



## agriculture & rural development

Department:  
Agriculture and Rural Development  
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

### **SPEAKING NOTES FOR MEC MTHEMBU ON DAFF – DARD EXTENSION SUMMIT 2018/19**

**Venue: Black Horses Lodge, Vryheid  
26 March, 2016**

**Acting Head of the Department, Mr. Myeza**

**Delegation from the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry**

**Guest Speaker Mr. Lukhalo**

**Our provincial Departmental Management**

**Farmer Organizations**

**Stakeholders from the Agricultural Sector**

**SASRI Officials**

**Board members of KZN South African Society for Agricultural Extension  
(SASAE)**

**Our Provincial Extension Practitioners**

**Programme Director**

**Distinguished Guests**

Let me take this opportunity to welcome you all to the annual Extension Summit. This summit is a very important annual event in our calendar as the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development as it forms a platform to reflect on the state of the Province on Agricultural Extension.

With the theme, **“The Role and Impact of Extension and Advisory Services in Land Reform Projects, KwaZulu-Natal: Evaluating Successes and Challenges”** this summit will create an opportunity where we will get to see

presentations on Extension Papers on the work done by our officials in the past year. We will also get an opportunity to acknowledge and award our Extension Officials who have done their work diligently, beyond the constraints they face in their working environment.

I must admit that when I had a look at the programme for this Summit and the papers to be presented here, I formed an impression that it was taking an academic slant. Research is naturally produced within an academic environment but as officials of government, our responsibility goes beyond producing knowledge for academic appetites.

Our research must also speak to our policy and strategic mandate. This prompted me to ask the question, who sets the research agenda here? What are the major rationale and determining factors that influence our choice of papers? Research must be relevant to the questions of the time, otherwise it risks becoming irrelevant.

Government wants the best and brightest of its extension and advisory service officials to be engaged on cutting edge research that's also policy relevant. Research must provide evidence base that informs policy and strategic management decision-making. That's the difference between academic research and that which is done within the context of government institutions.

Extension plays a crucial role in delivering support to the rural poor, which is why the role played by the extension officers must never be underestimated. As the Department, we expect extension officers to have the following skills:

- **Technical competency (the extension agent must be an expert in at least one field of agriculture)**
- **Communication skills (verbal; nonverbal; written and mass communication)**
- **Group facilitation skills (group dynamics and leadership)**
- **Extension management (program planning, management functions, ethics. monitoring and evaluation and leadership development).**

I am aware that there is an outcry by many stakeholders regarding the need to improve the capacity and visibility of our extension support and this is something that we as the department we are beginning to address.

Whenever we visit some districts we get complaints from farmers that they receive very little assistance from the department especially from extension officers. When they do get the support, it is "not consistent". Our extension officers in some instances are only known for handing out seed packs and ploughing, but even the ploughing was erratic and unsystematic.

I am also aware that there are extension officers who are resisting getting farmers ID when distributing implements, I want you know that this is compulsory and those who don't comply will be charged.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development like any other government department, is required to account on its spending of public funds and adhere to the Policy Framework for the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWMES). Within the department, there is Integrated Planning, Policy, M&E (IPPM&E) which among other things is responsible for monitoring programme performance information through data collection, data verification and generation of performance information reports. This performance information facilitates effective accountability to members of the Public and other interested parties to track progress and identify the scope for improvement.

**In providing performance information reports, the department is required to identify farmers it has supported or serviced through Public Funds. In certifying the credibility of farmers supported or serviced, the department is now expected to provide copies of 13 digit-bar-coded Identity Document (ID)/Smart Cards of supported or assisted farmers. Furthermore, the provision of ID/Smart Card copies provides assurance to the Auditor General that indeed a farmer supported or assisted is a warm body.** It is therefore for this reason that for some of the services provided by the department will now require farmers to provide copies of their IDs/Smart Cards.

Our farmers are therefore urged to be informed of this pronouncement and cooperate with the department in this regard. The ID/Smart Card copies need not to be certified and should only be given to the Department of Agriculture and Rural

Development official providing the client with the service or assistance. The farmers are advised to ensure that they are confident that the person they hand their ID/Smart Card copies to, is indeed a departmental official. This should be an Extension Officer (Agricultural Advisor) assigned to their area of jurisdiction or Deputy Director of the Local Municipality office.

During the Departmental Strategy workshop held last October this was discussed at length, and we saw a need to establish a **“New Generation of Agriculturists and Commercial Farmers”** with a specific focus on youth and women. We want to be aggressive on this programme in terms of funding and giving technical support to young farmers. There are already youth and women who are passionately involved in commercial farming who need to be propelled to higher levels of commercial activities. This will help break the glass ceiling of a white racial dominated commercial farming sector. Some of our youth in particular must be encourage to be involved in various agricultural value-chains up and down stream such as seeds, fertilizers, machinery and related businesses as well as the development of agricultural products.

The development of the agricultural sector in the province is premised on the transformation and promotion of previously disadvantaged producers and their inclusion in the agricultural mainstream economy and extension services will assist in making this a reality.

Agriculture is a major commercial activity and driver of economic development. The industry growth and development requires that we also keep up with the trends to satisfy the commercial imperatives. Our officers must be well-trained and ready to compete with the best in the industry. The commercial successes achieved in the sector are a challenge and opportunity for management of extension services. It asks poignant questions about the direction of this critical function. I trust this summit will help outline some of the solutions in this regard.

In October 2018, the department reviewed and approved its Agricultural Development Funding Policy which regulates and gives direction for the provision of agricultural support (Technical and Funding) to producers and farming community in the province.

The policy categorizes farmers into four categories (i.e. Vulnerable household, subsistence producer, smallholder producer, and commercial producer) and provide scales of support for each of the category. The policy is the principal anchor on the Department's interventions to drive food and nutrition security, growth and development in the agricultural Sector, value-chain opportunities, increased employment, which will collectively contribute to sustainable agrarian reform and comprehensive rural development in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal.

In light of the need for our country to increase food production and ensure food security for generations to come, young farmers should be supported and empowered to propel to higher levels of commercial activities. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development will prioritize across all categories of producers the promotion of designated groups; Youth, Woman, and disabled people. In this regard, every successful application from farming entities owned by designated groups within the Small-holder and Commercial producer categories will receive a 5% reduction on own contribution and 15% on grant funding.

Furthermore, on 30 November and 01 December 2018, two consultation workshops were held at Ulundi and Cedara regarding the National Policy on Comprehensive Producer Development Support. The province remains committed in developing and supporting farmers.

### **Extension Recovery Plan**

Since 2010/11, our Department has been implementing the Extension Recovery Plan (ERP) to support and revive extension in the province, this financial year (2018/19) alone, R46,6 million has been invested by the department and further R48,4 million will be invested in 2019/20 under the following pillars:

- Pillar 1: Increased visibility and accountability of extension*
- Pillar 2: Improved image and professionalism of extension*
- Pillar 3: Recruitment of extension practitioners*
- Pillar 4: Reskilling and reorientation of extension practitioners*
- Pillar 5: Provision of ICT infrastructure and other resources*

This summit should be able to give us an indication of how far our officers have progressed as individuals, local offices, district offices, as a province including

other stakeholders and partners involved in agricultural extension and at a national level on realizing these pillars.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution**

In closing, as you are all aware that the fourth industrial revolution is upon us, and as the agricultural sector we should already be working on a process of coming up with programmes which give us an indication how it will affect agriculture. The 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution creates an opportunity for the agricultural sector to evolve into an 'Agri Renaissance' desired end state, where our farmers need to embrace technology through farm-management software, precision agriculture, predictive data analytics and genetics. This will enable producers to monitor crop health, the weather and soil quality by using robotics and drones. This ladies and gentlemen, is the future of agriculture.

As the department we rely on you, our Extension Officers to assist and guide farmers on new and improved methods of farming. You are at the forefront of food production as you spend most of your time on the fields assisting farmers with good agricultural practice and production methods.

We are aware of the hard work you have done, it has not gone unnoticed hence we will also host an award ceremony to recognize Extension Officers for all their hard work and motivate them to commit to working even harder. Officials who will be awarded are those who excelled in rendering extension service in their respective districts.

Delegates, we are intentionally focusing on land reform because this is a pillar of development with Extension Officers playing a crucial role to ensure that land is used efficiently and productively. We must be ready to support the ANC-led government programme of expropriation of land without compensation and furthermore, this summit should remind Extension Officers of their role to empower those who have received land from government and render extension services of highest standard to our farmers.

Lately we have seen a trend where there is a rise of commercial farmers as opposed to small-scale farmers, this is something that we must all address. In order to address the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment

we need to give support to small-scale farmers and ensure that they also move to be commercial farmers.

With those words, I welcome you to the Extension Summit I want you to feel at home and have robust debates which will improve our sector.

Programme director and delegates, let us make this Extension Summit 2018/19 a fruitful one and come up with implementable resolutions that will take extension to even greater heights in 2019/20.

I thank you.