

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY MEC MAPULA MOKABA-PHUKWANA DURING
THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2016 AT
ZORORO LODGE IN POLOKWANE**

The HoD and Chairperson of the Advisory Council Mme Maisela R.J.

Leadership of our Agricultural and Farmers Unions

Representatives of our Institutions of Higher Learning

**Members of the Dept. of Agriculture & Rural Development Advisory
Council Committee**

Management of the Department and staff

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the HoD and chairperson of the Council Mme Maisela and her team of experts for inviting me into this high profile gathering.

The significance of consultative and participatory approach was well expressed in my meeting with the departmental bureaucrats on Friday the 23rd September 2016. The emphasis was on working together as a team with the people through their representative and other stakeholders who in the words of Inge Kotze will makes us:

“Celebrate and support the role of the farmer in South Africa as well as acknowledge that our farmers are the key custodians of our natural systems and freshwater resources and that together with them we can feed our growing population and support a vibrant food economy, fight poverty, joblessness and inequality.”

Ladies and gentlemen, I also indicated in that meeting that this is the most appropriate time that we seek solutions to agricultural challenges through partnerships. We desperately need our Academic Institutions, Academics, Professionals, Non-governmental organizations and most of all our farmers. We need everyone to see beyond the horizon and come with innovative measures to tackle natural phenomenon negatively affecting our sector.

As a winning nation, let us deal with these challenges facing our country with the same determination we unleashed when we dismantled the erstwhile discriminatory regime.

Agriculture in South Africa has a central role to play in building a strong economy and, in the process, reducing inequalities by increasing incomes and employment opportunities for the poor, while nurturing our inheritance of natural resources. To achieve this is a formidable challenge to us gathered here today.

We are under the grip of the worst drought in Africa for years in record and memory. The domestic economies in our continent affected by drought have taken a sharp knock, with projected staple food price hikes likely to continue unabated. The steep food prices could push most households to more serious vulnerability status leading to poverty, unemployment and crime.

Program Director

Our task is to establish an environment where opportunities for higher incomes and employment are created for resource poor farmers alongside a thriving commercial farming sector.

A detailed analysis of the various challenges is given in the Integrated Growth and Development Policy for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, or 'IGDP'.

Based on this analysis, the IGDP also outlines appropriate responses. The Agricultural Policy Action Plan (APAP) seeks to translate the highlevel responses offered in the IGDP into tangible, concrete steps. However, this first iteration of APAP is not offered as a fully comprehensive plan. It is rather, based on the model of the Industrial Policy Action Plan ('IPAP'), it identifies an ambitious but manageable number of focused actions, in anticipation of future APAP iterations that will take the process further.

APAP is planned over a five year period and will be updated on an annual basis. Aligning itself with the New Growth Path (NGP), the National Development Plan (NDP) and Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP), APAP seeks to assist in the achievement of the Millennium Goal Outcome 4, Decent Employment through Inclusive Growth, and that of Outcome 7, Comprehensive Rural Development and Food Security. As a country we performed badly on these outcomes and we need to pursue them beyond MDG.

APAP proposes a number of transversal interventions that complement but also go beyond the specific sectoral interventions identified. Altogether seven transversal interventions – or 'Key Action Programmes' ('KAPs') – are included, which collectively seek to strengthen the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors in diverse ways. One of these is Trade, agribusiness development and support.

Our Agricultural Policy Action Plan set out three major goals to achieve this task. We need:

- ✚ to build an efficient and internationally competitive agricultural sector;
- ✚ to support the emergence of a more diverse structure of production with a large increase in the numbers of successful smallholder farming enterprises;

- ✚ to conserve our agricultural natural resources and put in place policies and institutions for sustainable resource use.

The changes we foresee for the sector are part of broader processes of rural development, which include land reform, investment in water supply and transport infrastructure, and improved social service delivery.

These changes are intended to make a major contribution to achieving the aims of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Evictions of people living on the land, farm murders and abuses of farm workers characterise the instability deep-seated in the rural areas.

A prosperous agriculture, based on cooperation and collaboration, will play a part in removing instability and fear. Current amendments to existing farming laws are aimed at levelling the playing fields and alleviate fears and mistrusts.

This meeting takes place against the backdrop of the drought that continues to ravage the landscape and shores of our land. Agriculture and related functions are widely recognized as sectors with significant job creation potential and with strategic links to beneficiation opportunities.

However, between 1994 and 2012 the real contribution of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries (AFF) to GDP increased by 29%, over the same period employment declined in both primary production and agro processing by about 30% to 40%. This combination of slow to modest growth and declining employment, continues a longer term trend evident since at least the 1970s.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This meeting takes place when every farmer, commercial, smallholder or otherwise are looking upon government to provide solutions to numerous problems created by the drought.

It is within this context that we need to posthumously thank my predecessor, Cde Joy Matshokge for constituting this Advisory Council. To us this Advisory Council serves as a platform to provide much needed counsel. It serves as a sounding board on how best we can, together with other stakeholders carry forward the fight against joblessness, poverty and inequality.

The National Development Plan envisages an inclusive rural economy wherein there is economic growth, food security and jobs, which in turn have to result in improved living conditions for our people.

Chairperson

I am therefore happy when looking at your previous and currently scheduled engagements in this forum. Your deliberations show that this advisory council is more relevant and serve as a catalyst for change in assisting the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in overcoming prevailing conditions.

In addition to this, research depicts an enormous decline in the number of South Africa's commercial farmers since 1994. This decrease is mainly due to consolidation and the on – going land reform processes. The current few commercial farmers in the country still carry the responsibility of feeding a population of more than 52 million people. This threat requires a coherent radical approach, and one such approach is bringing youth on board. The involvement of youth will ensure continuity and sustainability of the agriculture and land reform production.

I am convinced that the process provide innovative ways towards creation of a better life for all. We are pleased that the Department has adopted the agri-park model as an approach mission to agricultural transformation and development. It is our firm belief that this model will go a long way to ensure that we together take South Africa forward.

To conclude, chairperson, I must reiterate that as the people representative I am an advocate of clean government and a supporter of corruption watch. I am confident and declare that my hands are clean and as such, we must operate above board. I call upon you as the advisory council to commit to transparent, clean and good governance.

Take a lead in the mission to stop the scourge of corruption eroding the moral fiber of our society. Let us all ensure that our children and future generations unapologetically enjoy the fruits of our struggle for equality, democracy and prosperity.

It is only through unity, hard work and zero tolerance towards corruption that we can REALIZE OUR VISION.

Dit is slegs deur eenheid, harde werk en 'n nul verdraag saamheid teenoor korrupsie wat ons kan BESEF ONS VISIE.

We therefore take this opportunity to welcome you all and wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.