

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY PREMIER DAVID MAKHURA ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURAL GAUTENG AGRI-FOOD CONFERENCE. TSHWANE EVENTS CENTRE.

13 October 2017

Conference Moderator, Criselda Dudumashe;
MEC Lebogang Maile, responsible for Economic Development, Environment and Rural Development;
Dr L Hove, Representative of Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) in South Africa;
Executive Mayors and Members of Mayoral Committees;
Representatives of AgriSA and the African Farmers Association (AFASA);
Farmers and owners of agribusinesses;
Experts and Policymakers;
Distinguished delegates;

It is a great pleasure to join you this morning this morning at this Inaugural Gauteng Agri-Food Conference wherein stakeholders will be discussing the critically important question of the Food Economy - Food Security, Agribusiness, Agro-processing and Urban Agriculture.

In this keynote address, I will deal two thematic areas:

- 1) Firstly, the role and position of Gauteng in the food economy and food systems of south Africa and the SADC region;
- 2) Secondly, the challenges of poverty and food security in our province;

Gauteng's role and position in the food economy and food systems of South Africa and SADC region

Given the demographic transitions brought by climate change, rapid urbanisation and fast-paced revolution in technology and their disruptive impact on our food systems, this Conference is very important as part of progressive humanity's ongoing efforts in addressing poverty, inequality and unemployment.

In its 2017 Report on the State of Food and Agriculture, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), argues that in order to achieve the sustainable development goal of a zero hunger and poverty-free world, policy makers need to understand the rural-urban nexus in the food systems and food economy.

The Report further argues rural transformations (rural development) and rapid urbanisation should be planned and managed in a manner that understands the socio-economic dynamics and dependencies between cities, towns and rural areas and the different roles they play across the food systems:

“Urbanisation will be an important driver of change, but it cannot be seen as the sole solution to the challenges posed by poverty and food insecurity...in order to be inclusive, rural transformation should focus on connecting cities

and towns and their surrounding rural areas with the development of agro-industrial sector and infrastructure...urban and rural sectors are not distinct, but form part of a continuum from capital and other major cities to larger regional centres, to smaller towns and finally, to rural spaces”.

This Agri-Food Conference in South Africa’s highly urbanised and most populous province which is biggest market for agricultural products, we should bear in mind the urban-rural nexus. We should also understand the relationship between our highly urbanised and industrialised province and the more agricultural provinces in the food production value chains of South Africa. Being highly urbanised and industrialised doesn't and shouldn't mean we must destroy agricultural land and food production capacity. We need balanced urban development.

In March 2015, our Department of Agriculture and Rural Development convened the Gauteng Agro-processing Summit which underscored the strategic position of our province in the food systems and food economy as the agro-processing hub of SADC region.

The 2014 Study on “The State of Agriculture in Gauteng” pointed out that we have a vibrant commercial farming and agribusiness sector, world class agro-processing capabilities and a dynamic community of small scale farmers and agro-processors in the five development corridors of our province. Ongoing interventions in infrastructure, financing mechanisms, technology and access to markets are crucial in growing our province’s contribution to the food economy and food security.

While agriculture contributes less than 1% to our provincial GDP, the forward and backward linkages in areas such as food production, textiles, beverages, tobacco, wood and wood products, agriculture and agro-processing can potentially contribute about 40% to Gauteng’s economy.

It is for this reason that we identified Sedibeng and West Rand as well as parts of Ekurhuleni and Tshwane as the food production and food security development corridors of the Gauteng City Region.

We are aware that although Gauteng occupies only 1.4% of our country’s total land mass, we have huge agricultural potential and food processing capacity which must be protected. We must not allow urbanisation and re-industrialisation to destroy urban agriculture.

We must protect our environment, promote the development of new industrial nodes, integrated and sustainable human settlements and safeguard agricultural land with our urban ecosystem.

In fact, we need smart farming and advanced agro-processing in order to meet food security needs of our increasing urban population and take full advantage of the bigger market of consumers with higher incomes and shifting diets.

The development and modernisation of the agri-parks currently underway will enable us to increase food production using smart farming technologies. The use of existing buildings and newly constructed buildings to promote urban food production and urban agriculture.

Accordingly, I call on all municipalities, Infrastructure Departments and developers to integrate hydroponics and aquaponics in the regeneration of inner-city buildings, new human settlements and post-apartheid cities.

Across Gauteng, we have also established six new agri-parks based mainly in our townships. These agri-parks are part of our township economy revitalisation and mainstreaming initiatives focusing on urban agriculture. They are also part of interventions aimed at strengthening food security in our province.

We also need to take full advantage of the dominant position and dynamic role that the food industry of our province occupies in the value chains of our country, the SADC region and the continent at large.

In Gauteng, the food beverage and tobacco sector employs close to 60 000 people and Gauteng's contribution to national Gross Value Added in the food, beverages and tobacco sector has remained relatively stable from 2010 to 2013 at around the R 1.4 trillion. It is for this reason that the Gauteng City Region Economic Development Plan identifies the food and beverages sector as one of those sectors that will receive specific attention and targeted support.

We are encouraged that already a significant number of Gauteng based companies have a major in the agro-processing industries within the SADC region:

- Fruit juices which currently account for 71.4% Gauteng's prepared fruit and vegetable exports;
- Cane/beet sugar which currently account for 78.5% of our SADC exports on sugar and sugar confectionary products;
- Sauces, seasoning and mustard make up Gauteng's largest exports of miscellaneous edible preparations.

Poverty and hunger in the midst of plenty in the Gauteng City Region

Having pointed all the positive features and strategic position of our province in the food economy and food systems of our country and SADC region, let me conclude my address by drawing your attention to our position on the vexing issues of poverty and hunger.

The United Nations has identified eradicating poverty and hunger as the top two most important sustainable development goals in its 2030 vision.

Food insecurity and poverty continue to afflict large sections of humanity. The recent report released by our own Statistics South Africa, *Poverty Trends in South Africa*, paints a disturbing picture about poverty and food security.

The report says that 55% of South Africans (30 million people) live in poverty (live on less than R1000 per person per month) and that poverty has increased between 2011 and 2015. On the other hand, 13.4 million South Africans are food insecure. The face of poverty is children, youth, female and Black.

Although South Africa made tremendous progress in the fight against poverty and hunger during the decade between 2000 and 2010, we must admit that we are losing ground in the war against poverty and hunger. We are moving backwards in the struggle to create a #ZeroHunger and #Poverty-free world.

Although Gauteng and Western Cape fair better than the rest of the country, it is a matter of great concern that 33% (one out of every three people) of Gautengers live on less R1000 per person per month. 19% of Gauteng households are regarded as poor. This represent more than 4 million people. Close to one million in our province are totally food insecure. The picture gets worse when one moves into Sedibeng and West Rand, the two poorest and most deprived districts of our province.

This is completely unacceptable given the status and position of our province in the food economy as explained earlier. We can't live in a country or province characterised by obscene wealth by the few while the majority of the population knows only extreme inequalities, acute poverty and chronic hunger.

We must refuse to accept that as normal. We need a new normal which is characterised by food security and socio-economic well-being for all. We need the Gauteng City region to lead the country in building a poverty-free and zero-hunger society.

The UN defines food security as a state of affairs when “all people, at all times, have physical, social, or economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious that meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

We need every community and every household in Gauteng to be food secure as a starting point of all development interventions. Urban agriculture must be integrated in all community developments and new human settlements.

We therefore need to intensify measures and interventions to deal with poverty, inequality and food insecurity through radical social and economic transformation.

One of the weaknesses of our land reform and restitution policy and programme is that it is not linked to addressing the question of food security and agricultural transformation. When we give people land and resettle them, we must ensure that they use the land productively to improve their livelihood and economic well-being.

To give people land without implements, seed and extension officers is to waste an important resource so central to economic development and social transformation. The masses cannot eat rhetorical fury of expropriation of land without compensation, while there is have no coherent plan to utilise land productively.

In Gauteng, land expropriation must be constitutional. It must be linked to industrial development, human settlements development and urban agriculture that support food security. We need more township food production and urban farming in to eliminate hunger and poverty and create vibrant local food economy in all Human Settlements across the Gauteng City Region.

We need big commercial farmers to work with emerging black farmers in order to assist in the development and empowerment of black farmers and black agri-businesses.

I urge you as Conference to ensure that as you deal with all the various aspects and explore opportunities of the food economy and Gauteng's position in the food system value chain, please place food security and fighting poverty and inequality at the centre of your deliberations and discourse.

Let us build a world free from hunger and poverty. Let us transform our economies to place the needs of all the people, especially the poor, at the centre of the new world order founded on the basis of sustainable development as represented by the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

I trust that this Conference set the tone and lay the basis for further transformative partnerships in the agriculture, agri-business and agro-processing sector, for the benefit of our citizens, our firms and industries as well as our economy.

As Nelson Mandela would have said:

“Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water, and salt for all”.

I would like to say let there be food security for all and food production in Gauteng!

Thank you.