



## 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: 033-3559300 or 0832340475

Fax: 033-343 8255  
Toll-Free: 0800 000 996  
Email: [Nalini.Dickson@kzndard.gov.za](mailto:Nalini.Dickson@kzndard.gov.za)

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### **SPEAKING NOTES FOR KZN MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR THEMBA MTHEMBU AT THE GALA DINNER AND GRADUATION CEREMONY FOR STUDENTS OF THE KWAZULU- NATAL/DENMARK YOUNG FARMERS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

**PROTEA HOTEL, HILTON**

**TUESDAY, 29 JUNE 2016**

Programme Director

Representative from Dalum Academy in Denmark, Mr Niels Jespersen

Chairperson of the Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA), Dr Tsitshi Mbatha

Deputy Chairperson, Dr Edwin Ngidi

ADA Board Members

ADA Acting CEO, Ms Phumla Vilakazi

Chief Operations Officer, Dr Thulasizwe Mkhabela

Head of Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr SF Mkhize

Our Special Guests, the Graduates of the Dalum Academy of Agricultural  
Business

Ladies and Gentlemen

I stand here with a sense of pride as I look at the graduates who have returned from Denmark having trained as young farmers.

This pride stems from a feeling that history has come full circle. Forty years ago in June 1976, young students in Soweto rose up to fight for a better education system and for a better chance in life. They never had opportunities to explore their full potential as the apartheid government at the time restricted the type of education that black students received and the careers they could pursue. When it came to agriculture, the role for blacks was mainly restricted to that of being farm labourers.

Today, you as graduates are the beneficiaries of the sacrifices made by those young students of 1976. Congratulations and well done for your hard work and making the best of the opportunity offered to you. From the report of

Mr Jespersen and Dr Mkhabela, it is clear that you were ambassadors for South Africa. You left a good impression on your host country, Denmark and showed them that this partnership to train young farmers has been a worthy project.

However, the graduation ceremony today and the certificates that will be presented to you is not the end of your journey, but just the beginning. You are now faced with the task of using all that you learnt to help grow agriculture, particularly the livestock sector in our province.

Part of the reason why this project to train farmers in Denmark was started, was because of the challenges faced by emerging Black farmer in the livestock industry.

For example, between 43 to 47 percent of all cattle in South Africa are owned mainly by African farmers, yet this section of our people only produce five percent of the red meat in the country.

The partnership forged between ADA and Dalum Academy was specifically aimed to help you enhance your skills and knowledge in the management of livestock, with emphasis on enhancing the piggery sector and the agribusiness side of farming. All of this will help improve the understanding of animal welfare, environmental protection and sustainability. This has been lacking among small sector black farmers that has led to the failure of many land reform projects.

For me, your journey from here onwards is not only about putting your skills into practise but sharing those skills with others who were not as fortunate to travel overseas and receive training. Earlier this month, I addressed the staff of KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and I called upon them to become agricultural activists or forces for social change within the sector.

You will be going to farms in the rural areas, where poverty still remains as a sad reminder that we may have won our political freedom, but have not yet attained economic freedom. The people most deeply affected are the farm workers who remain largely unskilled and continue to receive starvation wages and suffer abuse. My plea to you is that you become agricultural activists where you go and work and share your skills with the farm workers. As you were empowered, help them to become empowered as well.

This morning I addressed a Youth Farm Workers Summit in uMsinga and I told them that in the days of the struggle for freedom in this country, among the activists we had a saying, that each one teach one. I call upon you to continue the generosity of spirit of the 1976 generation and practise each one teach one. Play your part in uplifting the lives of the farm workers, the poor and the voiceless in our rural communities.

Good luck and best wishes in all your endeavours as you venture forward as young farmers. You must now become worthy ambassadors of Dalum Academy of Agricultural Business. Continue to show your hosts that you learnt your lessons well and you will go on to become enterprising young farmers.

In conclusion, I would like to thank ADA for the excellent work it has done in running this young farmers training Programme.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to Denmark, Mr Jespersen and Dalum Academy for showing your own generosity of spirit and becoming our partners in this project. I understand that this programme was set to run for three years and the last group of 16 students have already been selected and will be leaving to commence their training in September this year. My message to the new students is that you keep up the tradition of the graduates here today. Work hard and leave a good impression on your host country.

I am extremely happy that this will not be the end of our partnership. A spin-off of this programme is that a state-of-the-art pig production unit to be set up in KwaZulu-Natal to demonstrate the highest standard of pig production and to absorb the returning young farmers trained in Denmark.

We have much to celebrate so please enjoy the rest of this evening.

I Thank You!