Department of Agriculture
and Rural Development, KwaZulu-Natal

VOTE 03
BUDGET SPEECH
2026/27

17 JULY 2026 • KZN LEGISLATURE • PMB • 09:00 AM

THE YEAR OF THE YOUTH

Let's prioritize empowering the next generation of farmers in 2026 by dedicating this year to unlocking their potential in the sector.



Hon. Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa
MEC: Department of Agriculture & Rural Development, KwaZulu-Natal

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- Honourable Speaker, Ms. N Boyce
- Honourable Deputy Speaker, Ms Tembe
- Honourable Premier, Mr. AT Ntuli
- Honourable Members of the Executive Council
- Honourable Members of the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature
- Chairperson of the House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders, Inkosi R.S Shinga
- Religious and Traditional Leaders
- Mayors and Councillors
- Officials from the Department
- Sector Stakeholders
- Our citizens in the province and beyond
- Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen
Good Morning

It is both my honour and privilege to present to you my department's Budget Speech Policy Vote for the 2026/2027 financial year. With a quarter already into the year, it has been eventful.

Global shocks, natural disasters, and man-made events continue to shake the core of the globe and our collective livelihoods. The agricultural value chain is not immune from shocks or any other challenges.

GLOBAL CHALLENGES AFFECTING THE SECTOR

FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE

Speaking of challenges, the agricultural sector is still nursing its wounds following the depletion of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) vaccine stocks from our traditional suppliers in Botswana. This forced the national department to urgently secure alternative supplies from countries such as Argentina and Turkiye.

I am pleased to report steady progress since vaccinations started in late February this year. To date, the roll-out has recorded steady success in containing outbreaks and restoring confidence in the province. We will continue to work with the national department, veterinarians, and industry to complete the national vaccination drive and rebuild herd immunity. I will take you through the progress we have made later on in the speech.







RESPONDING TO THE CALL: THE PROVINCIAL MANDATE

Our Honourable Premier, Mr Thamsanqa Ntuli, placed agriculture at the centre of KwaZulu-Natal's economic renewal in his 2026 State of the Province Address.

The Premier's words deserve to be heard by every farmer in this province:
"Beyond its contribution to GDP, the agricultural sector underpins the rural political economy — by creating livelihoods, sustaining communities, and promoting inclusive economic growth. The interlinkages between agriculture, rural development, and food security are clear."

The Premier committed to intensifying mechanisation, supporting subsistence and smallholder farmers, advancing youth and women participation, and containing FMD through an accelerated vaccination rollout.



PROGRAMME 1: ADMINISTRATION

The department, through its Human Resource Management or HRM Sub-Programme, responds to Priority No. 3 of the Government of National Unity, that is “Building a capable, ethical, and developmental state that is responsive to the needs of its citizens.”

The HR Planning Tool is aligned to the departmental Strategic Plan that is used to identify and address human resource gaps and key workforce challenges. In line with the 7th Administration’s commitment, we are professionalizing the public service by ensuring that we attract people with skills, capabilities and integrity.

Our key responsibility through the HRM function is to ensure that there is sufficient supply of skills and roles required to meet the current and future needs of the department.

PROGRESS ON THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

During the 2025/2026 financial year, the department was able to fill 82 posts on permanent basis with 4 of those posts occupied at Senior Management level. The department appointed a total of 75 Assistant Agricultural Practitioners (AAPs) on a fixed-term basis to augment capacity within the extension and advisory services. For 2026/2027 financial year, the department has ring-fenced a budget of R 87 million for the filling of 292 posts that have been prioritised across all departmental programmes.

HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

We are committed to strengthening the institutional capacity by ensuring that there are competent, ethical, and professional employees to deliver quality services to citizens. The Department will be investing in several human development interventions. These initiatives include the provision of bursaries for internal staff members and external candidates, trainings, internships and learnerships. The department has allocated a total budget of R 29.3 million towards human capital development programmes.



BURSARIES

The department has allocated a budget of R 4 million in the 2026/2027 financial year for the awarding of 15 external bursaries and a budget of R 1.9 million for internal bursaries. The allocation of the external bursaries takes into account the scarce and critical skills as identified during skills audit processes. These include Bachelor: Veterinary Science, BSc. Agricultural Engineering, National Diploma for Vet Technology and National Diploma Industrial Engineering.



INTERNSHIP AND LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME

To empower youth with work experience and professional development opportunities, the Department has allocated a budget of R8.6 million to support 92 Graduate Interns. This cohort of Graduate Interns assumed duties on the 1st of June 2026, and the duration of their appointment is 24 months.

In addition to internships, the Department also offers learnerships, which are a combination of theoretical learning with practical workplace experience to prepare participants with industry-relevant skills and knowledge. In this financial year, an allocation of R 6,9 million has been made available to continue supporting 120 learners in Plant and Animal Production at NQF levels 2 and 3. These programmes are fully aligned to the IFP's 13-point Plan, which we have been campaigning for in the lead-up to the 2024 National and Provincial Election, because we strongly believe in education and that unemployed graduates should be assisted to find meaningful employment opportunities.

It's part of a call to redirect some of the billions spent on Sector Education and Training Authority (SETAs), to ensure that all graduates are given a 12-month internship at municipalities, provincial and national departments which can give graduates work experience and enhance their employability.



PROGRAMME 2: AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

We remain committed to building a resilient, inclusive, and competitive agricultural sector that contributes to food security, job creation, poverty alleviation, and economic transformation across our Province. Through targeted interventions, the Department continues to empower producers, strengthen rural economies and improve the livelihoods of our people.

In the 2025/26 financial year, the Department provided support to 19 018 subsistence producers, 561 smallholder producers and 10 commercial producers, contributing significantly to food security, agricultural production and rural economic development across the Province.

As we are experiencing challenges of a shortage of water that negatively affects farmers, we have ensured that 11 new boreholes were drilled in various districts, spending more than R3.5 million.

Honourable Members, one of the many beneficiaries of our programmes is Mr Mondli Shangase from uMbumbulu, south of Durban. Mr Shangase owns several hectares of land and has drilled his own borehole. As a department, we met him halfway by providing him with a tractor, ten tunnels, and essential farming implements. I am proud to announce that, through this assistance, he has never looked back. He has gone on to hire 10 people from his local community in uMbumbulu, with the completion of this project he will need 40 more young people.

Just last week, during our Operation Siyahlola, we visited his farm — Vuka Supply Farm. We were amazed at how he has repurposed a non-viable school to suit agricultural needs.

At the site, I issued a directive to my officials, led by the Acting Head of Department, to engage the Departments of Public Works and Education. The aim is to explore how we can make use of other non-viable schools for agricultural activities — using the land as farms, and repurposing classrooms for storage, workshops, and agricultural training.

Mr Shangase's farm, which, we have supported with an investment of R3.6 million, should serve as a flagship model for all the districts to emulate.



EXPANDING MECHANISATION SUPPORT

To accelerate food production and strengthen household food security, the Honourable Premier and I officially launched the Multi-Planting Season Programme in October 2025 in the Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma Local Municipality within the Harry Gwala District Municipality.

The programme forms part of the Department's broader strategy to maximise agricultural production through coordinated support to producers, provision of production inputs, mechanisation services and extension support. The Department subsequently recorded a significant achievement in food production support.





Against an annual target of 4 282 hectares, a total of 7 825 hectares were planted for food production, exceeding the target by 3 543 This remarkable performance demonstrates the effectiveness of government support programmes, the success of the Multi-Planting Season Programme and the commitment of our farming communities to ensuring food security throughout the Province.

In advancing transformation and inclusive growth within the agricultural sector, the Department supported 193 female farmer projects, 121 youth farmer projects, and 17 projects owned by persons with disabilities. These interventions continue to broaden participation in agriculture while ensuring that opportunities are extended to those who have historically been excluded from the mainstream economy.



Mechanisation remains a critical driver of agricultural productivity, competitiveness and food security. During the 2025/26 financial year, the Department procured 24 tractors to strengthen mechanisation support services across the Province. These tractors have enhanced the Department's capacity to provide land preparation services and support increased agricultural production.

Building on this investment, the Department has procured an additional 33 tractors during the 2026/27 financial year, bringing the total number of tractors acquired over the two-year period to 57 tractors. Over and above the expansion of the Department's mechanisation fleet, approximately R10 million has been allocated during the 2026/27 financial year for the outsourcing of mechanisation services through service providers across the Province.



This intervention will improve access to mechanisation support and enable more producers to benefit from timely land preparation and planting services.

To further strengthen mechanisation support, approximately R5.3 million has been allocated for the procurement of agricultural implements. These implements will complement the tractor fleet and enhance the Department's capacity to provide comprehensive mechanisation services to farmers throughout KwaZulu-Natal.

We are going to undertake vigorous soil sampling before the commencement of the 2026/27 Multi-Planting Season to ensure that agricultural support interventions are based on accurate scientific information. Soil analysis is essential for determining soil fertility, pH, nutrient status, and any soil constraints that may affect crop production.

These results enable the development of crop-specific fertilizer and lime recommendations, thereby improving crop establishment, growth, and yield potential. Our analytical services are specifically designed to provide soil fertility analysis and generate lime and fertilizer recommendations for a wide range of crops.



SOIL FERTILITY LAB

Speaking of the soil sampling and soil fertility, during the previous financial year 2025/26, the Analytical Services sub-directorate received a budget of R13 million to procure new equipment for the laboratories to stay abreast of the latest technology. We are pleased to report that amongst other instruments, the laboratories received the following instruments: a High-Performance Liquid Chromatographer (HPLC), Atomic Absorption Spectro-scopy (AAS), a Flow Injection Analyser and Carbon Nitrogen Sulphur analyzer instrument (CNS).

For the current financial year, R14 million has been allocated to the analytical laboratories. To date laboratory equipment for R9 million is under procurement stage. With the new updated laboratory instruments the laboratory can provide accurate, reliable, and efficient analytical services. Accurate analytical data is critical for making informed decisions regarding fertilizer recommendations, crop nutrition, livestock feeding programmes, and soil management practices.





Landcare Programme and Sustainable Natural Resource Management

The Department remains committed to promoting sustainable agricultural practices and responsible natural resource management through the implementation of the LandCare Programme, which plays a critical role in protecting agricultural resources, enhancing climate resilience and supporting sustainable livelihoods in rural communities.

During the 2025/26 financial year, the Department exceeded all three of its key LandCare performance targets. Against an annual target of 4 000 hectares, a total of 4 043 hectares of agricultural land were rehabilitated through LandCare interventions aimed at combating land degradation, improving soil health and restoring the productive capacity of agricultural land.

Through the implementation of the Expanded Public Works Programme, the Department created 475 green jobs, surpassing the annual target of 430 jobs. These employment opportunities provided much-needed income support while contributing to environmental conservation and sustainable land management across the Province.

Furthermore, the Department exceeded its target for conservation agriculture, with 813.4 hectares of cultivated land managed using conservation agriculture practices, against a target of 750 hectares. These interventions contribute towards improved soil fertility, enhanced water-use efficiency, reduced land degradation and increased resilience to climate change.





STRENGTHENING EXTENSION SERVICES AND SERVICE DELIVERY

The Department continues to strengthen its capacity to provide responsive and effective services to farming communities across the Province. To improve mobility and enhance service delivery, the Department procured 100 operational vehicles during the 2025/26 financial year.

These vehicles are enabling officials to reach farming communities more efficiently, strengthen monitoring and support, and improve the delivery of extension and advisory services, particularly in remote rural areas. Recognising the critical role of extension services in agricultural development, the Department welcomed 60 Assistant Agricultural Practitioners (AAPs) who have been deployed across the Province to strengthen technical support to farmers.

These young professionals will play an important role in improving farmer access to agricultural information, production support, innovation and advisory services, thereby strengthening agricultural development at grassroots level.

In further strengthening the extension function, the Department convened the Provincial Extension and Advisory Services Summit held at ICC on the 1st to the 2nd of June 2026, bringing together extension practitioners, agricultural stakeholders, academic institutions and industry experts to deliberate on strategies for modernising extension services and improving support to farmers.

The summit reaffirmed the importance of professional, responsive and farmer-centred extension services as a cornerstone of agricultural growth, innovation and food security. These interventions demonstrate the Department's commitment to building a capable, professional and developmental institution that is responsive to the needs of producers throughout KwaZulu-Natal.



PRIORITIES FOR THE 2026/27 FINANCIAL YEAR

We remain focused on expanding agricultural production, promoting sustainable natural resource management and strengthening the capacity of farmers during the 2026/27 financial year.

To this end, the Department plans to support 9 425 household producers, facilitate the planting of 6 220 hectares for food production, and provide targeted support to 364 smallholder producers and 18 commercial producers. Through the Smallholder Empowerment Programme and Extension and Advisory Services, 241 producers will receive training, while 57 producer study groups will be supported to improve production practices, strengthen enterprise development and enhance market participation.

In line with our commitment to inclusive agricultural growth, support will be provided to 149 female farmer projects, 63 youth farmer projects, and 32 projects owned by persons with disabilities. These interventions will ensure that women, youth and persons with disabilities remain active participants and beneficiaries of agricultural development programmes.

The Department anticipates that these interventions will contribute towards the creation of 114 agricultural job opportunities, particularly in rural communities where agriculture remains a critical driver of economic growth, poverty reduction and livelihood improvement.





2026 THE YEAR OF THE YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

We have designated 2026/27 as the Year of Youth. The Department is intensifying its commitment to creating sustainable agricultural opportunities for young people — not charity, but enterprise. Not handouts, but ownership.

In 2025/26, we provided support worth R6 million to 12 agricultural enterprises run by previously unemployed agricultural graduates. The support packages included production inputs, fencing, chicks, feed, broiler houses, boreholes and critical agricultural infrastructure. These young people are no longer programme beneficiaries — they are employers, entrepreneurs and economic contributors.

For 2026/27 financial year, we are in the process of issuing a call for project funding that will support 14 youth-owned agribusinesses through a dedicated R7 million investment — accelerating youth participation across agricultural value chains and unlocking economic inclusion.

We also implemented a Goat Production Development Programme — because livestock is wealth in KwaZulu-Natal. Through R9.145 million, we distributed 167 breeding goat sets to 181 beneficiaries: 105 women, 45 youth, and 14 persons with disabilities. These are not statistics. These are families building futures.





AGRONOMIC SEEDS & HORTICULTURAL SEEDLINGS PROGRAMME

During the previous financial year, the seed multiplication programme planted more than 100 hectares of maize, dry beans and potatoes. This was achieved through plantings at Kokstad, Cedara, Dundee and Makhathini research stations as well as at Ennis Farm in the Dannhauser area. In total 62 000 kg of maize seeds, 8 100 kg of dry beans seeds and 13 750 kg of potato seeds were distributed.

In addition, through our partnership with the South African Seed Potato Certification Scheme, staff are being trained on potato seed certification which will enable the Department to produce certified potato seeds to supply to subsistence farmers for food security purposes. The nursery at Makhathini supplied over eight million vegetable seedlings and sweet potato vines to vulnerable households.

For the coming year, the agronomic crops will be planted on a 100 hectares. Construction of the department's seed cleaning facility will eliminate outsourcing of seed cleaning services and the allocated budget will be injected into increasing the seed multiplication hectares planted. In addition to the nursery at Makhathini, vegetable seedling production is planned to commence in the uGu district to supply the surrounding districts.





HEMP PERMITS

Significant progress has been made in developing the hemp sector in the province as farmers have been assisted with compliance processes and in doing so approximately 700 permits have been granted to farmers. Training was given to over 200 farmers involved with hemp production as well as district and local hemp coordinators.

The department is also involved with hemp cultivar evaluations in collaboration with the Agricultural Research Council and the National Department of Agriculture. Negotiations are underway to access hemp seed for multiplication purposes. This will continue during the current financial year.



INDIGENOUS CHICKS PROGRAMME

The Indigenous Chicks Programme forms part of our broader Food Security and Nutrition Programme. The hatchery for indigenous chicks is located at the Owen Sithole College of Agriculture (OSCA). Currently, the hatchery has the capacity to produce 4 200 chicks per month.

To expand production, the programme will also be rolled out to the Makhathini Research Station. A breeding stock of 200 birds will be established there to supply fertile eggs for incubation at OSCA. Through this initiative, we aim to produce and distribute 45 000 chicks across all districts in the province.

REHABILITATION OF DAIRY INFRASTRUCTURE

The rehabilitation of the dairy infrastructure at Cedara and Dundee is a strategic investment that will strengthen the dairy sector, improve agricultural productivity, and create sustainable opportunities for farmers and young people. The existing infrastructure requires rehabilitation to restore its full operational capacity and provide a modern, functional environment for dairy production, training, and technology transfer.

Upgraded facilities will enable the implementation of best dairy management practices, improve animal health and welfare, enhance milk quality, and increase production efficiency. I would like to then call on our young farmers, more particularly from the previously disadvantaged communities to take advantage of this sector so that they too, contribute significantly in dairy production. As the department we will always support such initiatives with skills and training.



CLIMATE RESILIENCE

As part of climate mitigation strategy, due to continuous inclement weather, the Department has developed two interface tools to assist in recording climate incidents, namely, the successful Public Reporting Tool that is available on the website of the Department and is targeted at the farmers and the Incident Verification Tool which is used by the Advisory Services to record the incidents in their respective areas.

These tools have been very successful as incidents have been reported and captured. Furthermore, the Department is focusing on Conservation Agriculture Programme where it is working with various stakeholders to ensure that soil degradation is controlled by introducing tools and methods that enhance Conservation Agriculture.



AGRICULTURAL TRAINING INSTITUTES

Following renovations at the Agricultural Training Institutes, more practical facilities have become available for students to gain more hands-on experience. The R52 million residence renovation at Cedara is complete and students have already been accommodated. This has helped to also allow the College to increase its capacity with the introduction of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) skills programmes.

Cedara College has signed an agreement with its alumni to improve its teaching and learning through their experience. In addition, an agreement that would allow our third-year students to work on a technologically advanced barley feed system is being finalised. This will integrate Work Integrated Learning (WIL), advanced technology and practical hands-on experience, whilst also receiving a R 40 000 scholarship. Other MoU's with Higher Education institutions in KZN will enhance the teaching and learning in agriculture at all institutions.

Owen Sithole College of Agriculture continues to strengthen its contribution to agricultural education, skills development and farmer support in KwaZulu-Natal. The College has made significant progress in improving its infrastructure through the completion of major electrical, water and sewer upgrade projects, creating a more conducive environment for teaching, learning and practical training.



Information and communication technology (ICT) enhancement initiatives are also underway, including improvements to network connectivity and student information management systems to support modernized institutional operations.

In preparation for future growth, the College continues to provide Work-Integrated Learning opportunities for diploma and learnership students through partnerships with agricultural enterprises across the province, ensuring graduates acquire practical workplace experience and industry-relevant competencies.

During the 2026/27 financial year, the College will focus on strengthening programme accreditation, expanding industry partnerships, improving student support services, and implementing priority maintenance and refurbishment projects aimed at enhancing teaching, learning and student accommodation facilities.



VETERINARY SERVICES

Currently there are 2 286 dip tanks supplied with Acarisides or dipping chemicals. For the 2025/26 a total of 60 million rands was spent on external parasites control remedies. More than 105 000 dip tanks members benefited. The recruitment of 77 Dip Tank Assistants was done and they are placed around the Hluhluwe Umfolozi Park-FMD Protection Zone with vaccination.

Poles and Reinforce were procured and distributed in King Cetshwayo District as the most affected district with poor infrastructure (dip tanks). Procurement of PAHC Remedies, a total of 10 million rand was spent on Primary Animal Health Care remedies (medicines, vaccines and disinfectants).

Veterinary Laboratory Equipment procured a laboratory equipment to the tune of R 8.6 million in the 2025/26. The department will be procuring external parasites control remedies worth 47 million rand, vaccine and medicine worth 13 million rand, veterinary laboratory equipment and maintenance worth approximately 8.6 million rand.



In terms of staff capacity, the department appointed 60 Animal Health Technicians through EPWP.

FMD vaccination campaigns are ongoing and the department has successfully vaccinated seven districts namely: uGu, Harry Gwala, uMkhanyakude, Zululand, uMgungundlovu, eThekwini and uThukela.

On 22 July we are starting in King Cetshwayo District to be done simultaneously with ILembe District. Amajuba and UMzinyathi districts will be the last two districts to be done to complete the first phase of FMD mass vaccination programme. The province is targeting 80 percent of cattle to be vaccinated within 6 months.

So far we have vaccinated over 1,5 million animals of the province's 2.5 million cattle population.



PROGRAMME 3: RURAL DEVELOPMENT

AGRIHUBS CONSTRUCTION

The Fresh Produce Hub in Richards Bay is one of the major investment project in the province that was announced during the State of the Province Address on July 31, 2024 by the Honourable Premier. As a progress report, Madam Speaker, during our 2025/26 we reported that the project was at the procurement stages for the site establishment, clearing, and fencing of 5,64 hectares within the land allotted under Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone (RBIDZ) Phase 1 as part of the Agrihubs programme.

I am proud to announce that a female-owned local contractor was awarded a tender for the purpose to a value of R3,9 million, creating 41 local job

opportunities and sub-contracting of 8 local businesses to a value of R1.1 million. The 5,64-hectare-site has been cleared, surveyed and fenced.

The project has now moved to Phase 2 of Design and Construct. The Phase 2 contractor has been appointed. The final designs have been completed and submitted to the local municipality for approval. The contractor is already on site.

In addition, long-lead items such as steel, G6 material, and piling, to the value of R42 million, are being procured. Construction will commence immediately upon approval of the designs by the municipality, which is expected at the end of July this year.

The construction of this agri-hub is expected to create 500 jobs. It is anticipated that the fresh produce agri-hub will be completed in September next year.

BHAMBANANA RED MEAT PROGRESS REPORT

Honourable Premier, one of the key mandates you gave me upon my appointment in June 2024 was to ensure the successful completion of the Bhambanana Red Meat Abattoir in Jozini. This project had stalled for years due to recurring challenges, and its completion is critical to unlocking progress for our livestock farming communities.

Today, I am pleased to report to you and this august House that the project is now 70% complete.Following the site handover to ECA Consulting (Pty) Ltd in January for completion works valued at R16.9 million, which we attended, we are confident that repairs and renovations will be concluded in July next year. These repairs have thus far created local employment of 9 labourers and has 5 sub-contractors active on site.

Together with the Agribusiness Development Agency, we have also appointed a social facilitator. We are currently finalising the sourcing of an operator for the facility.

Honourable Premier, abattoirs serve as a critical link between livestock farmers and markets. Once operational, the Bhambanana Abattoir will have the capacity to slaughter up to 60 cattle per day, providing our farmers with direct market access and reducing transport costs.



PHEZU'KOMKHONO AWARDS

As part of the KwaZulu-Natal's commitment to significant economic initiatives, in response to the pressing issue of economic performance, we have developed a policy framework on the Women Entrepreneur Awards programme for 2025-2029, that will respond to the call of putting women at the forefront of the economic mainstream.

The objectives of the policy framework are to acknowledge, promote and increase active participation of women in the agricultural value chain for sustainable social and economic growth; to recognize the efforts and contribution of women, young women, senior citizens and women with disabilities in the agricultural sector through food security, job creation, economic growth and poverty alleviation; to encourage the participation of women, young women, senior citizens and women with disabilities in the agricultural value chain; and to award women for their efforts in the agricultural value chain with monetary prizes that can be invested back into their business activities for their sustainable social and economic growth.

This initiative is epitomised by the Phezu'Komkhono Awards that's held every year, in commemoration of the women's endeavors in the sector. The Department successfully hosted the Awards in February this year, where 25 women were recognized and honoured across various categories.



Among the recipients were a senior citizen and a woman with a disability, reaffirming our commitment to inclusivity and the recognition of women from all walks of life. A total amount of R1.4 million was awarded to these women as prize money. This support was intended not only to reward excellence, but also to encourage the winners to expand and strengthen their business operations.

The Department will continue to provide support to the winners to ensure that they progress beyond the level at which they entered the competition and graduate into more sustainable and competitive enterprises. We remain committed to recognizing the critical role played by women in agriculture, a sector that continues to feed our nation and sustain livelihoods. The Department has set aside an amount of R1,6 million in the 2026/27 financial year for hosting of these awards.



UNEMPLOYED AGRICULTURAL GRADUATES YOUTH PROGRAMME (UAGYP)

During 2025/26 financial year, a total of 130 graduates were appointed and placed on farms under the Unemployed Agriculture Graduates Youth Programme (UAGYP). The UAGYP runs for 2 years or 24 months. Financial year 2025/26 was the first year, so there will be no new appointments for 2026/2027. Preparations are in place for the recruitment of the next cohort, which will be appointed and placed on farms by June 2027 for another 2 years.





PROVINCE INVESTS IN GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL SKILLS THROUGH DENMARK INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Honourable Members, in a move that aligns our agriculture with international standards, we are proud to support 11 students participating in the Denmark Agricultural Internship Programme. This will see students selected from across all districts of our province.

We are deliberate, to ensure equitable provincial representation and to give every community access to international agricultural skills development opportunities. We are not only exporting produce. We are exporting talent, and importing world-class knowledge to grow our agri-sector at home. Kulomnyango asigcini nje kuphela ngokukhuluma kepha siyenza. Mhlonishwa Ndunankulu ngonyaka ozayo, siyabuya sizobika ngendima esizobe sesiyikhathulile ngaloluhlelo lwemifundaze nezwe iDenmark.



MARKET ACCESS INITIATIVES

The department continues to drive initiatives to unlock market opportunities both in the public as well as private sector and increase the number of historically disadvantaged farmers accessing markets.

The priority is given to women, youth and farmers with disabilities, especially in rural areas. The private sector markets include hotels, restaurants and food and beverages companies. In the 2025/26 financial year, approximately 240 farmers were supported with market access opportunities. Through this support, they were able to generate revenue of approximately R3.8 million.

These farmers supplied various markets with commodities including yellow maize, sugar beans, soya beans, eggs and vegetables. In the 2026/27 financial year, the department is targeting to increase revenue generated by farmers by 30%.

These initiatives will create approximately 50 job opportunities through post-harvest activities, like sorting, grading and packaging.

We will provide logistical support to ensure that the produce reaches the markets timeously.
The Department is currently finalising a comprehensive implementation plan for the Radical Agrarian Socio-Economic Transformation or RASET programme for the 2026/27 financial year. This plan is deliberately aligned with my pronouncement to designate 2026 as a year focused on the development and empowerment of young people. Working together with economists from Agricultural Services, the Chief Directorate: Rural Enterprise and Industrial Development has initiated a structured process to align production with market demand.

In the 2026/27 financial year, approximately 250 commodity-based cooperatives and individual farmers will be supported with market access. It is anticipated that the Department's interventions will generate significant positive spin-offs, particularly for young people. In this financial year, farmers' revenues are projected to increase by 40% while also creating much-needed job opportunities across the entire production value chain.

AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (ADA)

The Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA) continues to play a pivotal role in advancing the growth of farmers and agri-entrepreneurs across KwaZulu-Natal.

The appointment of the Chief Executive Officer, Mr M.J. Mfusi, brought renewed stability and momentum to the entity.
While the entity did not achieve its desired audit outcome, it nevertheless recorded several noteworthy achievements. A number of ADA-supported enterprises received provincial and national recognition for excellence in farming, agro-processing, and export development.

ADA continues to provide strategic support to key catalytic projects that are essential for agricultural development in our province.
The Makhathini Irrigation Scheme remains a cornerstone of agricultural production in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

Through infrastructure maintenance and technical support, significant progress has been made in rehabilitating bulk infrastructure, installing 32 kilometres of sub-surface drainage, and commissioning 23 new pump sets to improve water security and productivity.



We will continue to work closely with ADA to advance the rationalisation and restructuring of agricultural entities, including the Ntingwe Tea Estate, the Makhathini Irrigation Scheme, and the KwaZulu-Natal Farming Enterprise.



PREMIER'S EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Somlomo ngokukhulu ukuzithoba, ukukhombisa ukuthi igxalaba esesilikhathulile emnyangweni lihambe kangakanani, kubonakale kugqama kakhulu uMnyango wethu wezoLimo ngesikhathi sikhala simuka nezindondo eziningi emcimbini wakamuva kaNdunankulu la ebeklomelisa khona iminyango eyahlukahlukene efuqa intuthuko kubantu. Singasho nje ukuthi siyathokoza ukuthi umsebenzi wethu niwuchome uphaphe lwegwalagwala.

Sithembisa ukuqinisekisa ukuthi abalimi bakithi nomkhakha wonke wezolimo basazoqhubeka bahlinzekwe ngezidingongqangi ngesivinini esiphindiwe. Lokhu kuzosenza siphokophelele ekusebenzeleni abantu bakithi njengoba senzile sathola imiklomelo emningi efaka phakathi uMnyango ovelele ekuhlinzekeni ngezidingongqangi isifundazwe sonke, indondo yeNhloko yoMnyango evelele, uhlelo oludidiyelwe kahle, elokuphatha nokusebenza ngobuqotho nolokuhlinzeka intuthuko emiphakathini edonsa kanzima

IN CLOSING as the late US President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1937, once reminded us, and I quote: “A nation that destroys its soil, destroys itself.”

I am pleading with all our key stakeholders — farmers, organised agriculture, provinces, the private sector, and our communities — to ensure that this Budget is our collective commitment to that very future.

A future foreseen by Roosevelt ; a future in which, through resilience, unity, and hard work, we ensure that South African soil continues to feed a South African nation.

And again the late leader of my political home – The IFP – Inkosi Mangosuthu Buthelezi delivering a keynote address at Mahlabathini in uLundi in October 2006, also reminded us that “No human being or nation can survive if it does not involve its people in agricultural activities.”

This budget is doing exactly that, it involves our people, our farmers and our land in building a food-secure South Africa.



VOTE 3 BUDGET SUMMARY

The department hereby tables the 2026/27 budget of R2.818 billion for Vote 3: Agriculture and Rural Development according to its three programmes:

- **Programme 1-** Administration: R791 586 000 or 791 million rand
- **Programme 2 -** Agriculture: R1 983 794 000 or 1.9 billion rand
- **Programme 3 -** Rural Development: R 42 717 000 or 42 million rand.

TOTAL: R 2 818 097 000 or 2.8 billion rand.



Sengiphetha, angidlulise ukubonga kwami emndenini wami wakwaMadlopha nowakwaMthethwa naseqenjini lami i-IFP nobuholi bayo obuholwa nguMengameli uMhlonishwa uV.F. Hlabisa. Angibonge ngokungeseka ngasosonke isikhathi. Sibonga asiphezi kubo bonke ababambe iqhaza elibalulekile emnyangweni wethu.

Mhlonishwa Ndunankulu, siswele imilomo ezinkulungwane uhlezi unathi ezinhlelweni zethu, ufaka negxalaba lakho ekuphuculeni izimpilo zabalimi. Siphinde sibonge kumalungu esishayamthetho ngokuqinisekisa ukuthi asiphambuki emsebenzini wethu, bese kuzoba i-Portfolio Committee eholwa uMhlonishwa uSuper Zuma, iNhloko yoMnyango u Dr Fikile Qwabe oyisibani sabobonke abasebenzi bomnyango, yi board i-Agribusiness Development Agency, abezindaba, abalimi besifundazwe sonke nezinhlangano nososeshini babo, nabobonke ababambe iqhaza kuloMnyango.

Ngiyathokoza.

Department of Agriculture
and Rural Development, KwaZulu-Natal

VOTE 03
BUDGET SPEECH
2026/27

17 JULY 2026 ▪ KZN LEGISLATURE ▪ PMB ▪ 09:00am

THE YEAR OF THE YOUTH

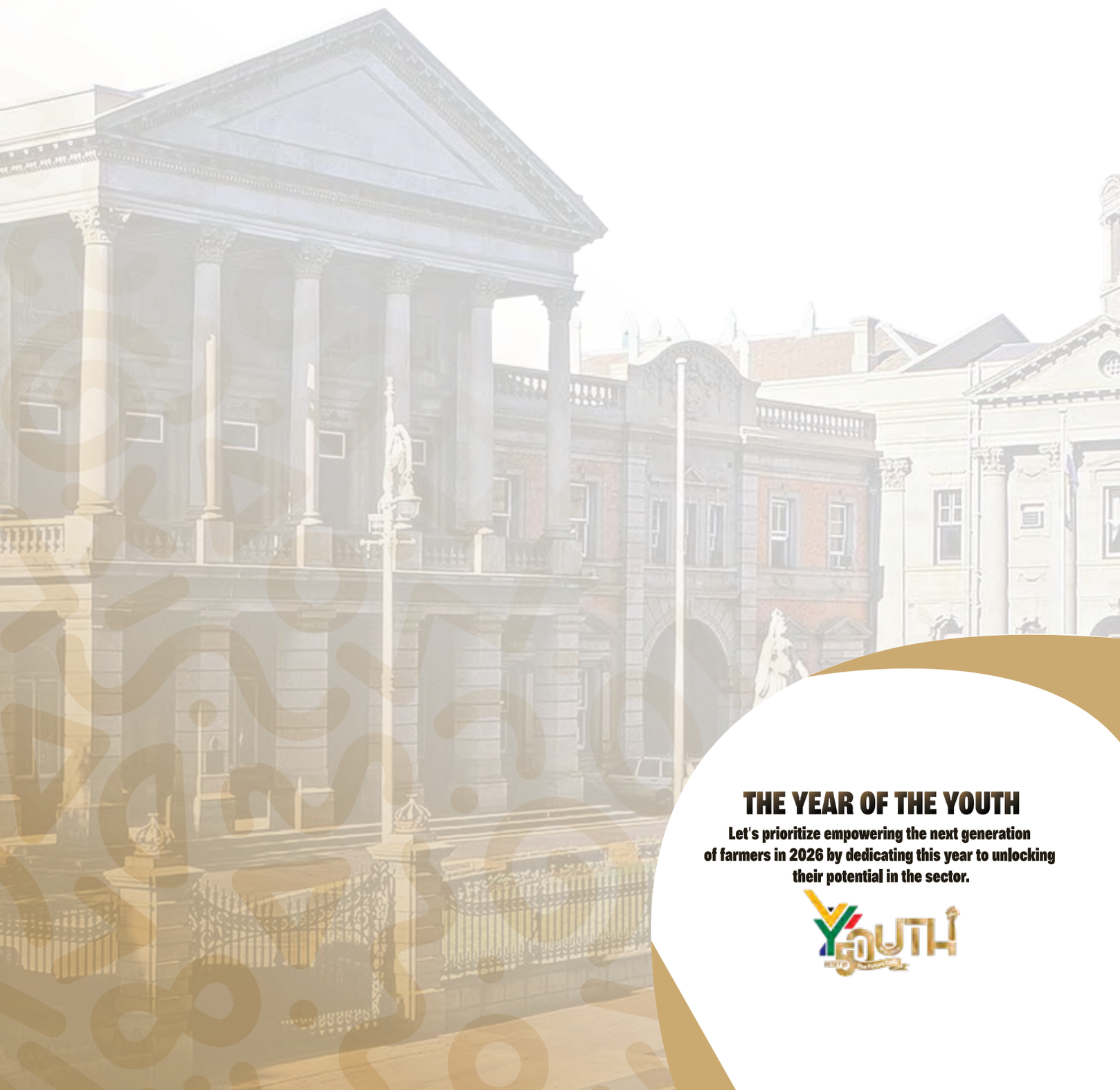
Let's prioritize empowering the next generation of farmers in 2026 by dedicating this year to unlocking their potential in the sector.



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

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THE YEAR OF THE YOUTH

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