



## 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 LAUNCH OF THE KZN PLANTING SEASON**

**VENUE: OPHUZANE STADIUM, EDUMBE MUNICIPALITY**

**DATE: TUESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2016**

Program Director & Head of the KZN Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (DARD) Dr S.F. Mkhize

Inkosi S. Mthethwa of the Egodini Traditional Council

Amakhosi present

The Mayor of Edumbe Municipality, Councillor M. Mavuso

Ward Councillor, Mr H.H. Vilakazi

All Councillors present

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

Members of the Portfolio Committee

Chairperson of Women in Agriculture & Rural Development (WARD), Ms Makhosi  
Xhakaza

The Chairperson of Youth in Agriculture & Rural Development (YARD), Mr Noah  
Nyawo

The District Manager, Mr Mzi Dlamini

Community Leaders

Farmers

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today we are celebrating more than the launch of the KwaZulu-Natal planting season. Agriculture in the Province is moving in a new direction.

Before going into detail, let me assure you that we are not abandoning the road we are travelling in terms of agrarian transformation in the province. We remain fixed on the goals of the National Development Plan and the Provincial Growth Plan to grow agriculture and an inclusive rural economy.

However, the drought has shown us that it cannot be business as usual. We have to shift our focus and change the way we do agriculture in order to make fundamental changes to the lives of our people. The launch of this ploughing season will be the last in this form. There are going to be many changes in agriculture, with still many more to come as consultations with various sectors continue.

At the heart of these changes is placing food security at the top of our agricultural agenda.

We are also going to spread our reach and work with a whole range of farmers. From the Gogo who tends her backyard garden to growing the numbers of our household, urban and community gardens. Most importantly, our focus is going to be on a diversity of crops. Up until recently, the main crops grown in our communal estates has been maize and beans. There is going to be renewed focus on traditional and subsistence farming.

In fact, all of this is summed up in the Department's new slogan, "Let's Make Agriculture our Culture,"

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me provide the context for this change in direction before talking about today's launch of the planting season. Finally, I will conclude by giving you some details as to where we are heading as we go about making agriculture our culture.

The people of eDumbe and the Zululand District have suffered the worst effects of the drought, to the point where you had water restrictions and it was almost impossible to grow anything in the dry, baked earth. So you are well aware that as a result of the drought we face a looming food crisis. Basic foods like maize has had to be imported and the cost of fruit and vegetables are so steep that it is becoming steadily unaffordable.

The Sunday Tribune over the weekend had an article on rising food prices eating up salaries. Pensioner Thandi Mkhize and others interviewed said they were forced to compromise on their diet. They spoke about having to give up on quality nutrition because they could not afford it. Meat, chicken and fruit were unaffordable and considered luxury items.

These foods that provide proteins and vitamins are essential for the health of our citizens, especially our children. According to Health Experts a result of not getting adequate proteins and vitamins one in five children suffers from malnutrition and learning disabilities. The well-being of future generations of our

children will be compromised if we do not find a way to provide nutritious food for the poor. We must look at nutrients and see how this determines the type of food we produce. For example the orange-fleshed sweet potatoes are a vital source of vitamin A.

So it is imperative that we change the way we do farming and that we see food as a health and a social justice issue before it is a business.

The other reason for changing direction is that a careful scrutiny of the agricultural sector will show that nothing much has changed. Farm workers still remain among the lowest paid workers and among the poorest of the poor. We have not succeeded in eradicating the legacies of colonialism, apartheid and land dispossession. As a result of forced removals, black youth have lost their connection to the land. The entire agro-processing value chain is dominated by a few large entities. Markets are controlled and new entrant Black farmers struggle to break into an environment marked by the dominance of a few large corporations.

Today's launch of the KZN Planting season here in eDumbe is being held against the backdrop of the changes that we want to see happen. As I said at the outset of my address this launch will be the last in this form.

The launch of this planting season coincides with the planting season for maize which generally runs from October to November. This is followed by the planting season for dry beans which runs from December to the end of February. In this planting season, the Department will be planting maize and beans on over twenty four thousand hectares of communal land throughout the province.

In the Zululand District, plans for the forthcoming planting season include the cultivation of 5000 hectares of maize and 2300 hectares of dry beans. In eDumbe seven million seven hundred and seventy thousand rand will be spent on eight communal estates, where the maize planted will be harvested and sold to the Dumbe Grain Exchange.

Farmers on the communal estates are wished every success as they go into the maize and bean planting season. Please ensure that you do your very best so that your efforts contribute to food security, job creation and poverty eradication in your areas.

This brings me to my conclusion and where we are heading as we steer a new course to increase agricultural activity in the province. The aim as always is to end hunger, eradicate poverty and improve nutrition.

The changed focus will include:

- Having different ploughing and planting programmes determined by the crop season as well as the material conditions of a particular area. It will be driven through facilitated initiatives and interaction among the municipalities, traditional structures and the local office of the Department.
- Besides vegetables, we plan to promote an extensive program of fruit cropping. It is unacceptable that poor children are deprived of the nourishment and enjoyment of eating fruit.
- Similarly, the livestock industry will also be part of this review to make meat and poultry more affordable.
- To enhance food security we are well aware that part of our intervention will have to include making available seeds, tractors, fertilizer and other inputs to communities. This is all part of promoting the culture of agriculture. The aim is for household and community gardens to flourish. It is to inspire and build a culture of agriculture.
- Mechanization programmes may be a challenge in this regard and what will be provided in this planting season may not be adequate. As DARD, we are aware that we must come up with a workable people centred solution. This may not be achieved this year, but will be accomplished in the following year.
- Steering this new path will mean that some policies will require a complete overhaul. In this regard, a string of consultative summits are in the offing. These consultations will be categorised according to farmers, farm workers, youth and women. A strategic programme in this regard is to build new generation of black farmers.
- An area that has to be explored is both the racial glass ceiling as well as monopolies in the agro-processing value chain. Overhauling the farming and food systems will be a complex process but we have to begin talking about these issues and how they can be changed. Ultimately, our policy interventions must aim to serve the public good as opposed to individual vested interests. Food and hunger is a humanitarian issue, it is about justice and human rights and we can make a difference if we make agriculture our culture.

I thank you



KZN MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Mr Themba Mthembu together with eDumbe Local Municipality Mayor Clrr Majuba Mavuso during the launch of the KZN Planting Season



MEC Themba Mthembu test driving one of the Departments new tractors during the launch of the KZN Planting Season



MEC Themba Mthembu together with eDumbe Local Municipality Mayor Clrr Majuba Mavuso visiting a Co-Operative at Mphuzane



MEC Themba Mthembu together with eDumbe Local Municipality Mayor Clrr Majuba Mavuso and KZN DARD Portfolio Chairperson Ms Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu advising members of the community during the launch of the KZN Planting Season