



agriculture,
forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH BY MINISTER SENZENI ZOKWANA

**GROOTFONTEIN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE
(GADI) IMBIZO**

MIDDLEBURG

DATE: 20 APRIL 2017

Programme Director
Executive Mayor
Councillors
Members of the various Growers Associations present
Small stock farmers
Members of GADI forum
Members of Association of Students of Agricultural Training Institutes (ASATI)
GADI Student Representative Council
Lecturers and students
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Molweni, goeie More

A renowned scholar, conservationist and farmer Wendell Berry once remarked:

“The soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all. It is the healer

and restorer and resurrector, by which disease passes into health, age into youth, death into life. Without proper care for it we can have no community, because without proper care for it we can have no life.”

Our country has an alarming high unemployment rate which is reportedly the third-highest in the world, more than 50% of which is unemployed youth. Notwithstanding being a leading economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa’s economic growth is not inclusive and tends to exacerbate income inequalities, especially among the already traditionally marginalized groups such as youth and women
In my opinion, part of the solution of this scourge of youth unemployment should be strengthening colleges of Agriculture.

GADI is one of the oldest Colleges of agriculture in South Africa established in 1911. The college is recognised for the role it has played in the development of livestock farming in the country particularly in the arid areas. Our clients and stakeholders in the small stock sector have expressed their gratitude and benefit they get from the work which is done at this Institution.

The college is recognised for its quality of academic staff and the outstanding industry involvement in the vocational training offerings of the college. The college prides itself with its training, research and extension services to small stock and agricultural production in semi – arid agro ecological zone. This is indeed commendable.

These colleges were originally meant to produce farmers, not job seekers. I am aware that there has been a shift in terms of focus for these colleges as they fell in the hands of different administrations with different priorities. However, the status quo cannot be left to chance. Drastic action needs to be taken to address the gross imbalance between the rapidly increasing population and the people who produce food in the country.

The colleges of Agriculture are not governed by any piece of legislation besides their compliance to the existing skills development Acts like the White paper on Post School Education (2015). In addressing this legislation vacuum, I launched the Norms and Standards for Agricultural Training Institutes in October 2015.

The Norms and Standards advocates for these colleges to become centres of excellence; serving their specific rural communities according to their agro ecological zones.

We want all the colleges to be identified and known within the communities they serve just like GADI is serving the small stock communities in the Karoo. The Department is visiting all provinces to reinforce the implementation of these Norms and Standards.

I cannot overemphasize the role our industry and stakeholder partners should play. Industry and Growers Associations present here, must join hands with us to develop these colleges to be what they were intended to be. Government alone cannot achieve this. We need you to avail resources and absorb the graduates from these Colleges and train them further to become young farmers of note.

I was very impressed when I was informed that GADI is assisted by 5 industry partners: Small Stock Research Trust, Grootfontein Education Trust, Dorper South Africa, Boer Goat Breeders Association and Merino South Africa.

These industry partners provide support to the college in the form of maintenance of livestock, farming consumables, research consumables such as laboratory chemicals and they contract service providers for specialised services in the college. Of note is that, these industry partners avail their animals to the college to be used to train third year students for practical exposure.

This is the direction we want all the colleges to take.

Our country is characterized by a considerably low entrepreneurial activity relative to most of our Sub-Saharan African countries. According to the UN World Food Programme hunger statistics, Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest prevalence of hunger. 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 ongoing land reform processes.

The few commercial farmers in the country still carry the responsibility of feeding a population of more than 50 million people.

This threat requires a coherent radical approach that will bring the youth on board. The involvement of youth will ensure continuity and sustainability of the agricultural production. This will in the process, assist in improving household food security and the creation of employment opportunities in rural areas, and consequently reduce rural migration to urban areas.

This is the time to put youth economic empowerment high on the sector's transformation agenda.

I know most of you are wondering, why the Department is placing so much effort when there is a decision to transfer these colleges to the Department of Higher Education and Training.

I have made an in principle commitment together with the Minister of Higher Education and Training to allow the process of due diligence in the 11 colleges to conclude; the findings will be presented to Cabinet.

The Department has prioritised youth development and empowerment which includes partnerships with institutions of higher learning.

In the Budget Vote Speech last year we articulated our vision for the Agriculture sector, which bears repeating once again with all of you gathered here today.

Agriculture is one of the critical sectors that can serve as a catalyst for radical socio-economic transformation, job creation and food security for all.

Lastly, I would like to extend a word of appreciation to the students, members of the community and various growers associations gathered here today for your commitment to strengthen this college and your collaborative efforts to bring meaningful change in this community.

In the words of former President of Tanzania Julius Nyerere; "...If real development is to take place, the people have to be involved."

Together, we can do more.

I thank you.

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