



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

KZN Department of Agriculture & Rural Development
Private Bag X9059, Pietermaritzburg, 3200

Enquiries: Nonkumbulo Sithole
Tel: 033 343 9300/ 082 304 1007
Toll-Free: 0800 000 996
Email: Nonkumbulo.sithole@kzndard.gov.za
Website: www.kzndard.gov.za

"Asiguqule ezoLimo zibe isikompilo lethu"

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS FOR THE KZN MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

THE HONOURABLE THEMBA MTHEMBU

**AT THE 2017 JOINT CONFERENCE: 3rd AFAAS AFRICA-WIDE
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION WEEK AND 51st ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF
THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY FOR AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION**

30 October to 3 November 2017

Theme: Scaling up Climate Smart Agriculture; Integrating Youth, Women
and the Digital Revolution"

Programme Director

The Honourable Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Willies Mchunu

Amakhosi Asendlunkulu

Minister of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries Senzeni Zokwana

The Deputy Minister of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries Bheki
Cele

The Mayor of eThekweni Cllr. Zandile Gumede

All councilors present

Chairperson of AFAAS

President of SASAE

All officials present

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

And a special welcome to all the Extension officers present.

Extension support is at the coalface of service delivery. This service is the lifeblood of agriculture, it is in the core of our day-to-day functioning of the Department. Extension Officers have direct excess and interface with farmers on a regular and intimate level.

Making them a crucial aspect in promoting agricultural productivity, increasing food and nutrition security, improving rural livelihoods and promoting agriculture as an engine for pro-poor economic growth.

Therefore, I cannot begin to stress the importance of ensuring that the extension programme is built on sound principles and good practice.

I am proud that as a Province we have been granted the privilege of hosting such a crucial session of dialogue, interaction and engagement which I trust will culminate in the strengthening of the skills and knowledge base of our extension officers ensuring improved and better service delivery to farmers across the country and the Province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Last year as a Department tasked with Agriculture and Rural Development in the Province, we embarked on an extensive strategy review process to ensure we are able to focus and respond to the shifting political, environmental, technological and socio-economic terrain in which we operate. Even more pressing, was ensuring that we are able to respond to the crisis levels of unemployment poverty and inequality which persist 23 years after the dawn of democracy.

To ensure agriculture is strategically positioned to play a meaningful and leadership role in changing this reality for the millions of poor people in the Province, we located Food and Nutrition Security at the core of our agricultural agenda. This would be buttressed by the promotion of small-holder farming and massive developmental programmes targeted at the youth, women and people with disabilities as these groups remain the face of poverty, particularly in rural areas.

I am therefore, pleased that this year's conference is themed: **Scaling up Climate Smart Agriculture; Integrating Youth, Women, and the Digital Revolution."** As it speaks to the agenda of ensuring that as a Department we are better placed to make fundamental changes to the lives of our people.

I am even more impressed that climate smart agriculture has become a critical aspect of our agricultural and rural development mandate. As seen over the past two years, natural disasters such as droughts and floods have become a reality that requires us to adjust and adapt our methods of farming to ensure we remain food secure with the focus of changing the lives of the farmers at grassroots level.

Distinguished guests I look forward to the outcomes and recommendations of this week-long engagement that I trust will contribute vastly in improving the effectiveness of the extension programme within the agricultural sector.

With that, allow me to introduce the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, the Honourable Willies Mchunu.

I thank you