



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

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MEC TP kaMadlopha-Mthethwa's keynote address during the 6th Urban Agri World Summit 2025.

VENUE: ZIMBALI ESTATE, KWADUKUZA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

DATED: 22 OCTOBER 2025

Programme Director

Magenta, the organizers of the Urban Agri World Summit

Mayor of iLembe District Municipality, Cllr. Thobani Shandu

Speaker of iLembe District Municipality, Cllr. Dolly Govender

KZN Film Commissioner, Mr. C Coetzee

Ilembe Enterprise leadership

Ilembe District Traditional Council

Thought leaders

Captains of industry

Members of the media

Good morning to a beautiful day in KwaZulu-Natal.

'Resilient Cities, Smart Agriculture, and Inclusive Growth.' A timely theme for this year's 6th Urban Agri World Summit. This theme perfectly aligns with our efforts to enhance sustainable agricultural practices and promote resilient rural development across the province. This summit comes at a time when the agricultural sector faces growing challenges due to climate change.

Furthermore, the agricultural sector is grappling with the crippling U.S. tariffs, which have placed immense strain on local producers and exporters. As such, government can tap in from the knowledge-sharing platforms like this one as you continue to engage

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in robust discussions on climate adaptation, food security, sustainable urban agricultural development, and shape policy direction.

Over the past few weeks, we have been proactively addressing the pressing issue of food insecurity, with a particular focus on rural areas. Food insecurity is a huge concern in northern parts of this province - Zululand, uMzinyathi and uMzinyathi districts, where evidence-based reports from Statistics SA's General Household Survey show that nearly 20 percent of the population in KwaZulu-Natal experience food insecurity, while a sizeable number also suffer from severe hunger. Again about 20 percent of our continent's population or 282 million Africans face food insecurity and are undernourished. The majority of the food insecure people are mostly in rural areas

Our funding, and empowerment programmes, flowing from the annual budget and the recently launched Multi-Planting Season, have been strategically designed to prioritise women and youth-led initiatives, particularly those in rural districts. Having said that, urban farming is fast proving to be a game-changer, especially for those maximising limited spaces through innovative methods such as hydroponics, vertical farming, rooftop gardens, and indoor farming.

It is also true that urban areas also experience inadequate food access, and as a government, we are committed to leaving no one behind. Therefore, platforms like this are crucial in exposing techno-savvy and alternative ways to cultivate plants. However, urban farming still faces regulatory challenges that may hinder its growth and sustainability, including zoning and land use regulations, permitting, and licensing. These challenges can be overcome through collaborative efforts and building relationships with stakeholders.

The National Development Plan identifies agriculture as a key economic activity capable of reducing poverty. Platforms that highlight the importance of agriculture are critical in addressing the bottlenecks affecting the sector.

Yesterday, my department signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Provincial Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, which will result in the transfer of 11



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plots of commercial farms to my department. I encourage urban dwellers to apply for these plots, and this MoU also aligns with our call to traditional leaders to release land for agricultural purposes, which will benefit both urban and rural communities.

I thank you