



agriculture
& rural development

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

“Asiguqule ezoLimo zibe isikompilo lethu”

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE MEC OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT IN KWAZULU NATAL,
THE HONOURABLE THEMBA MTHEMBU**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE KZN FEMALE FARMER OF THE YEAR AWARDS
CEREMONY – UKZN, EDGEWOOD CAMPUS**

15 AUGUST 2017

Programme Director,

The First Lady of our country, Mama MaKhumalo-Zuma

Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders Inkosi PHD Chiliza

The representative of the Ethekwini Mayor, Cllr Nkosenhle Madlala

All mayors present

Chairperson of the DARD Portfolio Committee Mrs Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu

All members of the Portfolio Committee

ANCWL KZN Provincial Chairperson Mrs Celiwe Madlopho

ANCWL Provincial Secretary Ms Nonhlanhla Gabela

Provincial Chairperson of the IFP Women’s Brigade, Ms Sthe Majola

The Acting HOD, Mr Jerry Mfusi

Our sponsors, Old Mutual, Total, ABSA, iThala bank and UKZN

All stakeholders

Farmers

Departmental Officials

Distinguished guests

Our guests of honour, the nominees of the provincial Female Entrepreneur Awards

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered here today to celebrate and appreciate the phenomenal work that women are doing in the agricultural sector in our Province. We are here to show gratitude and appreciation to the women who have broken the glass ceiling and created a space for themselves to prosper in this sector.

Women are the backbone of agriculture not only in this province and the country, but throughout developing countries. It is the product of human design and gendered power relations that those who are the major players in the sector and its value chains are male and predominantly white. Ordinarily, women should be dominating the agricultural sector from leadership, management and control by virtue of their majoritarian presence in the sector. However as comparable to most industries across the world, agriculture has remained a male dominated industry. Apart from subsistence farming, the sector has its two categories of commercial farming (small-scale farmers and the large-scale commercial farming) controlled and dominated by men. Furthermore, women receive little to no assistance regarding land, inputs, agricultural training, technologies, services and markets as compared to their male counterparts.

This state of affairs flies in the face of the knowledge (including indigenous knowledge) that women have in rural farming. Empowering and investing in rural women meaningfully increases productivity, reduces hunger and malnutrition and improves rural livelihoods.

According to Saquina Mucavele Mugede of the World Food Organization (WFO), in his article published by World Farmers Organisation publication on "The role of Rural Women in Agriculture" she made these interesting observations:

“In Africa, 80% of the agricultural production comes from small farmers, who are mostly rural women. Women comprise the largest percentage of the workforce in the agricultural sector, but do not have access and control over all land and productive resources. Agriculture is the main alternative for Rural Women, and it should come with better access to land and resources for the prevention, adaptation and mitigation of climate change, combined with rural women learning how to deal with cultural resistance and adapting to various manifestations of this phenomenon.

Realizing the importance of rural women in agriculture is an important aspect of gender relations. In many countries, the role of women in agriculture is considered just to be a "*help*" and not an important economic contribution to agricultural production. It is a fact that rural women guarantee increases in food production.

This is not, however, sufficient to meet future needs. Fighting hunger and malnutrition are some of the measures which should be taken to guarantee higher income and better living conditions for the most vulnerable communities, which are mostly formed by rural women who practice small-scale agriculture, especially in developing countries.....

It is true that agricultural activities should lead to rural women increasing their income. Mere financial support is, however, not sufficient. There is a need to drop policies which are less favorable to rural women, focusing on the appreciation of their role as producers of wealth and strengthening the network of public services in rural areas, including health, education, and welfare services, as well as establishing policies that combat the asymmetries that prevent rural women from being protected against the effects of climate change. The training of rural women is very important, especially with the adoption of modern agricultural techniques that are tailored to local conditions and that use natural resources in a sustainable manner, with a view to achieving economic development without degrading the environment”

The month of August represents an important period in our country, one where we give specific focus to the role that women play in their many fields of endeavour. It is also a month in which we remember the significant contribution made by women to the liberation struggle of our country. Women such as Lilian Ngoyi, Sophia Williams, Bertha Mashaba, Helen Joseph and many others who took the bull by the horns and marched to the union buildings to show their discontentment with the apartheid government and the proposed amendments to

the Urban Areas Act of 1950. Women then were able to organise and speak in one voice so they could achieve their end goal, democracy and equality for all.

In a speech made by our first democratic president, international icon and struggle hero, Tatu Nelson Mandela during the celebration of women's day in 1996, he said the following:

"The legacy of oppression weighs heavily on women. As long as women are bound by poverty and as long as they are looked down upon, human rights will lack substance. As long as outmoded ways of thinking prevent women from making a meaningful contribution to society, progress will be slow. As long as the nation refuses to acknowledge the equal role of more than half of itself. It is doomed to failure."

Violence against women

As government, we cannot speak about economic equality and ignore that our country faces a scourge against women. Every eight hours a woman is killed by her intimate partner while another one in four woman is physically abused.

Statistics in the 2016 South African Demographics and Health Survey reveal that 21% of women over the age of 18 reported that they had experienced violence at the hands of a partner, a further 6% of women in the same age bracket reported that they experienced sexual violence, while 16% of divorced or separated women and 10% of those cohabiting reported the same.

A common thread found amongst some of these women was that most of them are in the lowest wealth quintile. Their economic dependence on spouses/partners means they are often unable to stand up for themselves, they remain in abusive relationships.

I would like to call on all of us here today especially the women who are being recognised during this ceremony, to pass the baton forward by utilizing the skills, education, experience, technological know-how to assist other women particularly those who have become invisible and powerless to develop and uplift themselves from the grips of poverty, abuse and inequality through agriculture.

I find the theme for this year's celebrations telling, as indeed this is the time to proclaim progress towards women empowerment.

The above resonates with the Department's principal focus, Food and Nutrition Security. Under this strategic trajectory we have made a commitment to supply people with seedlings, mechanisation, indigenous goats and chickens, education & support and various other implements so they can start the journey towards owning agricultural enterprises.

Women, youth and people with disabilities are the core beneficiaries of all these Departmental programmes and to reinforce this mandate I announced the reintroduction of the directorate women, youth and persons with disabilities.

As we commemorate this women's month under the theme, "*The year of OR Tambo: Women United in Moving South Africa Forward*" I urge you all to unite in the transformation of the agricultural sector so we can have prosperous families, alleviate poverty, create employment and attain food and nutrition security for our province.

Congratulations to all the winners today and all those that were nominated, the role you play in this sector is immeasurably significant.

Wathinta abafazi, wathinta imbokodo.

Malibongwe igama lamakhosikazi

Thank you