



## agriculture & rural development

Department:  
agriculture  
& rural development  
**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

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### **SPEAKING NOTES FOR KZN MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR THEMBA MTHEMBU FOR THE YOUTH FARM WORKER'S SUMMIT IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOWETO STUDENT UPRISING**

**NYONYANA SPORTS GROUND - MSINGA**

**DATE: TUESDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2016**

The Mayor of uMzinyathi District Municipality, Councillor L. Ngubane

The Mayor of uMsinga, Councillor F. Sikhakhane

Inkosi ZD Majozi of the Majozi Traditional Council

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

Representatives of Youth Structures under uMzinyathi District

Community Leaders

Farm Workers

And all young people present

We are reaching the end of our commemoration of Youth Month. Many of you present here today were not yet born when the tragic events of June 16<sup>th</sup> 1976 took place 40 years ago.

But it is a day and a month that we must never forget because 40 years ago young people planted the seeds of our freedom. Thousands of school children marched the streets of Soweto in Johannesburg to protest against an inferior education system.

The Apartheid government did not want Black people to get educated because they wanted us to remain as labourers. To go deep underground in the mines and dig for gold, diamonds and coal. They did not want us to own land but to work on the land. To put it plainly, they wanted Black people to be uneducated so that they could serve as cheap labour for their farms and mines.

So they made it harder and harder for us to get a decent education. By 1976 the latest hardship introduced by the Nationalist Government was that all subjects in schools to be taught in Afrikaans instead of **in the learner's mother tongue**. Afrikaans was a language that few children understood, so they decided to hold a peaceful protest. By the end of June 16<sup>th</sup> more than 176 children were killed and thousands were seriously injured as the police opened fire and attacked them.

This is why we celebrate June as Youth Month in South Africa. The ANC-led government recognises the power and the ability of young people to be a force for change.

Young people stood up against oppression, they organized themselves and found their voices. They said this is enough to the apartheid government, you cannot continue ill-treating us.

You the young people of uMsinga – the farm workers, the children who had to drop out of school and those of you who see no future before your eyes, I am here to tell you that you can be a force for change in uMsinga and Government is here to support you.

We know that the struggle for economic liberation, for decent work and the fight against poverty is not easy. The current government and the local municipality in uMsinga is very aware that while we may have achieved political freedom our economic freedom is still to be attained.

Farm workers are among the poorest and the most oppressed workers in the country. The history of farm workers is that of not having opportunities to get formal education and training. Combined with poor and exploitative wages the vicious cycle of poverty continues because they then cannot afford to send their children to school. This has meant that children are often forced to work on the same farm to prevent the family from being evicted from their homes and the land where their ancestors are buried. The cycle of poverty continues from one generation to the next.

As I said, the struggle continues even in a free South Africa. Take the example of when our current democratic Government introduced the rule that farmers must pay a minimum decent living wage for farm workers and prescribed minimum working conditions for labourers. What happened was that farmers went on to casualize their work force. This means that instead of employing permanent workers, they started employing seasonal and contract workers, which left the workers out of work and with no money when the planting or ploughing season was over.

So you see today young people face different struggles and the fight for freedom started by the students of 1976 is not yet over. You have to take up that battle and continue to work for a brighter future for yourselves. You can become active agents of change and the good news is that you are not alone, you have a supportive government which has policies, programs and projects to help you. That chain can be broken and we want to break that chain here in uMsinga.

Many young people believe that there are opportunities in the big cities. Let me warn you that the grass is not always greener on the other side. Youth

unemployment is a problem in the big cities as well, young people end up struggling to live in Informal settlements in cities like Msunduzi, eThekweni and uMhlabathazi where they become targets for criminals and drug dealers. In fact in the cities a growing number of young people, are keeping up the tradition of 1976 and are getting involved in campaigns to reclaim their streets and their neighbourhoods from drug dealers.

**Government's National Development Plan shows that rural areas** can also become economic hubs and that people living in uMzinga can also enjoy economic freedom. For me, a key ingredient to attaining this transformation is for farm workers and youth structures to get organised, so that you can become empowered and like the generation of 1976, begin to take control of your own lives and begin to break the chains of poverty.

Let us begin this conversation here in uMzinga. I am inviting you to form structures on your farms in your workplaces, among the unemployed youth in this municipality, so that we can begin to pilot programmes to bring about change. I believe that the very transformation of the rural landscape in South Africa requires the organisation of farm workers and young people.

There is evidence right here in uMzinga of the benefits of getting organised. This morning I was told of a project by three young men from Nquthu who were unemployed. They organised themselves, approached the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for help and today they are growing beetroot spinach, onions and cabbages. The Department has supported them with extension services and fertiliser for the produce. They were also assisted with links to markets to sell their vegetables. These enterprising youngsters are getting into poultry farming and they are doing tombstones on site to generate extra income for their farming business.

In nearby Umvoti young people organised themselves and set up the Gayede Youth Project a goat farming enterprise. They approached the KZN DARD for help and were given 200 goats to start the project. They were also assisted with more than 2 hectares of fencing.

Here in uMzinga the Department has formed partnerships with HEIFER SA, Mdukatshani Rural Development Project and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform to commercialize the untapped potential of goats. A Goat Master Plan for KZN has been drawn up. The master plan envisages that within the next 5 years, 7000 farmers will be commercialized and goat productivity will have doubled. This initiative includes research, extension, training, value-adding and marketing. This is an area that many of you may want to get involved in.

The Department has programmes to help young people acquire skills. You can visit our website or visit our offices here in uMzinga to find out what is on offer. We also have a programme to bring agricultural graduates to work on farms. We want these graduates to display the generosity of spirit of the 1976 generation and help develop unskilled farm workers. In the days of the struggle for Freedom, we had a saying, each one teach one. Those who were fortunate to acquire skills can help develop those who do not have the skills.

However, the most important reason for our meeting here today, is to find out from you whether we as a Department are doing enough for the youth and the farm workers. As government it is important for us to review our work from time to time to see what we are doing right, where we can do more and which areas are being neglected.

I am concerned that farmer workers are not getting enough recognition and that many are still struggling and working under slave like conditions. I would like to hear from you about this and so that we can get organized and address these issues.

Similarly, there is the area of land restitution involving farm workers. Do farm workers have security in their homes and do they have decent homes. Government is well aware of the problems in this area. Farm workers facing illegal eviction can contact the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform for assistance. They will be assisted by a team of legal and mediation personnel appointed by the Department. Strengthening the relative rights of people working on farms.

Government also has the 50/50 Policy Framework which was announced by the President in the State of the Nation Address last year. The policy framework seeks direct redress for farm workers whose sweat and toil built up the powerful agricultural sector in our country. Yet they have never profited from their labour, and whose welfare has never been considered. Government is buying them a share as co-owners and managers in the farms they have helped to build, through an equity injection into these enterprises. This is considered one the most lasting solution to farm evictions.

We are also piloting the one hectare, one household policy, where farm dwellers have land to grow their own food for household consumption and for sale.

We have made great strides in helping our people. But being a caring government we know that we must stop from time to time and ask the question, are we doing enough. We must also listen to our communities, particularly the youth who represent our future and groupings like farm workers who are most marginalised and exploited. I want to know your challenges and whether you are able to access government services and what we can do to make our services more accessible to you.

Let us begin talking to each other and as I said the best way for you to get your voices heard is by getting organised in the spirit of the revolutionary fighters of 1976. The baton is now passed on to you and together with government we can create a better more caring uMsinga, KZN and South Africa.

I Thank You