



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEECH BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT AT THE LAUNCH OF JOZINI SMALLHOLDER SUPPORT
PROGRAMME WITH UNILEVER**

Date: 11 April 2025

Venue: Ndumo, Jozini Local Municipality

Programme Director

Agriculture Minister, Honourable John Steenhuisen

Deputy Minister, Honourable Nokuzola Capa

KwaZulu-Natal Premier, Honourable Thamsanqa Ntuli

Unilever Southern Africa CEO Mr Justin Apsey and your colleagues

Jozini Local Municipality Mayor, Cllr M Mathe

All uMkhanyakude District Council Councillors

Amakhosi nezinduna (oNdabezitha)

Abalimi bakithi

Osihlalo bama Cooperatives

Sanibona

I am delighted to address you today as farmers and graduates of the Unilever Smallholder Farmer Programme. I am particularly pleased with this initiative, which aims to strengthen the private-public partnership between Unilever and the government. A partnership with a global corporation like Unilever, boasting 400 brands across over 100 countries, needs great support from both government and local communities.

Despite all the challenges brought on by the tariffs imposed by the Donald Trump-led US government, including those affecting developing nations like ours, Unilever, a multinational corporation, has demonstrated a confidence booster by continuing to invest in our country and beyond. On behalf of the agricultural sector in KwaZulu-Natal, we extend our gratitude



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to Unilever for this investment, which will have a lasting impact on our area of Ndumo and the uMkhanyakude District as a whole. You have demonstrated your commitment through actionable programmes such as this one with a potential to address food insecurity, alleviate poverty and bring about economic stability in our area. Since my appointment as the MEC for this department, we have been traversing every district in KwaZulu-Natal, convening izimbizo and meetings. I must be honest with you; the main concern for smallholder producers and farmers as well as cooperatives is the lack of access to markets for their fresh produce, other crops, and livestock auction sales. Unilever has delivered in this regard by not only providing access to markets but providing training and upskilling students on Herbs and Spice programme.

Ukubambisana nenkampani ezimele i Unilever kuloluhlelo kungeminye imizamo yokuletha uguquko embonini yezolimo, futhi kuvulele abalimi izimakethe njengoba kade bekhala ngokungabinayo imakethe yokudayisa imikhiqizo yabo. Abalimi lapha bathi kwesinye isikhathi izivuno zabo ziyaye zibole ngenxa yokungathengwa ngoba baswela izimakethe. Asibonge u Unilever ke ngoba konke lokhu sekuzoba umlando, isikhona imakethe evulwe i Unilever ekuthengeni imikhiqizo yezithako zokudla.

Ukutshalwa kwezimali kuloluhlelo lapha eNdumo kwenze ukuthi abalimi bathole uqeqesho lwamakhono ezolimo, baphinde bahlomula ngezinsiza zokulima ikakhulukazi emkhakheni wezithako zokudla. Inhlosongqangi yaloluhlelo ukuqeqesha abalimi ukuba kube yibo abakhiqizela i Unilever imikhiqizo, bahlinzeke le nkampani ngalemikhiqizo.

Ongoing mentorship and support will be provided to farmers to ensure their sustained viability as Unilever suppliers. Additionally, DARD will offer extension advisory support.

I would also like to express my appreciation to our national Minister of Agriculture, Honourable John Steenhuisen, for his support, which has been instrumental in the successful realisation of this project and its launch.

To our youths we want to see the face of the agriculture industry change to include young farmers and those in rural areas. Farming is not a business for old people only.

Kuyangijabulisa ukuzwa ukuthi laba abahlomule ohlelweni lakwa Unilever loqeqesho ngezithako zokudla abayikhulu bathathwe ezindaweni ezifana nase Ndumo, eMakhane naseMahlabeni. Okungihlabe kakhulu umxhwele ukuthi 67 wamaphesenti abo bayintsha



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kanti u 66 wamaphesenti abo bangabesifazane. Sikushayela ihlombe okwenziwe i Unilever ngoba lezibalo ziyinkomba yokuthi bahambisana nezinkambiso zikahulumeni ukuzwelana kakhulu nabesifazane nezingane.

Onyakeni wezimali esiphuma kuwo ophele ngoMarch uMnyango wezoLimo nokuThuthukiswa kweziNdawo zasemaKhaya usize intsha ecishe ifike ku 1 500 ngamathuba anhlobonhlobo atholakala kwezolimo. Amanye alamathuba ukuba abafundi bafunde mahhala e Cedara College of Agriculture nase Inkosi Owen Sithole College of Agriculture, ngosizo lakwa AgriSeta njengoba ixhase ngenani lika R500 thousand ngonyaka, bese kuthi uMnyango weZolimo wahlinzeka ngo R700 thousand. I Sugar Trust Fund for Education ixhasa abafundi abayishumi unyaka nonyaka. Kulezi zikhungo ezimbili okuyi-Osca ne Cedara sibeke eceleni izigidi eziyisithupha u R6 million ukuxhasa abafundi abangu 120 bama learnerships. That's why we are proud to have this collaboration with Unilever because we know that it will be beneficial to our communities and change the face of agriculture in the region.

The Honourable, Steenhuisen it would be disservice of me if I don't talk briefly about the outbreak of Foot-and-Mouth Disease last reported in the Amajuba District which encompasses Newcastle, eMadlangeni and Dannhauser. We are calling on our farmers to ensure their cattle do not roam around. A Disease Management Area (DMA), declared in March this year by the Honourable Minister, remains in effect. Movement of animals into, through, or out of this area is restricted and permitted only with authorisation from the State Veterinary office. According to the latest declaration, the DMA now also includes areas along R74 route from parts of iLembe District to uMzinyathi District. Siyaninxusa ke balimi ukuba niqinisekise ukuthi imfuyo yenu aniyidayiseli amabhusa nabantu abangaphandle kwezifunda zenu ezifana nalapha eMkhanyakude, King Cetshwayo naseZululand.

Kalabo abahlomula ohlelweni lokuqeqeshwa ohlelweni lwakwa Unilever sithi sithembele kuni ukuba nikhathule indima ebonakalayo ekufukuleni imiphakathi ehlwempu, edinga ulwazi eniluthekelwe kuloluhlelo, niphinde nibe yizimpendulo kwizinsalelo esibhekene nazo kuleli ekuqhamukeni namasu okuqeda indlala. Ningadlali ngamathuba afana nalawa aqhamuka nezimkampani ezizimele.



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Ngithanda ukusho ukuthi nani mphakathi walapha nibe ngabavikeli balengqalasizinda nezinsiza zaloluhlelo esiluthula namuhla. Ngesikhathi sezibhelu onyakeni u 2021 kutatshwa izimpahla ezitolo, ambalwa amadolobha angakubonanga okwabonwa uSawuli waseBhayibhelini okuyiseNquthu nasoLundi. Ngiyafuna ukusho ukuthi nani niyivikele lendawo, niyeseke ngoba kusebenza abemindenini yenu, nezingane zenu ezizoletha uzinzo emindenini kwezomnotho.

Unilever, thanks for unlocking the true potential of Ndumo, and thanks for not looking beyond this area when it needed you most. Thank you for putting bread on the table for many families who often to go bed on empty stomachs. The Jozini area, which features the Makhathini Irrigation Scheme spanning nearly five thousand hectares, has the potential to supply the entire KZN Province. We are also extending an invitation to other investors to participate, as Jozini and KwaZulu-Natal as whole offer numerous untapped agricultural market opportunities.