SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND LAND AFFAIRS, HON. LULU XINGWANA (MP)

GALA DINNER OF THE AGRIbee SHOWCASING

21 FEBRUARY 2008
CAPE TOWN
Honourable Premier, Mr Ebrahim Rasool
Members of the media
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Honourable Premier let me thank you for hosting us in the province of the Western Cape. Cape Town. Its surrounding geographical areas hold important memories for all South Africans. It has been the place where philosophies and strategies have been formed by our current political and business leaders. It is named the Mother City, rightfully so, as it has birthed many first of which we are not going to dwell on here tonight. We all are delighted to be here in beautiful surroundings and scenery and wonderful people, thanks for hosting and receiving the important stakeholders of South Africa’s agricultural sector. Premier, MEC what you do here in this province go far over our national borders and indeed our people are very proud of your contribution in this regard.

Honoured guests, activities relating to AgriBEE over the current 3 year period has provided insight into a work program for the future intensifying the inclusive stakeholder approach towards shared growth in the agriculture sector. Intergovernmental partnerships are being created which will enhance implementation efforts within our industry efforts.

The agricultural sector also faces various challenges ranging from local resources under-pressure to global economic slowdowns etc. However, through our coordinated efforts and actions which include
sustainable empowerment initiatives can be absorbed and turned into successes.

Our capacity to deliver can be expanded by successfully involving institutions like Women in Agriculture and Rural Development (WARD) and Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development; the disabled and empowerment of farm workers. The integration of these institutions within the agriculture sector can assist to ease capacity challenges and help with mobilisation efforts. I appeal indeed to you as sector stakeholders to work together and exploit synergies successfully to grow this important economic sector.

The finalisation of broad-based guidelines for empowerment within the agriculture sector has shifted actions into higher gear with emphasis placed on implementation and impact. Over the period during which guidelines were formulated, participants in the sector were busy with transformation efforts as can be witnessed from the last 3 annual showcasing events. Now that the dispensation and mechanisms for broad-based transformation are in place, efforts can be evaluated and measured against determined-indicators. This phase in itself has the ability to expand agriculture’s share to the national economy and other social and macro economic goals. I urged you as sector partners to continue engaging with efforts to validate the empowerment base in agriculture. Through the provision of information critical decisions can be made by leaders in different spheres with better confidence and translated by the business sector into sustainable returns. I trust on your participation in this regard.
Without spending time highlighting key priority areas within our transformation agenda, allow me to point out to skills development. The year 2008 being the first in which all grade 12s will be sitting for the same exams it is worth mentioning that this uniformity can assist with building a cadre of next generation political and business leaders who are can be up to the challenges our country face. Government, through the Department of Agriculture together with its provincial departments, agencies and Setas will further deepen efforts to contribute to skills enhancement for the benefit of the sector at large. Partnerships will be encouraged to accelerate the pace of transformation with consideration to strengthen governance processes to ensure that activity and its returns reach the masses at ground level. Skills opportunities remain an important entry point into the mainstreaming of economy and I salute all impact-driven efforts towards a skilled agriculture sector.

I encourage you as sector stakeholders to continue in the same spirit with implementation as you did during AgriBEE charter development using broad inclusive participation and ownership of thought processes.

The features of unprecedented growth in economy which are experienced locally have to continue to spill over to our sector as well. Providing enterprising and job opportunities and in so doing contributing to 2014 vision.
To remain a competitive agriculture sector, it is now ever important to capture aspects of integration and transformation within our business agendas.

Honoured guests the agriculture sector must continue in its contributing efforts towards attaining better life for all South Africans. More so because agriculture is at the forefront of local and rural economic activities and this is manifested in our involvement across public and private sector program initiatives.

Our work program will continue to be influenced from voices from the grassroots levels. In this regard the APEX PRIORITIES have been spelled out during the 2008 State of the Nation Address. Departments of Agriculture and Land Affairs have geared themselves up to deliver on its action plans and would require sector stakeholders’ relentless effort to ensure impact.

The third annual AgriBEE showcasing event has once again met expectations and will continue to provide a platform for openly sharing lessons and experiences in this regard. In 2006 we started out by showcasing a broad number of initiatives with specific focus on first-movers in this regard the sugar sub-sector lessons and experiences were projected extensively during the event. During 2007, the scope of the AgriBEE Charter provided direction in that the initiatives showcased covered most sub-sectors and included agricultural services partnerships as well. This year the spectrum of our annual showcasing program captured all these again plus
allowing for sector stakeholders to present strategies, views and opportunities relating to the implementation of the AgriBEE in South Africa. I am sure that you have had your time spent well during this day and that networks formed today can be leveraged to the best interest of agriculture sector.

I thank the people behind the empowerment profiles which were showcased here today, and during 2006 and 2007. Your contribution is valued towards a refined set of good practices which can guide and reference future empowerment efforts.

2010 is upon us and our sector is at the forefront contributing to making this event successful for our continent. The whole spectrum of social, arts culture and economic opportunities are there for our partners to engage with. Indeed I believe we all will make us proud and deliver a momentous experience to our guests which will be treasured in their memories forever. Let us meaningfully integrate with other economic sectors’ initiatives enabling empowered returns on the agricultural rand spend during 2010.

Business Unusual: All hands on deck to speed up change

Thank you