



**DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MEC RESPONSIBLE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, Ms NANDI NDALANE ON THE OCCASION OF GRADUATION CEREMONY BY TOMPI SELEKA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE ON 26 NOVEMBER 2021 AT BOLIVIA LODGE

Programme Director

Head of the Department, Ms Ramatsimele Maisela

The Rector of Tompi Seleka College of Agriculture, Mr Mashiloane and your team

Senior management present here

Our distinguished graduates

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Afternoon

We are hosting this graduation ceremony on the back of promising fall which we experienced as a province over the last few days. Some parts of our province have received much needed rainfall which brought some relief to the farming community. As we are gathered here some parts of the province continue to receive the rainfall a reality which we welcome with both hands. We are aware that the rainfall which we have received so far is not sufficient to solve all our water problems but we trust that looking ahead our province will receive much needed rainfall in order for the Agriculture production to obtain positive yields.

Programme Director

I deliberately began my address by appreciating the rainfall to further illustrate the many blessings the rain brings into our lives. All of you gathered here know fully well that rainfall in our centuries old culture is associated with blessings.

Now today we are blessed that amongst us or importantly the guests of honour today being our lovely graduates are highly blessed to have achieved their academic goals. Infront of us here this afternoon, we see men and women who defied all the odds and emerged victorious by claiming their academic goals to the delight of your families, loved ones and of course the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Limpopo.

When I was preparing this address two days ago, I spent time in searching for suitable inspirational quotes with the view of inspiring you as you begin your new journey. Well sadly, I couldn't find anything new which you do not know already. I am aware that, I am addressing graduates and academics in your own right. We all know that academics are known to be well read people who are an inspired lot by nature. Despite these facts I thought I must share with you one of my favourite quotes from the former American President Mr Abraham Lincon who said, "The best way to predict your future is to create it." For me this is one of the most powerful quotes which has many lessons despite having been said very many years ago.

Each day many of us worry about our future. We ask ourselves what does the future hold for me and my loved ones. The uncertainty of not knowing what future holds for us remain a constant thorn in our thoughts. Today, however, I want all of us gathered here to stop worrying about our future and take lessons from the 16th President of the United States of America Mr Abraham Lincon. According to Lincon as I have quoted him above, we can all predict our future and stop worrying about it by simply creating it. The question is, how do we create our future in order for us to stop worrying about it.

Programme director

Part of responding to that question lies in front of us today. I'm referring to men and women who are graduating today who have take a step in predicting their future.

The achievement of these men and women says in future we will have stock farmers, crop farmers, Agriculture specialists of all kinds to name but a few who will feed our nation, grow the economy of this country, create much needed job opportunities for our people and also bring innovation into the Agricultural sector. So while many of us who may not be academics and who may continue to worry about our future, these men and women we are celebrating today have nothing to worry about. You have predicted your future through this achievement. We all know that it was not easy. You defied all odds, spent sleepless night and today you are reaping the rewards of your hard work. In my view you have successfully predicted your future and I can assure you, your future looks very bright. Congratulations.

Programme Director

I have mentioned in ceremonies of this nature in the past that the future of Agriculture in our country and province lie in the hands of young man and women who are graduating from our Agriculture colleges and other institutions of higher learning. Statistics worryingly show that many of those who are involved in the Agricultural sector are aging members of our community. It is therefore critically important that these graduates take their position now in this important economic sector in order to sustain food security for the masses of our people. All of us gathered here know all too well that our food does not come from the retail stores. We are educated enough to know and teach our people that all food comes from Agriculture. We therefore possess in ourselves the greatest responsibility of them all that of ensuring that we feed our nation through the knowledge you have acquired over the years during your studies. The qualification you have obtained puts you in a better position and authority to lead in the production food for our people. I trust that you will use your qualification to improve agriculture in our province. The knowledge that you have obtained throughout the years that you have spent at Tompi Seleka College of Agriculture should put you in a better position to lead this very important sector.

Programme Director

The lack of jobs in our province remain one of our challenges in our developmental agenda. What worries us the most is that majority of those who are affected by the lack of jobs are young people. Many of these young people are graduates who have been produced by our institutions of higher learning. This is indeed a serious challenge. As government we have prioritised addressing this problem in order to avoid instability in our country as a result of spiralling out of control of youth unemployment.

To our relief I must say Agricultural sector provides better opportunities for our young people including graduates. We know that with Agriculture there are plenty of job opportunities and working together with established Agriculture entities we are able provide our graduates with job placements. We will continue to strength our relationship with these entities so that those who require work experience are able to be provided with such opportunities. I have no doubt that all of you graduates are destined to greater heights. I trust that through the qualification you have obtained you will be able either enter job market or create your own projects. We will work very hard to provide much needed support withing our limited resources.

Programme Director

On Wednesday next week our province will join the nations of the world in the commemoration of World Aids Day on the 1 December. Over the years HIV/AIDS has ravaged our societies with many of our people losing their lives to this disease. Today a few days before we commemorate the international World Aids Day as nations of the world and particularly our country South Africa, we can be proud of the achievements we have obtained through our collaborative efforts. Many of you will know that South Africa has the largest number of people living with this disease with the statistics recorded at over 7 million people.

While this number may be of grave concern to all of us, it is important to note that as a country and province we have made huge strides in making treatment available to our people. South Africa has met the first of the 90-90-90 targets of people living with HIV by the year 2020. The 90-90-90 target to some of you who may not know relates to 90 percent of people living with HIV will know their status, 90 percent of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive their treatment and 90 percent of all people receiving treatment will have viral suppression. We can all see that our country has made commendable progress towards the United Nations Programme on HIV/Aids.

There is no doubt that in terms of treatment we are heading in the right direction and hopefully all our people who are receiving treatment will consistently take their medication in order to live a healthy life. It is also important to emphasise that those of you who have not contracted the disease need to take all precautionary measures to ensure that you do not fall victim to this pandemic.

Programme Director

While these achievements deserve to be celebrated as a country and province, we, however, cannot afford to be complacent. Today being a Friday like all other Fridays of the month of November have all been declared Cheka Impilo Fridays. This is a national wellness campaign whose objective is to challenge all South Africans to always Cheka Impilo and know your status. It is a campaign that aims to initiate people on HIV treatment, find the missing TB cases and screen people for non-communicable diseases. As the name suggest, we all need to check and guard our health in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This includes amongst others and not limited to practicing safe sex in order to prevent Sexually transmitted infections, quitting smoking in order to prevent tuberculosis and of course observe all the regulations of Covid-19 pandemic. As a province we have demonstrated a high level of solidarity when it comes dealing with matters affecting our lives. As we observe Check Impilo Friday let us remember that great health is great wealth.

Let us take part in ensuring that we lead a healthy lifestyle and prevent these deadly diseases from destroying our lives. Prevention is better than cure

Programme Director

I wish each one of these graduates the very best in their future. I trust that the future that they have created through this achievement will ensure that they succeed in life and in Agriculture. I wish you a safe and joyous festive season and a prosperous new year to those of you who I'm seeing for the last time this year.

I thank you.