



agriculture,
forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEECH FOR THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE
FORESTRY AND FISHERIES
2018 #YAFF AWARDS**

**VENUE: VELMORE HOTEL & SPA
PRETORIA**

DATE: 29 JUNE 2018

Programme Director,
Deputy Ministers
Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Forestry
and Fisheries
MECs of Agriculture
Director General
Heads of Provincial Departments
FAO Country Representative
AFAAS Executive Director
Sponsors
Captains of industries
Young producers and Entrepreneurs
Graduates
Finalists
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen

Molweni, good evening

During his State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared 2018 a centenary year for our two fallen giants, Mama Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu and Utata Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. Youth empowerment was close to the hearts of these two remarkable leaders. In the 1950s Mama Albertina Sisulu ran a race similar to that of the youth of 1976, she led a campaign to boycott the Bantu Education

system. She fought this system to a point where her home became an alternative school as her children had been withdrawn from their government schools because of the inferior system. Similarly, Madiba believed that the future lies in the youth and that as government, working with many societal stakeholders, we must place a large premium on to our youth. When he was addressing the gathering during 1999 celebration for June 16, Nelson Mandela said “the youth of 1976 were in the forefront of the liberation struggle; today you must be in the forefront of reconstruction and development”.

Ladies and gentlemen, our country is experiencing an economic backslide. According to analysts, this can be attributed to many domestic and global factors such as low productivity levels. According to reports by Stats SA the Agricultural sector’s strong performance in the previous year was one of the positive features that assisted in keeping the country’s economy afloat for the better half of 2017. Subsequently, the sector shrunk by 24, 2% in the first quarter of 2018. At a country level we witnessed an undesirable turn in the economic tide shrinking the economy by 2, 2% quarter-on-quarter.

It is worth noting that what boosted the sector to jolt the economy back to life after two consecutive quarters of decline in 2017 was an increase in, inter alia, the production of field crops and horticultural crops. This shows the importance of agricultural production to the country’s GDP growth. The shortfall in the sector should be viewed as an opportunity by young people. It is high time that youth must learn to strategically position themselves to take advantage of opportunities that are presented to them.

Ladies and gentlemen, we all know that South Africa is a net importer of wheat, importing about 40 to 50% annually. I still maintain that, there is a great potential for production of wheat in the country and if well managed it can inevitably reduce wheat imports. With the recent weakening of the Rand against the Dollar, which according to Analysts is bound to increase the price of wheat commodities such as bread, it is important for local producers to take advantage of this opportunity and produce more of that which is in demand.

Taking stock of what has been said by the previous speakers on the involvement of youth in the sector, it is indeed a sad reality; given the numerous mechanisms that have been put in place to entice the youth to actively participate in the sector. Research shows that an average farmer in South Africa is over the age of 58 with no provision for succession. Moreover, the number of agricultural commercial and smallholder units have been declining over the years. This is a grave threat to South Africa's food sovereignty. This poses a challenge to all of us, to develop and support a new crop of young Producers who will take care of food security in the country.

Over and above the many challenges that young people are facing such as lack of access to land and finance, lack of skills, among others, there is an issue of bad perception by the youth into agriculture. This negative perception has blinded most black youth and thus they associate the sector with slavery and hardship based on the experiences of their parents. Imagine a child of a farmworker, growing up in poverty and witnessing the hardship of a parent living in unfavourable conditions and

dying poor. What would motivate this child to have any form of association with the sector?

We have to clearly articulate the path for young people who are interested in joining the sector as Producers. This applies to the Continent at large. About 45% of sub-Saharan Africa's population is below the age of 15 while farmers in this region are ageing. 17 million of the population in South Africa is youth and 5.9 million of that youth are unemployed. With that chronicle, there is still no focused programme and/or support measures for those youth who are interested in joining the production side of the sector, as farmers, fisher folks and foresters.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is evident that youth participation in the Fishery and Forestry sub-sectors is almost non-existent. These are challenges that need to be systematically addressed if more young people are to be developed. It is upon the government and relevant structures of authority to create an enabling environment from a policy point of view for youth development.

In the past two years, I have embarked on a youth outreach programme during the months of June. During these engagements, I interacted with youth to establish and understand their problems. I must say this exercise was an eye opener, it revealed the reality on the ground. Enterprises that are fully owned and managed by youth are very few. Most of the young people are part of a Cooperative movement and they are not active in the day to day running of these businesses.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is upon us as Government and business to go back to the drawing board and find ways to increase the participation of youth in small-scale fisheries. Transformation is a very mammoth task to embark on, but just as notable strides have been made in increasing the participation of women in the sector; the same shall happen with youth, we need to exert the same effort as we shift our focus to youth.

It is not all doom and gloom; we have young people making their mark in the sector. The department is in the process of creating an environment that will allow youth to flourish by ensuring increased investments in businesses owned and managed by them. DAFF has developed Norms and Standards for the inclusion of Vulnerable Groups that will reset departmental programmes towards an inclusive strategy, intended primarily to address the skewed participation in the sector.

These Norms and Standards articulate precise targets and time frames in order to fast track transformation within the sector. They further serve as a yardstick with which the department will be able to measure the rate of transformation. The implementation of the Norms and Standards will compel departmental programmes to progressively within a prescribed time frame ensure equal targets (50/50) for both male and female beneficiaries in line with budget allocations. Also ensuring that 50% of the total beneficiaries are youth, and 50% of the youth are agriculture, forestry and fisheries graduates, with 6% of all beneficiaries being people living with disabilities.

Furthermore, pertaining to the Forestry sub-sector, the department is in the process of conducting a study on the participation of women and youth in this sub - sector. The study will examine, inter alia, the

quantitative and qualitative trends on the employment of women and youth strata in the sector disaggregate their participation along the entire value chain, explore the structural economic impediments for youth and female-led Small Medium and Micro Enterprises in the value chain. The study will also review the effectiveness of existing industrial and trade policy on enhancing their participation. This will serve as a baseline for government planning in trying to transform the Forestry sub-sector.

Ladies and gentlemen, in closing let me echo the sentiments of the late Oliver Tambo when he said “the children of any nation are its future. A country, a movement, a person that does not value its youth and children does not deserve its future”. We need to invest in our youth in order to realise the dividends.

Let us join hands in reshaping the future of agriculture, forestry and fisheries through creating a sustainable path for the country’s young producers. The 4th industrial revolution has swept our sector. What is known as Smart agriculture whereby old methods have been replaced by technology should be an attractive development for young people to choose agriculture as their sector of choice. We have drones, weather and climate forecast technologies that makes the business of agriculture quicker and smarter. I want to wish well all our young producers today and I direct you to be good ambassadors of agriculture and attract more youth to our sector.

I thank you