



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DATE: 28 October 2024

Location: Ntingwe Tea Estate, Nkandla, King Cetshwayo District

Greetings to the Head of Department Mr ZN Dlamini
ADA Chairperson Mr S Gumbi and members of the board
Ntingwe Tea Estate Interim Board and the Management
Staff of Ntingwe Tea Estate

I am deeply honoured to finally make this visit to the Ntingwe Tea Estate, a destination I have long wanted to explore. Apart from executiving my mandate and responsibilities of oversight and providing strategic guidance, this visit will also offer me valuable insights into your operations and challenges that you're encountering. I look forward to learning from your experience as we chart the way forward as I am committed to seeing tea excellence and innovation. I am here to witness firsthand your remarkable work. I am informed that you currently have four Permanent Managers; 49 employees that are employed on a permanent basis and those that are on fixed-term contracts; including 63 seasonal employees.

I regard Ntingwe Tea Estate as one of the key and strategic entities of the Department of Agriculture as it's supposed to create employment opportunities, not only for the highly and advanced skilled labours but for ordinary people as well. The creation of employment is key to reducing unemployment, currently sitting at 32.9 percent in the first quarter of 2024. Ntingwe is supposed to pluck in that gap of reducing employment, more especially by absorbing locals and rural communities from the King Cetshwayo District where there's little economic activities and centres of employment. You have the

capacity to employ 800 seasonal employees during peak harvesting periods. This must be realised.

Ntingwe Tea Estate was initiated in 1987 with the aim to provide much needed employment opportunities and contribute towards economic growth in a deeply impoverished area of the district. I am excited to know that Ntingwe employs over 70% women.

As the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, we are the majority shareholder of Ntingwe with 62 percent shareholding, and Ithala Finance and Development Corporation is a joint shareholder with 38 percent shares. With me, here is the Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA), acting as project manager for Ntingwe. I am told they got involved with Ntingwe in 2017.

ADA has accelerated production activities, which has led to the production of 200 000 kgs of made tea to date, generating over R7 million revenue since 2021/22. Now, with the new ADA Board led by Mr Gumbi, Ntingwe needs to double its efforts to realizing its true potential of cultivating and producing tea in its 395 hectares. Our harvesting cannot be confined to using only 255 hectares, which is 65 percent of the tea fields.

Taking a leaf out of the work done with ADA with the appointment of the new Board, we will soon appoint the board for Ntingwe to further strengthen its governance and to ensure continuation of operations without any hinderances. Ntingwe is managed as a project that is funded by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, with an allocation of R4,9 million that is used towards procurement of production inputs and for payment of salaries for employees.

I am quite excited to know that ADA has taken a decision to take Ntingwe products directly to the market through retail shops and government institutions. Sales of 1000 kg packaged tea bags were completed for 21 government hospitals in the province through PCK Distributors as a trial, and this has proven to be a viable market option for the

company. Ntingwe has been generating revenue in yesteryears, which has assisted immensely in propelling Ntingwe operations forward.

With all the challenges being encountered and felt across the industry, instability and budgetary constraints, I need you to rise like a Phoenix, and dust yourself up and emerge with renewed hope for the better company, which is performing well, with good governance practices that will yield great outcomes.

I hope my presence today inspires everyone to pull in one direction. We want dedicated senior management personnel who will breathe new life into the organisation and that spirit to cascade down to the shop floor.

Ngiyathokoza Mphathi wohlelo.