

2022/23 BUDGET SPEECH

DELIVERED BY THE MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

HON. MRS BN SITHOLE-MOLOI

VOTE 3: DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Honourable Speaker, Ms. N Boyce**
- **Honourable Deputy Speaker, Mr. T Mthembu**
- **Honourable Premier, Mr. S Zikalala**
- **Honourable Members of the Executive Council**
- **Honourable Members of the KZN Legislature**
- **House of Traditional Leaders Chairperson, Inkosi Chiliza**
- **Religious and Traditional Leaders**
- **Mayors and Councillors**
- **Officials from the Department**
- **Sector Stakeholders**
- **Our citizens of KZN**
- **Members of the Media**
- **Ladies and Gentleman**

1. INTRODUCTION

Honourable Speaker, we are grateful for this opportunity once again to deliver our annual budget speech as the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, despite the challenges that engulfed our beautiful province recently.

Honourable Speaker, as we stand here our hearts are heavy following the recent devastating floods that destroyed houses, infrastructure, crops, livestock and more importantly the many lives lost amongst our people. We extend our sincere condolences to the families that lost their loved ones and we also pray that those who are still missing are found and brought back to their families.

Several homes including farm dwellers' houses and individual farmers were damaged, critical infrastructure including roads, communication, agricultural infrastructure, machinery & equipment, various crops (Sugar Cane, Grains, Fruits and Vegetables) and

Livestock including Large, small and companion animals were also impacted by the flooding.

As a caring government immediately we received news of the floods that wreaked havoc in our communities. The Honourable Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Mr Sihle Zikalala dispatched the executive team and civil servants throughout the affected areas.

I was deployed to Ntuzuma and uMzinyathi (North of Durban). It was disheartening to see displaced families looking over their washed away houses, they could no longer go to. In some areas, it was painful to see a family member pointing to what used to be their homestead.

Honourable Members, the agricultural sector was not spared. The Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Mrs Thoko Didiza, and I visited the area of Shongweni, Cliffdale, oThongathi and Endwedwe, where we personally witnessed the devastating effects in the agricultural sector.

In Shongweni, a female poultry farmer was left reeling at the loss of infrastructure, egg laying chickens and feed due to severe rains.

Honourable Members, the data that we collected thus far indicate that the damage in agricultural crops is estimated at 5 789 hectares of land in KwaZulu-Natal, there are about 30 000 dead and displaced livestock (poultry, pigs, cattle, sheep), 56 farmers were affected, there are 589 farm workers affected, 267 farm dwellers' households and 27 agricultural projects were affected.

Export and import of produce was affected due to Durban Harbour which was temporarily closed including the Durban Fresh Produce Market affecting shipment and loss of perishable stock.

The damage to communication and road infrastructure compounded the situation as our ground officials were delayed to access other farming communities.

Honourable Speaker, in the midst of this horrible ordeal, we convened a special stakeholder meeting in Durban, where we discussed urgent interventions needed by the sector to guard against food insecurity.

Thus far, we received data from various farmer organizations throughout the Province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Honourable Members, we also appreciate the input from our stakeholders which has enabled us to have a clear picture of the situation on the ground. The impact on the loss of nutrients, pest and diseases has resulted in the decline of produce quality and yields including loss of income.

The ripple effects of this disaster in the food system could be a rise in food prices as the sector was still reeling from the shocks of the July unrest and the December torrential rains.

Honourable Speaker, as we have indicated earlier that the National Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Mrs Thoko Didiza visited the Province of KwaZulu-Natal following the devastating disaster.

She pronounced a need for the establishment of a Steering Committee that will include Provincial Department, National Department and Stakeholders.

The committee is called Agricultural Land Reform and Rural Development Disaster Management Steering Committee. The

Committee is a standing committee which will be operational for the duration of the National State of Disaster due to the KZN floods. We are looking forward as Provincial Department to work with the Committee to change the lives of our people.

Honourable Members, our budget speech is inspired by the positive attitude of our people particularly in deep rural areas who have shown interest in the agricultural sector. I have met with different people who have told me how enthusiastic they are about changing the tide in the agricultural sector.

We deliver this speech whilst being mindful of the plight of workers during this Workers' Month. We stand with the employees who are until today working on very appalling working conditions and who are still struggling for better salaries.

We express our gratitude to all workers of the world who continue to fight for better wages and improved conditions. We are in solidarity with the workers.

In my department, I've seen dedication from our staff who have served with diligence from 10 to 30 years. We have recently honoured them in

our Long Service Awards ceremony.

Honourable Members, our theme for last financial year was “ The year of Livestock” we have seen the potential of developing rural economy through livestock, hence the 2022/23 financial year has been deemed “The year of developing rural economy through Livestock”

Madam Speaker, it is imperative that we pause and reflect on what has been achieved from the commitments we made to this House in the previous financial year 2021/2022.

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EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION

Honourable Members, I am pleased to announce that the Department’s Turnaround Strategy is yielding positive results.

The overall aim of the strategy was to improve the Department’s systems of internal controls and governance in order to make the institution more efficient and effective in fulfilling its mandate.

The strategy has four critical focus areas Governance and AG Audit Improvement; Service Delivery Improvement; and Strengthening Institutional Capacity.

IMPROVED AUDIT OUTCOMES

Honourable Members, we are delighted to report on the improvement that the Department has registered on the AG audit outcomes.

Members will recall the history that this Department comes from when it was regularly qualified for internal control deficiencies.

For the second year in a row we have been able to obtain a successive unqualified AG audit outcome in 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years.

This outcome confirms the success of the turnaround strategy that we are implementing since 2019. The Department is working towards achieving a clean audit outcome.

PREMIER SERVICE EXCELLENCE WINNERS

The Department is pleased about the milestones attained as it journeys through the implementation of its turnaround programme. The image of the Department and service delivery record is improving as more farmers and other citizen groups experience improved service offerings.

Recently, the Department won several awards in the Premier Service Excellence Awards. The Department was awarded with gold on the categories for Best Communication Team during National Lockdown and Best Public Service Innovator of the year, won by Lesley Thurtell from the Soil Science section.

At the outbreak of the corona virus, the Department utilized its laboratories to produce sanitizers and distributed those for use by other government departments and the farming communities as part of its contribution to the COVID-19 response.

Furthermore, as agricultural sector was declared an essential service, the Department distributed relief funds to farmers to support continued food production and the Department's communications team ensured coherent messaging to farmers. It is thus humbling that these efforts are recognized by these awards.

The Department also had two winners on the silver category: Jeffrey Malevu from Amajuba District Office on the Best Frontline Service

Delivery Employee of the Year and Nonsikelelo Mathabela from King Cetshwayo District on the Best implemented project of the Year.

Additionally, Siyethemba Kunene (King Cetshwayo District Office) received a certificate of commendation on the best implemented project of the year. On the category for Best General worker of the year, Busani Mthiya from ILembe District office won a bronze.

These awards build on what has become a proud tradition in the Department with several of its components and employees winning provincial and national recognition on service excellence.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Department was able to improve its expenditure from 99.93% in 2020/21 to 99.96% of the budget in 2021/22 financial year.

The Department's expenditure improved considerably, resulting in Department's under-expenditure decreasing from R98.648 million in 2019/20 to R17.151 million in 2020/21 and down to R1 million in 2021/22.

In 2018/19, the under-expenditure was R264.4 million, which shows there has been massive expenditure improvement in the past three years. The improved expenditure management is a result of the tightened expenditure control, risk management as well reduced irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure.

ENHANCING HUMAN CAPACITY

Honourable Speaker, the Department has ensured that critical executive positions that had acting incumbents were filled promptly. Some recent appointments include the appointment of Deputy Director General: Agriculture Development Services; Chief Director: Human Resource Management; Director: Engineering and District Director: UMkhanyakude. Furthermore, 10 senior management positions have been advertised and will be filled in this financial year.

BURSARIES, INTERNSHIPS AND LEARNERSHIPS

Creating a pool of critical and scarce skills remains an area of focus in the Department's strategic agenda. In the year 2021/22; the department has supported a total of fifty-one (51) youth with full bursaries in the following fields of study: veterinary science, agribusiness, agronomy, animal and poultry, agricultural economics,

agricultural engineering, agricultural management, plant pathology, animal science, biological science and animal health to mention a few. For 2022/23; the Department is awarding nine (9) bursaries in the hard to fill position within the scarce skills category.

The Department has appointed 142 graduates into the internship programme running for 24 months until the end of 2022/23 financial year. 116 learners have been enrolled on the Department's Plant Production and Animal Production Learnerships.

AGRICULTURAL SERVICES

In his State of the Nation Address His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa identified agriculture as having the potential to generate large-scale employment, particularly in the citrus, table and dried grape, subtropical fruit, avocado, berry and nuts industries, and said that the master plans for the sugar and poultry industries were already contributing to increased investment, improved production, and transformation.

Indeed, His Excellency the President of the Republic of South Africa has given us marching orders and we are ready to oblige. Honourable Members, there is no doubt that agricultural production remains a key

contributor to the South African economy and a means for the livelihoods of the majority of our rural population. Sustained agricultural growth is critical for uplifting the living standards of all South Africans.

MULTI-PLANTING SEASON

Grain Value Chain

Indeed, Honourable Members in order to sustain agricultural growth, the Department is committed to implementing the sector commodity approach strategy.

To demonstrate this commitment, in the 2022/23 financial year, the Department is planning to support 10 136 grain producers and will be assisting farmers to cultivate 28 320 hectares with food production compared to the 21 394 hectares cultivated in the previous financial year.

In the 2021/22 financial year, a cumulative total of 6 641 producers were supported in the Grain Commodity Value Chain against a target of 5 631 grain producers. In the medium term the Department will restructure support to grain producers in line with the grain Silo Agri-Hubs programme.

FOOD SECURITY

Honourable Members, according to the latest General Household Survey 2020 by Statistics South Africa, households and individuals vulnerable to hunger increased slightly compared to previous periods to 10.8% and 11.6% respectively.

Furthermore, 16.8% of KwaZulu-Natal's household considered their access to food as inadequate. Although this represents a slight decrease from 17.5% in 2019 there was a notable increase in the number of households with inadequate food access reported in the period 2020. Beyond supporting individuals and communities to grow their own food for sustenance, the Department has a suite of interventions aimed at smallholder and commercial producers.

AGRONOMIC SEED AND MEGA NURSERIES

Last year, we made an undertaking to this House, that the department will bring into operation the Makhathini Nursery and build new Mega Nurseries at Dundee and Cedara Research Stations as government seed production initiative.

I am pleased to announce to this august house that during the past season, the Makhathini nursery produced 70 000 seedlings for the

farmers around uMkhanyakude district. A total of 30 graduates were employed to support seedling production.

The structure designs for nurseries at Dundee and Cedara have been completed and the construction will start in the 2022/2023 financial year. The primary objective of the agronomic seed and mega nurseries is to reduce dependence on out sourcing for the supply of seeds and seedlings.

Under the agronomic seed programme, in the previous financial year the Department managed to harvest 3.63 tons of maize seeds and distributed to farmers who planted 145 hectares.

The farmers will harvest an estimated 580 tons of maize. Bean seed harvested was 7.0 tons and distributed to the farmers who planted 93 hectares of beans. The farmers will harvest an estimated 139.5 tons of beans.

In the current planting season 20 hectares of maize and 40 hectares of beans have planted for seed multiplication. Accordingly, 120 tons of maize seeds and 100 tons of bean seeds will be harvested to support

the cultivation of 4800 hectares of maize and 1332 hectares of beans in the current financial year's planting season.

In order ensure successful implementation of the seed multiplication programme the Department has created 108 job opportunities for the youth at Dundee, Kokstad and Makhathini Research stations.

Furthermore, eight Candidates Scientists will be employed to provide support in running the programme.

Last year, the Department's food security intervention programmes successfully supported 21 315 households with food production initiatives. To ensure stability in food security for these households, the department is planning to support a further 18 071 subsistence farmers and 3 958 smallholder producers in the 2022/23 financial year.

EXTENSION RECOVERY PLAN

Honourable Chairperson, the department continues to provide technical information and support to small scale farmers, communities and emerging farmers. We have strengthened the extension recovery programme by employing 31 Contract Agricultural advisors for a period of 3 years.

LAND CARE

Honourable Members, the Department has implemented Projects amounting to R37 million rand in 2021/2022 financial year, creating over 970 EPWP jobs opportunities and rehabilitated 4400ha of land.

In the current financial year, the department will rehabilitate an additional 4400ha of agricultural land, which is estimated to create over 810 EPWP job opportunities.

LIVESTOCK VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT

Honourable Chairperson, in my previous budget speech I declared 2021/22 as the “Year of Livestock”. We are pleased to report that we have successfully implemented a total of 46 livestock value chain projects at a total budget cost of R10.3 million. We supported over 1

651 producers in the Red Meat Commodity Value Chain with provision of feed, veterinary services, fencing material, breeding stock, extension and advisory services and other forms of technical support.

The Department also conducted thirteen (13) rural livestock auction sales across the province, where more than 1800 animals were sold earning over R13 million in payments to farmers.

In the 2022/23 financial year, the department is planning to support a total of 28 Livestock Value Chain Projects constituting 13 Beef Commodity Projects, 9 Piggery Commodity Projects, 1 Goats Commodity Project, and 5 Poultry Commodity Projects. A total budget of approximately One Hundred and Four Million Rand (R104 M) has been set aside for the implementation of these projects.

LIVESTOCK ASSOCIATIONS

Honourable Members, the Honourable Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Mr Sihle Zikalala officialy launched the revitalization of Livestock Associations in our province. The Department is currently implimenting

Ward Livestock Committees in municipalities through out the province to improve infrastructure, livestock services and commodities.

The Department will be conducting local and district roadshows engaging livestock farmers to take a lead in the management and maintenance of infrastructure constructed in their respective areas.

These engagements will be used to also promote keeping of livestock for marketing purposes and ensuring thriving rural livestock industry.

COMMERCIALIZATION OF GOAT FARMING

Honourable Members, as a Department we are concerned that out of 1.7 million goats that are sold in KZN only 600 000 come from the province. In most occasions we depend on neighbouring countries like Namibia, Lesotho and Mozambique with the supply of goats. To increase goat production in the province we have set aside R3 million for remedies and protective clothing.

R5 million was allocated in 2021/22 to start the pilot projects in the five (5) Districts, namely; Umkhanyakude, Umzinyathi, uThukela, King Cetshwayo, and Zululand Districts.

Honourable Chairperson, the primary objective of the goat programme is to preserve the culture of goat farming and ensure that goat meat is available in all retail stores in the province.

COMMUNAL BEEF IMPROVEMENT (CBI)

In the last financial year we committed to implement a communal beef improvement programme in order to improve the genetic potential of the communal beef herd through the introduction of artificial insemination (AI) and follow-up bulls with superior genetics. The Department commenced the implementation of this programme at Umzimkhulu under Harry Gwala District.

Animals were collected from different dip tanks within the district and were screened to ensure they meet the program requirements. A total of 178 animals and 78 beneficiaries participated in the programme.

The selected beef heifers from the communal farmers were moved to a feedlot where they were flushed and synchronized to prepare for Artificial Insemination. After insemination they were followed by bulls for natural mating. Animals are in a process of being returned back to beneficiaries and they have all been diagnosed pregnant.

WOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Honourable Members, last year we made an undertaking to construct shearing sheds in Harry Gwala District in support of a promising communally driven wool industry at uMzimkhulu. Accordingly, two (2) sheds have been completed, and the other four are currently in construction.

The Department supported 13 Wool Growers Association with shearing equipment in the 2021/22 financial year. As a result of this support, Wool

Growers Associations are able to timeously shear and supply wool to buyers. Over 345 smallholder producers with over 24,281 stock of sheep stand to benefit from the Department's wool improvement interventions and this has a potential to generate R16.9 million in revenue for the rural communities.

AGRICULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

In the 2021/22 financial year, 58 agricultural infrastructure projects were established while 09 agricultural infrastructure projects were rehabilitated. A total of 351 kilometers were fenced for agricultural purposes.

In the 2022/23 financial year, the department is planning to further establish 45 agricultural infrastructure projects and rehabilitate 10 agricultural infrastructure projects including constructing a total of 250 kilometers of fence for agricultural purposes.

IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT

Honourable Members, in 2020/21 the Department invested more than R20 million in **subsurface drainage for the Makhathini irrigation scheme**.

This current financial year an additional amount of R6.5 million will be injected to the project.

On the **rehabilitation of 1 kilometre irrigation canal** at Makhathini irrigation scheme the department spent more than R10 million in the previous financial year. We have engaged the Department of Water and Sanitation to intervene on the matter as the canal serves as a bulk water supply.

MJINDI / MAKHATHINI IRRIGATION SCHEME

The ADA will continue to provide water services to Makhathini Farmers through Mjindi irrigation scheme. As part of improving water provision, the ADA plans to undertake the following key projects:

- Continue with the rehabilitation of the irrigation canal.
- Rehabilitate the Pump-sets at Makhathini Irrigation Scheme

In the **rehabilitation of Makhathini Pump-stations**, more than R6 million was invested in the previous financial year and a further R2,2 million will be allocated in the current financial year.

The project has created over 56 job opportunities.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

ESTABLISHMENT OF AGRI-HUBS

Honourable Members, I am pleased to announce that as promised in the last financial year that the department has completed the planning phase which includes the identification of sites, Geo-tech analysis, Environmental impact assessment(EIA) and consultation with public and private sector.

I am happy to announce that the department has already begun the Environment Impact Assessments processes for all Agri-hubs and will

continue during the financial year 2022/2023. The Department will be focussing in conducting relevant studies including public participation, which is also intending to commence the bulk infrastructure of the Agri-hubs and **R30 million** has been set aside for this purpose.

One of the focus areas in the implementation of the Agri- Hubs during the financial year 2022/23 is the finalisation of the Resources Mobilization phase and conclusion of contracts and or MOUs with public and or private partners.

This phase entails engagements with local and international interested funders/ investors in the development and operation of Agri-Hubs.

In his State of the Province Address, the Honourable Premier Mr Sihle Zikalala, said “The red meat Hub is going to be located in the Zululand District Municipality while the wool skin and hides treatment facility will be located in uThukela District Municipality. The white meat Hub will be on the border of EThekwini Municipality and UMgungundlovu District. The Dairy Hub will be in the Harry Gwala District Municipality, the fresh produce hub in

King Cetshwayo Municipality and the Green Hub in the Amajuba District Municipality.”

Lokhu kutshengisa ngokusobala ukuthi singuHulumeni waKwaZulu-Natal sizimisele ukusebenza ngokukhulu ukuzikhandla ukuguqula izimpilo zabantu bakithi.

RASET TRANSFER TO DARD

We are pleased to report to the House, Honourable chairperson, that the Radical Agrarian Socio-Economic Transformation (RASET) Programme (RASET) has officially moved from the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and `Environmental Affairs to our department with effect from April 2022. This move is the fulfillment of the decision by KZN Executive Council to move RASET programme to DARD with full resources.

The rationale of this decision is to align the programme with the farmer support programmes for full benefit of the KZN farmers that supply fresh produce to this RASET and expansion of opportunities in the value chain. RASET is now housed under programme three- Rural Development- within the Department budget structure.

For 2022/23 the programme will focus on the securing more markets for farmers as well as adding more commodity to RASET basket such herbs for spices. To this end, there are already potential industry partners as well as Department of Education and Correctional Services to get them to buy from RASET producers.

HEMP/ CANNABIS PRODUCTION

Honourable Chairperson, kuyaziwa ukuthi abantu bakithi babheke ukusungula amathuba amabhizinisi abo ngohlelo lokutshalwa komthunzi wezinkukhu. Siyaqhubeka siwuHulumeni ukusheshisa ukwenza ucwaningo lokutshalwa komthunzi wezinkukhu.

The National department was tasked with developing a Master Plan for the Cannabis Industry. Following the finalization of the regulatory framework, provincial departments have been directed to appoint steering committees to contribute to the Master Plan and production guidelines for the Cannabis industry in their respective provinces. The Department is participating in this process with a view to commence research trials as soon as approval is received.

The Provincial Executive Council recently resolved on the establishment of a Provincial Steering Committee on Hemp/Cannabis to be led by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

SUPPORTING WOMEN, YOUTH AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Department recognizes the importance of giving hope to vulnerable groups by supporting projects owned by woman, youth and people with disability. In the 2022/23 financial year, the department is planning to spend a total amount of R26.1 million towards supporting 230 vulnerable group projects constituting of 113 women owned projects, 83 youth owned projects and 34 person with disability owned projects.

UNEMPLOYED AGRICULTURE GRADUATE PROGRAMME

Honorable members, the Department continues with an excellent work on the placement of unemployed graduates in commercial, land reform farms and different agricultural enterprises in order to gain vital work experience. This will include, but is not limited to, the experiential training and on-farm mentorship of unemployed agricultural graduates towards better employability and entrepreneurial development.

The graduate development programme forms part of the various planned interventions of the department for youth economic empowerment as well as sector transformation amongst women and people with disabilities. This graduate development programme hopes to see young agriculturalists exit with an entrepreneurial spirit and skills to step into the sector and establish their own enterprises.

As feedback to the progress of last year's pronouncement, I am pleased to indicate that 340 agricultural graduates were placed on farms and agricultural enterprises under the agricultural graduate development programme.

In this regard the Department will continue to implement this initiative in the coming financial year, as these 340 graduates undertake their second year in the programme. The Department will again be placing 340 new graduates on enterprises in this financial year to ensure our young agricultural enthusiasts continue to grow as entrepreneurs in the sector.

VETERINARY SERVICES

PREVENTING AND MANAGING ANIMAL DISEASES

The Department has made a provision of remedies for livestock production and animal health to the amount of R50 million in an effort to curb animal borne diseases with the focus on rural and semi-urban areas. For 2021/2022 rabies vaccination materials, were made available at a cost of R2 million.

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

Honourable Members, in May 2021 the first case was reported in Mtubatuba Local Municipality in a dip tank called Nkonkoni.

Subsequently, the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development Mrs Thoko Didiza declared a Disease Management Area (DMA) in the KwaZulu-Natal Province.

In January 2022 the disease resurfaced in KwaHlabisa area which still within the Disease Management Area (DMA). The virus picked up in KwaHlabisa area is similar to the one isolated from Mtubatuba which is a sign that the virus is still circulating and spreading through movement of animals.

Resurfacing of the virus shows that the disease is rapidly spreading within the DMA and it needs to be contained through vaccination before its spread outside the DMA.

There are movement restrictions placed on cloven-hoofed animals, their products and genetic material out of, into, within or through the revised DMA. Visible Veterinary Patrols (VVPs) are deployed to monitor movements of animals within, through and out of the DMA.

Clinical and serological surveillance around the affected areas continue, with intensified inspections around the newly identified infected dip tank. Since the start of the outbreak in May 2021, samples have been collected from 421 locations in the province. Two rounds of serological surveillance have been completed.

After intensive serological and clinical surveillance, it was discovered that the disease is rapidly spreading and the Department has advocated for vaccination to curb the disease spread to augment the current disease control measures. Vaccination is an important component of programmes that seek to reduce impact of FMD and to

block circulation of the causative virus in order to establish and maintain disease freedom by providing protective immune response.

Intensified vaccination programmes, disease surveillance, awareness campaign and movement controls are critical to enable the province to manage FMD successfully.

The administration of vaccine consists of 1st and 2nd dose which is administered after 6-8 weeks. Vaccine is safe to be used in all animals irrespective of age and also it is safe on pregnant animals. First round of vaccination commenced in March 2022 with the second round expected to start in July 2022, with over 41 dip tanks and over 40 000 cattle expected to be vaccinated.

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE and 4TH INDUSTRIAL SMART AGRICULTURE

Honourable Members, since the world has gone to 4th industrial revolution, it has compelled the agricultural sector to venture into the 4th industrial smart agriculture. I am happy to announce that major strides have been made in line with 4th industrial smart agriculture.

The Department is currently developing systems to apply strategic developmental technologies and innovative mechanisms. This will empower, develop, skill (reskill and upskill) emerging and smallholder farmers into precision farmers that produce significant agricultural produce.

In this current financial year, Analytical Services plans to add a High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) instrument to their inventory, which will enable the labs to produce even more in depth results.

CEDARA AND OWEN SITHOLE COLLEGES OF AGRICULTURE

As a Department, we acknowledge that the current farmers are aging and there is a serious need to introduce new, young and fresh farmers into the sector, which is why our Colleges are ensuring that there is a contingency plan within the sector to take over the baton from the older generation farmers through to the younger graduates/farmers.

The graduates have played an impeccable role in ensuring that the natural resources which are utilised in agriculture is done so in a sustainable manner using Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), so that resources are able to sustain future generations.

We continue to produce quality qualifications in all facets, which is why Cedara College of Agriculture has an agreement with the UKZN to offer a B Agric programme at Cedara. This programme has now produced its 10th group of graduates. In the same token, Owen Sithole College of Agriculture works with University of Zululand on Value Adding and Agro Processing initiatives. Both Colleges have agreements with AgriSETA to provide bursaries to almost all students based on their needs.

SOIL FERTILITY RESEARCH

We have had unpredictable weather patterns during the last 3 years which necessitated us as government to develop a strategy on climate change.

In response to climate change, the Department is increasing its investment in research and in particular to adaptive Conservation Agriculture (CA) research.

This research is specific to KZN Agro-ecological zones in development of new soil fertility testing methods. Research areas of focus illustrate the impact of conservation agriculture as a strategy on carbon sequestration, soil health and conservation.

This type of research is establishing different types of technologies which assists in an increase in soil organic matter, reduced greenhouse gas emissions due to less external inputs and more carbon sequestration.

Increased water infiltration will reduce run-off, soil erosion and sedimentation and will improve surface and ground water levels and quality any further assist in land rehabilitation.

ESTABLISHMENT OF EARLY MORNING FARMERS MARKETS

Having witnessed the challenges associated with food distribution during the recent floods, COVID-19 Lockdowns and Social Unrest that occurred in the province. The Department has developed a programme to drive the establishment of Early Morning Farmers Markets for Cooperatives (including vulnerable groups) as a complimentary strategy to existing Municipal Fresh Produce and RASET Markets.

This initiative offers alternatives to traditional distribution methods and seeks to reduce reliance on the middleman/distributors (agents). These agents sometimes exploit smallholder farmers by buying their produce

at ridiculously low prices and selling the same fresh produce at much higher prices. It is through such initiatives that government is trying to support youth and women cooperatives, in particular, to enable their produce to be sold in their locality, reducing travelling and transport costs.

Components of this programme were implemented during the launch of the 2021/22 Planting Season where more than 200 Women, Youth and People with Disabilities were provided a successful platform to sell and exhibit their high quality produce.

This programme will be rolled out to all 11 districts where each district will prioritize its local municipality to host the Early Morning Farmers Market each month. The Department will be working together with RASET unit and District municipalities in rolling out this programme.

MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

A total of 37 Agricultural projects have been part of the Department's Mentorship Programme for 2021-2022 financial year. Most of these projects were from 22 Women Cooperatives, 03 Disabled, 11 Youth Owned Enterprises and 04 Male owned.

A total of R3.7 million has been spent on the 37 projects covering all 11 districts for the period of 36 months. They have been receiving mentorship and coaching from the experienced mentors including business skills, financial management skills, production, marketing and business plan writing skills. They were also linked with the RASET programme and other retail markets like Spar and Boxer.

It is worth noting that the 37 projects are now exiting the Mentorship program and the Exit Strategy has been developed which includes support from the Department with farming implements, linking with investors and financiers. These enterprises will be monitored at a district level to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the projects. There has been a huge demand of the Mentorship Programme and an additional 44 projects has been selected by the eleven Districts to be part of the 2022-23 Mentorship Programme.

RURAL AGRO-INDUSTRIALISATION

Honourable Members, the Rural Industrialization, particularly for youth, has never been explored. In the spirit of localisation, we will develop plans to create local rural industries to produce common products required by farmers. The products to be explored will include: Animal Feed Manufacturing; Barbed Wire Manufacturing; and Pole Manufacturing.

Honourable Members, these rural manufacturing opportunities could be located at Farmer Production Support Units (FPSUs), the future regional AgriHubs, or even in unused facilities owned by rural local municipalities. We therefore call on our rural Municipalities to work with us to ensure these local rural industrial opportunities are unlocked.

AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

The Agribusiness Development Agency will continue to focus on the development of key commodity value chains aligned production with strategic partnerships to contribute to the development of light industries and manufacturing.

During the last financial year, the ADA concluded a blended finance agreement with Ithala Development Finance Corporation Limited (Ithala) to jointly fund the Penniemarie vegetable project based in uMvoti near

Muden. In this partnership Ithala acquired the land for the project and ADA provided production inputs.

This is the reason why, we have decided to continue in the 2022/23 financial year to support this project with machinery and equipment in order to ensure the project is viable and self-sustained. Honourable Members, we are happy that the beneficiaries of this project are 100% women, youth and persons with disability owned.

Honorable Chairperson, in the financial year 2022/23, the Agency will be supporting a total of 15 commodity enterprises with infrastructure, production inputs, stock equipment and breeding stock. These will include beef, poultry, goats, vegetables and blueberry enterprises.

BEEF ENTERPRISES

In our quest to stimulate the beef industry, the Agency will support four beef enterprises of which three of the four are women owned, these include Onala beef farmers, Sizisizwe Co-operative, Good Hoep projects in Zululand District and Keliana Management in uMgungundlovu District. Onala beef farmers, Keliana Management and Good Hoep will each be supported with beef production stock (Weaners) and production inputs (animal feed & Veterinary supplies) for their 400 animal feedlot enterprises.

Sizisizwe Co-operative is a 4615ha beef grazing farm that is working towards establishing a commercial beef feedlot. The Agency will provide support with breeding stock (Heifers and breeding bulls) and this will assist the enterprise to establish its own throughput supply for the feedlot operation.

Sheep Production

Honourable Members, we are prioritizing sheep production to improve this industry in our Province. In this current financial year, the Agency will support two projects namely Ufahari and Amakhosazana that are 100% youth and women owned. These projects are based in uMgungundlovu District. The Agency will provide support with infrastructure (sheep sheds, boreholes & fencing) breeding stock (ewes & rams), development of grazing pastures and production inputs (animal feed & veterinary supplies).

Goats

Honorable Members, as part of establishing the goat value chain, the owned Agency is providing support to Copper Sunset project, which is a 100% women owned enterprise located also under uMgungundlovu District. Copper Sunset will be assisted with goat breeding stock (doe & buck) production inputs (animal feed & veterinary supplies) and development of cultivated pasture.

Poultry

The Agency is providing support to two youth owned enterprises. These are Mansimu layers project under uMgungundlovu and Lunginhlanhla layers under Ilembe Districts. Mansimu project will be supported with 10 000-layer capacity automated cages, production stock and production inputs (animal feed & veterinary supplies). Lunginhlanhla layers will be supported with an egg packaging facility, production stock i.e. 10 000 pullets and production inputs (animal feed & veterinary supplies).

Horticulture and crop production

The Agency will support two women owned enterprises (Inganda and KZN High Yield), with commercial tunnels for high value crops such as cucumbers, herbs and lettuce. These project will be supported with the value adding facilities in the form of fully equipped mobile packhouses.

The Agency will develop the first blueberry export facility in KZN as the catalytic project based in uMgungundlovu. This enterprise will also be supported with fully fledged tunnels for blueberry production.

Mentorship and Capacity Building Initiatives

The Agency partnered with AgriSeta to roll out skills development initiatives. This programme will include the provision of skills to farmers across KZN in the following areas:

- Short Skills
- Mentorship
- Placement of Graduates to the different enterprises

This programme is aimed at ensuring that emerging farmers are advanced to become sustainable commercial farmers, contribute to the economy of the province and create job opportunities.

Market Access

As part of ensuring participation in the value chain process, 20 enterprises with market ready products will be assisted with product testing in order to enter highly regulated markets.

NTINGWE TEA ESTATE

We understand the importance of resuscitating Ntingwe Tea Estate and to preserve job opportunities for the current employees. Honourable Members, the Ntingwe Tea Estate has the potential to grow and contribute immensely to the provincial economy. The Agency is developing a comprehensive marketing strategy for Ntingwe Tea Estate to enhance its brand for better market exposure. This will include selling the tea to local markets and government establishments through the RASET programme.

Ntingwe Tea will embark on acquiring the Rain Forest Alliance Accreditation in order to be able to access and attract higher prices in the export market.

Honourable Speaker and Members, I hereby table the budget vote for the 2022/23 financial year for the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development:

Programme 1- Administration: R692, 934 million

Programme 2- Agricultural Development Services: R1, 713 185 billion

Programme 3- Rural Development: R84, 437

Total: R2, 490, 556

CONCLUSION

Honourable Members, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the entire staff of the department for their continued support. Ngithanda ukubonga nabalimi esihlala sihlalanga nabo ukudingida kabanzi ngokuguqula imboni yezolimo, kuninanonke ngithi Inkosi ibenani siqhubeke nokusebenza kanzima ukuze sishintshe izimpilo zabantu bakithi.

To my family, my husband, the ANC leadership and all my comrades in general, I salute you for being my strength and a shoulder to lean on.

Kumphakathi wakithi kanye nakubalimi ngokwehlukana kwabo ngithi:

“Phez’komkhono”

I thank you!