



**agriculture
& rural development**

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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**SPEECH BY MEC AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT,
MR CYRIL XABA AT THE MSINGA GOAT EXPO
AND GOAT DISH COMPETITION**

VENUE: MPHELANKANI SPORTS GROUND, MSINGA

DATE: SATURDAY, 30TH JANUARY 2016

His Majesty the King

Premier of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, Mr Senzo Mchunu

Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders,

Inkosi PHD Chiliza

Chairperson, Mr RT Mthembu and members of the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Portfolio Committee

Members of the House of Traditional Leaders

The Speaker of the Umzinyathi District Municipality,

Councillor B. Chambule

The Mayor of Msinga, Councillor FJ Sikhakhane

Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Speakers and Councillors present

Mr N. Mndaweni of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform

The leadership of the Agriculture Development Agency

Our Partners for this event, Heifer International South Africa; Mdukatshani Rural Development Trust; AAM and Ms Bawelile Myeza-Mngoma of Welile Holdings

Restaurant owners, chefs and judges

Members of Livestock Associations

KZN DARD Exco and Officials

Goat Breeders & Cooperative members

The Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Experts tell us that South Africa is experiencing the worst drought in over a hundred years. They also tell us that with climate change the situation is not going to get any better. We will have to get used to living with unpredictable weather patterns.

We are already experiencing the devastating effects of the current drought – water is scarce, cattle are dying and food prices are soaring. The Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy says that a basket of basic foodstuff now costs a family 35% more than it did a year ago. A cabbage that cost R4 a couple of months ago has increased to R15. The country faces importing five to six tons of maize at a cost of over R20 billion and all of this is pushing up the price of red meat. With cattle dying and farmers cutting down on their herds, the price of red meat is going to become extremely expensive and unaffordable to the majority of our households.

In short – our food security is under serious threat.

The message from this bleak picture is that we can no longer farm as we have been doing, nor can we continue with concentrating all our farming efforts on the usual livestock and crops such as maize and beans. We have to adapt and change to avoid food shortages in the future.

The experts tell us that we have to practise climate smart agriculture. This is why we are here today, we are getting smart with goats and we have a five-year master plan to put goat farming on the map. Goats do better in drought conditions and they need much less feed than cattle. They can browse on trees if grass is not available. Goat farming is one way of practising climate smart agriculture.

The plan starts here in Msinga. There will be pilot projects, as well, in Nkandla, Nongoma, Jozini, Umhlabuyalingana and Hlabisa. These are areas that have suffered the worst effects of the drought. Many subsistence goat farmers who are mainly women, reside in these municipalities. The Master Plan is about creating wealth by commercialising goat farming. It is about promoting the eating of goat meat and bringing goats into the mainstream of the livestock industry.

Goat meat, known as chevon, is popular the world over, especially in the Middle East, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and the Caribbean. Saudi Arabia where goat meat is a delicacy has already approached the KwaZulu-Natal government requesting a supply of one million goats per year. The export value to this country alone could be more than two billion rand.

The consumption of Goat meat is also growing among the health-conscious populations in Western Countries. The meat is low in kilojoules and high in protein and iron and is seen as a healthier alternative to beef and pork.

In South Africa goat meat is commonly used for traditional functions, but with our cooking competition here today, we hope to show you that many tasty dishes can be made from the meat and that it can become part of our regular diets. In this time of climate change as we find new ways of farming, we must also discover new ways of eating.

You will find on display in the Expo several other products such as goat's milk and cheese, goat sausages, Russians and patties as well as goat leather products.

The Master Plan recognises that for a long time, goats have been the stepchild of our livestock industry and not enough attention has been paid to their breeding, health and management. Funds have been set aside for research into indigenous goats; into cross breeding, improving nutrition and the health of our goat stock. What is exciting about this initiative is that there are farmers who hold a lot of traditional knowledge. This is a field of research where scientific and indigenous knowledge can be combined to improve agriculture in our province.

You will hear from the other speakers today how goat farmers will get support towards improving the productivity of their stock through training and extension support. Ms Nomfuzo Mkhize from the Livestock and Research Unit at the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development will talk about goat reproduction and Ram management. She will touch on nutrition as well as disease management.

Mr Rolf Aadnesgaard of AAM is going to educate us on the different breeds of goats, their characteristics and the uses of each breed. We are going to find out more about Indigenous Zulu goats, the Boer goats and Kalahari Reds which are the meat breeds. Then there are the milch goats which are the milk producers and made up of the Toggenburg and Saanen breeds.

For me, the strength of this goat master plan is that it addresses issues of youth unemployment and poverty eradication. Msinga is described as the poorest municipality in South Africa and a 2014 government study described the area as the worst place in the country for a young person to grow up. The five-year vision of the plan aims to improve lives in Msinga as well as at the other municipalities where the pilot projects are being launched. This will be done by:

- Creating 620 jobs for youth. 350 of these will be for community animal health workers who will be trained and provided with vet kits. The aim is for them to work towards starting their own businesses in this field. 270 youth will be trained to operate their own goat support microbusinesses in such ventures as block-making, skins and hay processing.

- 7000 goat farmers will be offered the opportunity to commercialise their herds. This will be a major boost for women as I said earlier, the majority of subsistence goat owners are women.
- There are long term plans to build a goat abattoir to serve the area and there will be continued support in the marketing and promotion of goat meat as a product.

Other key objectives are to double goat productivity in the next five years, reduce the imports of goats from other African countries and start fulfilling export demands for goat meat and skins.

Please enjoy the event. There is a lot to see and learn and I urge you to visit the various stalls. Go to the pens where the different breeds are on display. There will be experts available at the pens to answer questions about the breeds, their availability, adaptability and resistance to disease.

Stop at the different stalls to find out about

*fodder, feeding and food supplements;

*mineral lick block and lick block making;

*the box baler;

*water requirements and water disease;

* as well as vet services and goat handling

Help yourselves to the training and information material available.

Good luck to the contestants in the cooking competition. The judges will need more luck because standards are high and they are going to have a difficult time choosing the best goat dishes.

Today is a historic day for agriculture in the province. We are adopting smart tactics in farming and dealing with food security. We are also working smart as the goat master plan is not just an initiative of government, it has come about because of a partnership involving government, the private sector, NGOs, Livestock Associations and local communities. I want to take this opportunity to thank all my partners for their hard work and enthusiasm in getting this project off the ground.

This event is about new beginnings, innovations and transformation. Embrace the change as we take KwaZulu-Natal forward.

I Thank You!