



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH BY HON. THEMBENI KAMADLOPHA-MTHETHWA AT THE OPENING OF CEDARA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE FOR THE FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

DATE: 4 FEBRUARY 2025

LOCATION: CEDARA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, UMNGENI LOCAL
MUNICIPALITY

Programme Director

EXCO Members

MANCO Members

Our entities - ADA and KZN Agriculture Farming Enterprise

The Head of Department Mr Z Dlamini

Chief Director of Agricultural Research Development and Training Institutions Dr Fikile

Qwabe and her team

Our First-year Students

Ladies and Gentleman good morning,

INTRODUCTION

It is a tremendous pleasure to be among the future leaders of our nation. Witnessing your convergence here for the purpose of acquiring and enhancing agricultural knowledge fills me with great optimism that this sector will not die in your hands.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE IN SA AND KWAZULU-NATAL

The Cedara College of Agriculture is commemorating 120 years of existence, having produced numerous farmers, scholars, agricultural scientists and agricultural experts who

continue to shape the country's fortunes. Embarking on agricultural studies will undoubtedly bring much-needed stability to the sector. Currently, this sector contributes approximately six percent to the KwaZulu-Natal GDP. I encourage you, as students, to ensure that this percentage increases, as the province has immense potential to become a major contributor to the economy, thereby reducing the unemployment rate, currently at 32.1 percent in the third quarter of the current financial year. We have consistently emphasized that education is the master key to unlocking all doors of success. Pursuing agricultural studies will enhance primary animal health, animal productivity and animal husbandry.

We look forward to your enrollment in agriculture as a field of study, which will ultimately enrich your lives, as well as the lives of animals and crops. Through your participation in agriculture, we can be assured that our future will remain bright. We anticipate witnessing your innovative and life-changing experiments that will mitigate the effects of climate change in agriculture. As a sector, agriculture faces numerous challenges, including food insecurity, animal mortality, genetic disorders in animals, climate change and unsustainable agricultural practices for crops, which require further study and innovative solutions through your novel ideas.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING AN AGRICULTURAL QUALIFICATION THROUGH OUR INSTITUTIONS

It is widely acknowledged that South Africa faces challenges related to low agricultural productivity. To address this issue and enhance agricultural yields, our department has devised a comprehensive array of agricultural programs and studies. These initiatives are specifically designed to alleviate poverty and reduce unemployment. Our provincial cabinet has approved the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, which I have the privilege of leading, to explore the feasibility of acquiring a State-Owned Model Farm.

This government-owned model farm operates as an agricultural enterprise under government ownership, management, and operation, serving as a benchmark for industry best practices. The primary objectives of a model farm include showcasing innovative and

sustainable farming methods, providing employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled labor, fostering the development of new skills, increasing agricultural output, reducing reliance on government assistance, and mitigating food insecurity. Addressing poverty necessitates innovative solutions. A report commissioned by my department, conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council last year, revealed findings from a survey that confirmed the province's concerns regarding unemployment, which, if left unchecked, may lead to instability.

LEARNERSHIP AND TRAINING

Therefore, I urge you, as students and future leaders of this country, to not only acquire knowledge but also be at the forefront of providing solutions to our unemployment rate, particularly for women, youth, and vulnerable groups. Ensure that you are not only pursuing an agricultural qualification but also equipping yourselves with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of today's world.

Upon completing your studies, you should be empowered to address global challenges such as climate change, pest and disease spread, and water scarcity. My department offers Learnership and internship programs for young people and graduates, providing hands-on experience in various agricultural fields, including livestock production, crop production, and agricultural business management. We have implemented specific programs targeting unemployed agricultural graduates, offering on-farm placements, mentorship, and entrepreneurial training to enhance employability within the agricultural sector.

Furthermore, we also provide Agricultural Diplomas through Owen Sithole College of Agriculture and Cedara colleges, and support needy students with bursaries from AgriSeta, having allocated R500,000 for students. Additional funding is provided by the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform (R700,000), the Sugar Industry Trust Fund for Education, sponsoring 10 students per year, and SASRI. I am pleased to note that among the first-year students, we have 60 on Learnership. For all

the agricultural colleges, we have set aside R6 million to provide 120 learnerships to unemployed youth within the KZN Province, equipping them with agricultural skills and knowledge. This initiative aligns with our campaign promises during the 2024 general election, as outlined in our 13-point plan as the IFP.

CONCLUSION

We rely on you, not merely as workers, but as masters of your own destiny. As young individuals, you have a vast array of opportunities awaiting you, particularly within our department. The Head of Department 'Mr. Z Dlamini' s report during our Strategic Planning session in Newcastle last year highlighted that our staff is ageing. He noted that the majority of our staff complement falls within the age range of 46 to 55. This emphasizes the importance of integrating qualified young individuals into our staff, which includes those of you seated before me.

HOSTEL RENOVATIONS

We have invested over R100 million in renovating the hostels at Cedara and Owen Sithole Colleges of Agriculture. Let us make agriculture fashionable and contribute to a greener province.

Siyathokoza Mphathi wohlelo.