to solve this problem of food insecurity.

The solution I am talking about is getting back in touch with the land and making agriculture our culture. The Department will be working alongside with you. We will be giving you the building blocks such as tractors, seeds fertilizers to get started and we will be walking alongside you as we work together to make agriculture our culture.

The drought has hit us hard we have watched our cattle die and food prices go up. However, let us be aware that it is not just the drought alone that has left us struggling with the ever-increasing cost of food. Ladies and Gentlemen, there are also large business interests that control food prices so that the capitalists can make profits at the expense of the poor. A few years back the South African Competitions Commission found that a few companies were controlling the price of bread. I call out to suppliers, retailers and businesses to be mindful of steep price increases as it hurts the poor most.

Ladies and Gentlemen we need to take back control of our food production and not continue to be victims of price increases dictated by the markets. We need to make agriculture our culture.

As our commitment to this drive, the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has started a process to look at how we can give poverty-stricken households access to nutritious, affordable food. We are working on finding ways to produce cheaper nutrient rich food as well as growing and raising drought-resistant crops and livestock. Our aim is to contribute a massive programme on food security to change the lives of the people of Alfred Duma Municipality as well the rest of the Province.

As a start here at Alfred Duma, I have visited local farms and projects. The Hlubi Land Reform Project has been assisted by the Department since 2012. In this climate of food insecurity we are going to step up our assistance by providing R1.2 million for a centre pivot for the farm's irrigation system. This will help the project increase its production of maize, soya beans and vegetables. I have been told that once the centre pivot is installed, the Hlubi project has the potential to employ more than 20 people.

The upliftment of livestock farming is a big part of our food security programme. In Alfred Duma municipality, the Department conducted three cattle auctions that generated over R2.5 million for local livestock farmers and ten job opportunities were created during these cattle sales. The drought had a serious impact on our livestock and to address the tragedy of seeing cattle perish, the Department made R2,5 million available to subsistence farmers for drought relief. Now that the rains are returning and with our programme to uplift livestock farming, I am certain that you will be able to hold many more cattle auctions here.

Ensuring that the province has healthy livestock is one of the key functions of the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. DARD has spent R10 million on livestock medication per month for five cattle farmers associations. In addition, R1.5 million will be spent this year on the Besters Project to construct two crush pens, rehabilitate two dip tanks and provide fencing. Already a borehole to the value of R150 000 has been drilled.

Ladies and Gentlemen you can see that we are serious about making agriculture our culture here in Alfred Duma Municipality. Let me tell you that the person who would be happiest about this is Alfred Duma himself. During the 1950's he was one of the activists who fought hard against the system of forced removals. This was when productive Black farmers at Besters were forced to abandon their farms by the apartheid government and to move to townships where the soil was poor and they had little to no land to grow food.

We must get back to basics and connect with the land. I have been inspired by my visit this morning to both the Mthandi Community Garden and the Mgwaqaza Community Garden. The members of these projects are leading the way and showing what can be done. The Department has provided both projects with pumps and fencing and over the years we have continued to supply them with seeds. I am amazed at the range of vegetables that are being grown. Both Mthandi and Mgwaqaza have grown spinach, cabbage, carrots, maize, beetroot and onions. Mthandi is also producing potatoes, tomatoes and sweet potatoes. While Mgwaqaza is producing peas, tomatoes, green beans, garlic and potatoes.

If these community gardens continue to grow potatoes, they may be able to help bring down the prices in this area.

Ladies and Gentlemen as our commitment to grow agriculture in Alfred Duma Municipality, I will now hand over seeds to the Mthandi and Mgwaqaza community gardens. This will be followed by a cheque handover amounting to R1,2 million to the Hlubi Project for a centre pivot for the irrigation system.

Together we can do more to make agriculture our culture.

I thank you.



KZN MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Mr Themba Mthembu together with Alfred Duma Local Municipality Mayor Clrr Vincent Madlala during their oversight visit to the Hlubi Project, Mr Hlubi is a farmer from the Mthandi Community



MEC Themba Mthembu visiting members of the Mthandi Co-Operative



MEC Themba Mthembu together with Alfred Duma Local Municipality Mayor Clrr Vincent Madlala visiting members of the Mthandi Co-Operative