



agriculture & rural development

Department:
Agriculture and Rural Development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

SPEAKING NOTES FOR MEC THEMBA MTHEMBU ON HIS ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMODITY ORGANISATIONS

VENUE: CENTENARY HALL, CEDARA

08 February, 2019

Programme Director, Acting HOD Mr. Myeza

Representatives from Commodity Organisations

EXCO and MANCO members

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you all for making time to join us today, having an engagement like this has been long overdue. As the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development we have a mandate to drive agricultural development, farmer support and development, animal health and disease control as well as ensuring rural development in KwaZulu-Natal.

The Agricultural Sector plays a major role in uplifting our economy and improving the lives of many not only in our Province but in South Africa as a whole. However, last year we saw Agricultural production fall by 29,2% in the second quarter of 2018, after a 33,6% slump in the first quarter. This decline was largely driven by a drop in the production of field crops and continued drought conditions throughout the country.

This is one of the reasons President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the economic stimulus and recovery plan which will assist in boosting the country's sluggish economy, restore investor confidence and create jobs. This stimulus plan will re-prioritise funding to be directed towards investments in agriculture, as well as economic activity in townships and rural areas. Triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment still remain a major challenge for government and one of the ways to combat these challenges is through agriculture. KwaZulu-Natal

produces almost 30 percent of the national agricultural output hence we need to work hard to ensure that this sector thrives in our economy.

Yesterday during the State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa reiterated the importance of agriculture in our economy. He said government policies and programmes on key parts of the economy which are labour intensive will focus on agriculture.

“South Africa still has large areas of underutilised or unproductive land. There are around 250,000 small emerging farmers who are working the land and need support in fully developing their businesses and this is where our focus will be. Agricultural exports are an important source of revenue for our economy, and developing our agricultural sector is key to enhancing our food security and for attracting investment.”

Through an accelerated programme of land reform, government will work to expand agricultural output and promote economic inclusion.

“Our policy and legislative interventions will ensure that more land is made available for agriculture, industrial development and human settlements. As part of accelerating land reform, we have identified land parcels owned by the state for redistribution. As part of the stimulus package in agriculture, we have invested significantly in comprehensive farmer development support to ensure that restituted and communal land is productively utilised. We will continue to prioritise targeted skills development and capacity building programmes for small-holder and emerging black farmers.”

In the coming year, government will continue to focus on high value agricultural products with export potential such as our fruit, wine and vegetable industries, as well as poultry and red meat. This is where commodity associations can work hand in hand with government to assist small scale farmers.

As the Department, we have experienced some challenges which we are in the process of addressing. Since 2009 this Department has seen four MEC's come and go and has had at least 10 HOD's; this high turnover of Political Principals and Heads of Department has resulted in constant changes in policies and strategic programmes with minimal implementation. This is one of the reasons we have created the Agricultural Master Plan which will serve as a roadmap to unlock socio-economic development in the Province.

I once said that the major challenge in this Department is that it is captured and has been turned to some kind of a paradise for tenderpreneurs. There appears to be an alliance of tenderpreneurs, corrupt officials, some trade union leaders and some powerful people who are bent on helping themselves on the Department. Anyone who stand in their way does not deserve to lead this Department, they collaborate on a disposal strategy. The recent picketing by some labour union which you have seen recently needs to be viewed in this context. We have since

decided to have an internal anti-corruption committee which will sit on a regular basis under ministry which will also include organized labour.

Last year we conducted a Strategic Plan session to assess the state of organizational direction and policy agenda. This exercise was crucial for the Department, as it assisted in making a proper assessment and come up with practical ideas which formed part of the strategic plan for 2020/2025. It created a platform for the department to perform an honest assessment and come up with workable solutions for the next five years.

Subsequent to this planning review, the Department has undertaken the development of a Turnaround Strategy that seeks to unlock the identified blockages and build the requisite institutional capacity to stimulate agricultural development, increase contribution to economic growth and optimize high potential commodity and service delivery. Today, we are going to be sharing the work already done in this regard.

In addressing some of the challenges faced by the Department, we are in the process of establishing an Agricultural Development Advisory Body which will have representatives from different stakeholders representing the interests of farmers, organised agriculture, farm labourers and dwellers, academia and research institutions and financial institutions. This advisory body will serve as a provincial structure which will advise the MEC and the Department.

COMMODITY PARTNERS

As the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development we know that more still needs to be done to build a working relationship with our commodity partners. Our aim is to strengthen relations which started in 2015 in order to have inclusive industry opportunities and models that will lead to a favourable agricultural sector dispensation.

We know that we cannot do this alone as the Department, we need to work together with stakeholders to improve the sector and take it to new heights. Strong partnerships with commodity organisations will lay a foundation for the formulation of a clear strategy for inclusive development of value chains and industries in KZN. Working together will create a platform to provide expertise to support small-holder and commercial Black producers to achieve their potential.

Our partnership with commodities will create efforts towards integration of Black farmers into meaningful participation and decision making in the agricultural sector through:

- ownership
- management control
- employment equity
- skills development
- enterprise, entrepreneurial and agro-logistics development

- local socio-economic development

We want partnerships that will seek solutions to unique challenges faced by smallholder producers through:

- Agricultural research in commodity diversification
- Formulation of adaptation strategies to mitigate climate change (improving production and profitability, drought management, soil, climate, efficient water use and crop protection)
- Provision of market intelligence
- Provision of relevant and appropriate extension services for producers
- Human capital development with a focus on technical, financial and business management skills

AGRICULTURAL SUMMIT

Last November we held a successful Agricultural Summit which was officially opened by the honorable Premier Willies Mchunu. The Summit which most of the stakeholders in the room attended, received high level presentations from Professor Modi of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, reflecting on the status of Agriculture in the Province and Ms Joemat from the National Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries on Operation Phakisa.

During the Summit the following resolutions were made:

1. The Department will roll-out the Agricultural Masterplan to all the Districts in KwaZulu-Natal.
2. In order to ensure full ownership by KZN citizenry the Masterplan will also be published in Department website in English and IsiZulu.
3. The report of the summit to be tabled in the provincial legislature.
4. The summit will be held every five years.

AGRICULTURAL MASTERPLAN

The Agricultural Summit also served as a platform for our strategic partners to get an opportunity to contribute towards the Agricultural Master Plan.

The Master Plan will be taken to all regions in KwaZulu-Natal, where each region will have its own Master Plan, creating a structured and directed interaction for the department to offer technical knowledge to farmers on how to shape agriculture in their respective areas.

Through this Master Plan, the aim is to have an equitable and united agricultural sector which will be productive, competitive and environmentally sustainable with

thriving food secure rural communities by 2035. Our focus as the Department is to:

- Transform key institutions to promote agricultural growth and offer multiple economic opportunities especially for women, youth and disabled people.
- Increase in production of crops, livestock and all other related subsectors to enhance national food self-sufficiency and to increase food security.
- Promote efficient utilisation of agricultural land
- Expansion of irrigable land through water use efficiency for crops and livestock
- Improve access to market for producers
- Add value and agro processing to agricultural products before reaching local and international markets

Ladies and Gentlemen as you can see this is a mammoth task which will need us to work jointly together for it to succeed. We have started working with some commodity organisations and these partnerships have shown fruitful results, hence we believe that we can do more together to shape the agricultural sector in KwaZulu-Natal. We want partnerships that will seek solutions to challenges faced by smallholder producers.

After the successful implementation of the Agricultural Master Plan we will be developing the Irrigation Master Plan, which will look into the entire irrigation infrastructure in the Province this will assist struggling farmers especially in drought-stricken areas. President Ramaphosa says government is also developing a comprehensive integrated nation plan that addresses water shortages, ageing infrastructure and poor project implementation. He says government **"is urgently establishing an inter-governmental rapid response technical team, reinforced by specialist professionals, to intervene in areas which are experiencing severe water problems."** This assistance from the National government will go a long way to assist farmers especially in KwaZulu-Natal who are still struggling to get access to water for crops and livestock.

A lot still needs to be done to improve the agricultural sector and I hope that this engagement will enhance our current interactions and will further identify partnership possibilities for collaborative planning towards a better agricultural sector for all. Working together, we can champion quality agricultural services which will benefit people of KwaZulu-Natal especially in rural areas. I thank you.