

**POLICY &
BUDGET
SPEECH**

2017/18

Date: 26 May 2017

Venue: Provincial Legislature

Time: 09h00



agriculture, rural development,
land & environmental affairs

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



2017/18 POLICY AND BUDGET VOTE BY MEC FOR AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, HON. VR SHONGWE

26 MAY 2017

Honourable Speaker and Deputy Speaker;

Honourable Premier, Mr DD Mabuza;

Provincial African National Congress Secretary Mandla Ndhlovu and the entire Leadership;

ANC Chief Whip;

Honourable Members of the Executive Council;

Honourable Members of the Provincial Legislature;

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Hon. David Dube

Representatives from Organised Agriculture;

Representatives from the Business Community;

Representatives of Labour Federations;

The Director General, Mr Thulani Mdakane;

Head of Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs, Ms SP Xulu;

Our 2016 Provincial Female Entrepreneur Award Overall winner, Ms Makhosazane Sambo;

Distinguished Guests;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

And all the people of Mpumalanga who are listening to us over the radio...

INTRODUCTION

I am privileged and honoured for this opportunity to stand before you today, in 2017, a year that marks the centenary of a great leader, the former President of our glorious African National Congress, Oliver Reginald Tambo.

Undoubtedly, his legacy was honoured accordingly during the commemoration of Human Rights Day on 21st of March 2017, under the Theme “The Year of OR Tambo – Unity in Action in Advancing Human Rights”.

Madam Speaker, we are also wrapping up Africa Month. Commemorations have been held all over the country and the rest of Africa since the beginning of May, not to celebrating race or colour; but to celebrate humanity.

There is no doubt that this continent is a cradle of human kind. Hence our efforts and calls for all Africans, to continue promoting the African agenda, African values and ideas. This agenda can be supported amongst others, by the knowledge that, as far as Author Arthus Keith once said – and I quote: “The discovery of agriculture was the first step towards civilization”. End Quote.

Another Author, Samuel Johnson once said – and I quote: “Agriculture not only gives riches to nations, but the only riches she can call her own”, End Quote.

The year 2017 also marks 23 years since the African National Congress was democratically put in power.

It is worth mentioning that regardless of the challenges facing our country, our people still have many good reasons to say, without any fear, that South Africa is a much better place to live in compared to what it used to be before the 1st democratic elections in 1994.

More and more South Africans, in particular those from the previously disadvantaged background, are now enjoying basic necessities like housing, good healthcare, education, electricity, and water. Our efforts to see more and more of our people becoming part of the economy will continue. After all, Rome was never build in one day.

It is the ruling party that has acknowledged the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

It is the ANC-led government that has acknowledged that we need to improve the lives of our people, most of whom were previously disadvantaged, but played a major role in the attainment of the democracy and freedom we enjoy today.

It is the ANC-led government that has acknowledged that more still needs to be done; hence our call to every South African to play a part, and make our beautiful country a better place to live in.

Honourable members, the year 2017 also marks 62 years of the Freedom Charter. Through the Freedom Charter, all South Africans expressed their ideas and dreams of a liberated South Africa;

and besides our Constitution, the National Development Plan (NDP) too builds on the aspirations of the Freedom Charter.

Today, we still aspire to achieving much of what stands in the Freedom Charter, more especially in creating a country where “The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work it”.

The Freedom Charter, as adopted by the Congress of the People in Kliptown on 26th of June 1955 states, amongst others, that – and I quote:

“The land shall be shared among those who work it;

Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it to banish famine and land hunger;

The state shall help the peasants with implements, seeds, tractors and dams to save soil and assist the tillers;

Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land; All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;

People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished”.
Close Quote.

Similarly, the Constitution of the Republic is also very clear on this matter. It states that - and I quote:

“We, the people of South Africa, recognizing the injustices of our past, honour those who suffered for justice and for our land, respect those who worked to build and develop our country, and believe that South Africa belongs to all those who live in it”. Close quote.

The Freedom Charter and our Constitution state clearly that this land that belongs to all of us must be worked on and ensure that support is provided.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Honourable Speaker, this Province has placed Land Reform as a priority that could stimulate the creation of the much-needed jobs as outlined in the Mpumalanga Economic Growth and

Development Programme. The Land Reform programme is further underpinned on the government-produced long-term plan for the country, the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Outcome 7 agreements. The NDP builds on the New Growth Path and plans to create 11 million jobs by 2030.

Interestingly, the NDP proposes a differentiated Rural Development Strategy, which has agriculture as an essential component.

Agriculture is one key contributor in the economy of the province, contributing 3.4% of the Gross Domestic Product, and accounting for 630-thousand formal jobs. Interestingly as part of this strategy, the NDP advocates for agricultural development based on successful land reform.

In his State of the Province Address before this august house on the 24th of February 2017, the Honourable Premier DD Mabuza called for a Provincial Land Indaba, to be held with a sole aim of discussing pertinent policies and issues affecting the Land Reform Programme.

During his speech the Premier said, and I quote:

“It is of great concern that despite such investment, most of the Land Reform Farms are lying fallow without any agricultural activity. This is not right and cannot be accepted. It undermines our efforts of addressing the land question.”

“The state of dysfunctionality and non-compliance of Trusts and CPAs is of major concern. They inadvertently threaten peace and stability in some communities...”

“We are conscious of the challenges faced by farm dwellers and farm workers.”

“We need to urgently intervene to improve the socio-economic conditions of farm dwellers to ensure that, like all of us, they live in environments that support their full enjoyment of socio-economic rights and dignity.”

“Our land reform programme must be anchored to our agenda of growing the agricultural sector for both domestic consumption and exports to international markets.” End quote

I am proud to announce that as a Department, working with the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, we successfully hosted a two-day Provincial Land Indaba in Mbombela earlier this month. It was held under the theme: *“Towards attaining sustainable agricultural production and Land Reform farms in Mpumalanga: A Multi-Sectoral approach.”*

This Indaba was attended by about a Thousand stakeholders, who included farm dwellers and vulnerable farm workers, representatives of CPAs and Trusts, Traditional Leaders, Youth and Women in farming, Organized Agriculture, NGO's and the Private Sector.

For two days, we discussed issues around Security in Farms, Alignment of Pre-and-Post Settlement Support Services, Institutional Arrangements for Land Holding Entities, and the Fast Tracking the Finalisation of Restitution Cases.

During our engagements at the Indaba, we noted that despite the interventions and progress made on the Land Reform programme, there are evident challenges still faced by the beneficiaries.

They includes infightings; refusal to relinquish power in CPA committees; accusations and counter-accusations; alleged interference by officials and lack of financial management and farm management skills; all of these contribute immensely to the deterioration of these farms.

However, we acknowledge the fact that the Land question is an emotional one; and it cannot be addressed and finalized in a two-day Indaba. Working together with all stakeholders, our efforts will continue to find a lasting solution to this issue.

DROUGHT AND THE FALL ARMY WORM

Honourable Speaker, the Department and our farmers are faced with so many problems today, and Mpumalanga farmers not immune. They operated in a very harsh and challenging environment in the past two years due to severe drought.

Our intervention through the Drought Relief programme, however, saw farmers being rescued with the distribution and deliveries of drought pellets, Lucerne, bales and molasses. Affected farmers had to register to receive the feed. With the recent rains however, there are noticeable improvements to vegetation in most parts of the province and as a result, livestock conditions have since improved.

Madam Speaker, as we recovered from the drought, an invasive pest called the Fall Army Worm was detected in a number of provinces in February this year, and Mpumalanga was not spared. Several plant types such as maize, sorghum, soybeans, groundnuts and potatoes were affected.

Long term interventions against the pest include, among others, capacity building, resource mobilisation and research programmes to determine the areas and hosts where it may survive during winter in South Africa. To date, all the interventions made have proved to be of crucial assistance in containing the pest.

MPUMALANGA SHOW

Madam Speaker, on a more positive note, we are happy to announce that preparations are well underway for the inaugural Mpumalanga Show, to be held at the end of August for four days in Mbombela. Endorsed and supported by the Premier, this spectacle will showcase the province's rich Agriculture, Tourism, Wildlife and Forestry Sectors to the country and neighboring countries.

As the Honourable Premier puts it – and I quote: *“This show will create a platform for innovative collaboration and exchange of ideas among industry players.”* End quote.

The Show is one platform where both commercial and emerging farmers will be given the same platform to share ideas. We therefore call upon emerging farmers in our province to take advantage and benefit from the workshops and exhibitions during the four-day extravaganza.

DAFF FEMALE ENTREPRENEUR AWARDS

Honourable Speaker, I am happy to announce that the province made it again at the national DAFF Female Entrepreneur Awards Competition held in Limpopo late last year. Ms Makhosazane Sambo from eSkhwahlane in Nkomazi municipality scooped 1st prize in the Smallholder Category.

We are consistently doing well as a province at provincial and national level through this programme. More good news is that Mpumalanga will be hosting the national DAFF Female Entrepreneur Awards in August 2017.

FARMER SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Our Farmer Support and Development programme renders district level services in support of agrarian reform and rural development. This includes providing technical and infrastructure support to land reform beneficiaries including subsistence food producers, smallholder farmers and commercial farmers. Hence we say: “Phezu Komkhono Mlimi”.

Ngaloluhlelo, balimi, ikakhulu labo lebabuyiselwe umhlaba, bayosekelwa nguhulumende ngabogandaganda, naletinye tinsita tetidzingo-ncanti, njengobe senta taba tekusombulula tinkinga letikhungatse lamapulasi abo.

(Through this programme, farmers, especially land reform beneficiaries, will be provided with specialised support ranging from mechanisation, infrastructure, and community mobilisation as we address agrarian reform challenges)

During the 2016/17 Financial Year, **1 033** smallholder producers were supported, with **203** farm assessments completed. **157** projects performance reports were compiled, while in realizing job

creation, **195** jobs were created and sustained through land reform.

32 young agricultural graduates were placed on land reform farms across the province. We also had **12** commodity based mentorship initiatives implemented and maintained, which included vegetables, sugarcane, citrus, livestock, grains, mushroom, soya & dry beans and poultry.

We will continue in this financial year to provide support to **1 200 (one thousand two hundred) smallholder producers** and **5 (five) commodity based mentors** that are appointed and linked to land reform farms. The main aim is to provide support, skills, and allow for strategy development of farmers after exiting.

Project Performance reports of funded projects will be conducted and Farm Assessments be developed, so that assistance can be rotated to new incubates once the first ones are off the ground.

An amount of just over R531-million (**Five hundred and 31-million Rand**) has been budgeted for Masibuyele Emasimini Programme.

MASIBUYELE ESIBAYENI

Through Masibuyele Esibayeni Programme (MESP), we aim to increase household level food security through the rolling out of the Livestock Improvement Programme. Since its inception in 2011/12 financial year, over 7-thousand animals have been delivered to beneficiaries across the province.

There is no doubt that this programme is generating positive socio-economic impacts, as we continue to enhance it in order to create commercial livestock farmers.

Initially, Masibuyele Esibayeni involved the loaning of animals to famers for a period of five years, and return the offsprings so that we support other farmers. However the Executive Council resolved that the Department must come up with a policy that will necessitate more farmers to

benefit without returning the stock received. We are therefore currently in a process of evaluating the current approach/strategy to improve the current status of the programme.

This year, we have planned to support 15 projects/farms with livestock through Masibuyele Esibayeni. There will be one (1) cattle production set supplied to a qualifying livestock farm, one (1) set of dairy cows as well as small stock supplied to livestock farms. This includes **six (6)** sets

of Goats, three (3) sets of Sheep and four (4) sets of Pigs respectively. A formal invitation for potential beneficiaries to apply for the animals will be out soon.

We have set aside **R5 million** for the Livestock Development Programme, as we say Masibuyele Esibayeni to our people.

ONE-STOP CENTRES

Honourable Speaker, we continue with the construction of One Stop Centres where production inputs will be kept and farmer support symposiums held. The construction is underway in Vaalbank in the Dr. JS Moroka Local Municipality, Mkhuhlu in Bushbuckridge, Mzinti Training Centre in Nkomazi and one in Mkhondo. Some of these Centres are nearing completion, and will start operating soon. We have budgeted an amount of **R10.8 million** for this course.

EXTENSION AND ADVISORY

In ensuring that our Agricultural Advisors provide professional agricultural support, the Department assisted 70% of them to register with the South African Council for Natural Scientific Profession (SACNASP).

This year's focus for Extension and Advisory Services will be to strengthen the collaborations with Commodity Associations such as sugar, grain, poultry, red meat, citrus, deciduous and sub-tropical fruit. This collaboration will expose the Agricultural Advisors and the producers to the value chain of the provincial strategic and key commodities.

Furthermore, we will establish Provincial Extension Forums in order to promote coordinated extension support for the farmers as we target to achieve 100% registration in the Council for Natural Scientific Profession in 2017/18 financial year. The Department will register farmers on the National Farmer Database.

An amount of **R28 million** is set aside for the Extension Recovery Plan.

SUPPORT TO LAND UNDER TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP

Honourable Speaker, Amakhosi have a huge role to play for their communities, including using

their communal land to benefit their subjects. However, we have noted that some of the communal land is lying fallow...while it can be utilized fruitfully to produce food for the people.

The Department will identify few of Amakhosi who have land that is under-utilized, interact and enter into agreement with them, to make sure that the land becomes productive. An amount of **R2.7 million** is allocated for the support of Communal Land under Traditional Leadership, though only a few Amakhosi will receive support this year.

TRACTOR ASSEMBLE AND MAINTENANCE PLANT

We have already started working towards the establishment of a tractor assembling plant in the province. I am happy to announce that two suitable sites have since been identified and secured for the construction of the plant; one in Ekandastria in Nkangala District, and one in Secunda in the Gert Sibande District.

The idea came after a very successful outbound mission to Russia, led by the Honourable Premier late last year. The assembling plant will help us create the much-needed job opportunities for our people. An amount of R2.3 million has been set aside for the commissioning of the tractor assemble and maintenance plant.

FORTUNE 40 YOUNG FARMER INCUBATION PROGRAMME

Honourable Speaker, we are on course as we continue implementing the Fortune 40 Mpumalanga Young Farmer Incubation Programme, launched officially in September 2015. Already in the past year the Department was able to support 15 projects with infrastructure, while 7 of these are already in production.

Through Fortune 40, our aim is to draw young people into farming, thereby creating jobs in the process and ensuring that land which was lying fallow for years is brought back to production.

More than 200 youths throughout the province are part of Fortune 40. Through their Mentors and practical training they receive, they are getting 30% theory and 70% farm work, while some of them have already visited major players in the sector to negotiate marketing either for further processing or exporting.

This year, we will ensure that we complete the infrastructure in all projects and also expand the existing ones. The idea is to develop these farms to a level of commercial farming.

We are encouraged by the commitment displayed by these young farmers, regardless of a few challenges they sometimes experience.

An amount of **R82-million** has been set aside for the Fortune 40 programme.

GOVERNMENT FOOD NUTRITION PROGRAMME

Honourable Speaker and Members, in his State of the Province Address in February this year the Honourable Premier DD Mabuza indicated that farmer cooperatives will, through Government's Nutrition Programme, start to supply vegetables and fruits to schools, hospitals and social development centres in this financial year.

Farmers' readiness has been verified and they are ready to meet the demand. In ensuring smooth transition without disrupting the system, farmers will start supplying 50% to the programme, meaning that, in that 50% they will be supplying 100% vegetables and fruits.

This stake will be increased gradually over the period of three years to reach full 100% of all programmes in Education, Health and Social Development. This programme will open market opportunities for our small-scale farmers and the Fortune 40 Youth Programme. We have also collaborated with commercial farmers in this regard.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The farming community is still recovering from a very severe drought which hit most part of the country in the past two years. It affected our farmers in all commodities but more severely, livestock farmers. We however made efforts to alleviate the impact.

Although we have received some drizzles of rain in the past few months, we are not yet fully out of danger. Sadly, preliminary Forecasts are projecting possibilities of more drought conditions later

this year. We shall however monitor the space, to ensure that our farmers are not caught off-guard this time around.

An amount of **R5.3 million** is set aside for the disaster relief in this financial year.

AGRI-PARKS

Honourable Speaker, our Province has three Agri-Parks sites; one in Dr JS Moroka in Nkangala, Mkhondo in Gert Sibande and another in Bushbuckridge. We are not going to reverse on this beautiful development despite all challenges faced.

We have secured land to construct Agri-hubs and this year we shall start putting bricks and mortar marking a milestone towards establishing these hubs. The main aim behind this project is to ensure food security, and providing a market.

In the previous years we exerted our efforts into establishing Farmer Production Support Units such as Packhouses, Feedlots and Abattoirs. The Agri-hubs will therefore complement the work already started by the Department. I must say that work is on course.

An amount of **R9.5 million** is allocated construction of the Agri-hubs.

COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

During the 2016/17 financial year the Department managed to assist farmers to register 82 Agricultural cooperatives. The total of 1 142 (**One thousand One Hundred and-42**) of these cooperatives members were trained on the principles and governance issues of cooperatives entities.

These cooperatives will be supported in order to produce good quality products so that they can participate in the Government Nutrition Programme and other markets, including the Agri-hubs that I just alluded to.

THE MPUMALANGA INTERNATIONAL FRESH PRODUCE MARKET

Honourable Speaker, although the Fresh Produce Market is still under construction, the Department is already preparing farmers for them to meet the required accredited food safety standards.

In November 2016, twenty farmers were sent to the Johannesburg Fresh Produce Market for training on trading with market agents, and also to have an insight of the market transaction which starts at 4h00 in the morning.

We also started a programme of assisting the producers to be accredited on the South African Agricultural Acceptable Practices (SAAGAP) which ensures food safety. The following achievements were obtained:-

- 4 farms were assisted to obtain their accreditation certificates last year.
- 10 farms have been audited for SAAGAP compliance, and their accreditation applications submitted to DAFF for assistance this year.

LINKING OF FARMERS TO MARKETS

Honourable Speaker, our department is assisting farmers in addressing the triple challenges through the sustainable agricultural production in order to sell their produce to formal markets in the province. During the 2016/17 financial year, 88 farmers were linked to formal markets.

The Department is in a process of developing a red meat abattoir in Bushbuckridge to assist livestock farmers to access the meat market with the value addition of their animals. There is also a poultry abattoir planned for the Gert Sibande District this year. These abattoirs will be linked in the supply to the Government Nutrition Programme.

RE-OPENING OF THE MARAPYANE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

The Lowveld College of Agriculture was one of the twelve colleges of agriculture in the country. The Marapyane Campus of the Lowveld College of Agriculture opened its doors in February 2012 to students who registered for a Diploma in Agriculture.

However, the state-of-the-art structure was left unused when the students of the Lowveld College of Agriculture formed part of the University of Mpumalanga.

We plan to re-open that college in Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality. Our aim is that it will serve as a farmer-training centre to cater for the majority of the previously disadvantaged farmers, including the youth in agriculture and Fortune 40 beneficiaries, who do not qualify to register for University study. This initiative will therefore open an opportunity for Mpumalanga farmers to be taught on the latest trends and scientific information on agriculture.

An amount of **R5 million** has been put aside for the college infrastructure development. A further **R500 thousand** is set aside for the Funda Mlimi infrastructure. We also recognize the role of primary education, hence the support to 8 (**Eight**) agriculture High Schools in the province.

SOIL TESTING LABORATORY

The Department would like to uplift the status of its research facilities in order to ensure that farming is carried out with scientific rationale and rigor. A new laboratory that will be able to test the soils for fertility has been developed and this is in line with the requirements of the professional soil-testing lab. For this purpose, the Department will ensure that all farms that are serviced with inputs are mapped with up-to-date soil information.

In addition, the Department will be able to analyze the leaves and other plant materials for nutrient deficiencies as well as analyze the borehole water for metal contamination, to safeguard our communities that use borehole water.

In the previous financial year, the Department procured a state-of-the-art soil testing machine and upgraded the Nooidgedagt soil testing laboratory. Over and above that, soil scientists and three (3) technicians have been appointed to assist the farmers in evaluating their soil and providing guidance in partnership with Extension Advisors.

An amount of **R4.2 million** is allocated for the maintenance and smooth running of the research station.

VETERINARY SERVICES

Honourable Speaker, we are experiencing shortage of various scarce skills in this Department. Amongst these, are Veterinarians, Veterinary Public Health practitioners, Veterinary nurses, Veterinary technologists and Animal Health Technicians.

In trying to close that gap I have some good news to tell. The Department initiated a learner programme where Mathematics and Science learners at high schools throughout the province participated in speech contests relating to Meat Safety, Herd Health and Pet Care.

This was aimed at encouraging learners to pursue careers in Veterinary and Para-veterinary Science. Of the 30 learners who participated, the Department adopted the top 10 and nurtured

them starting from their high school career, and we are paying for their fees from Grade 10 to grade 12, then to University.

We had the first contingent of veterinary undergraduates who enrolled for the Bachelor of Veterinary Science studies at the University of Pretoria and under the full bursary Scheme of the Province in 2009/2010 financial year.

Today, I am proud to announce one of the qualified Veterinary Doctors who benefitted from this programme, Dr Patience Motsatsi Selotole. She matriculated in 2009 at Takheni Secondary School in Elukwatini, and was fully supported by the Department.

We will continue to promote Veterinary Public Health and food safety by registering 49 abattoirs, and subjecting them to a minimum of 490 regular inspections. This will ensure that the meat produced from these abattoirs is safe for consumption. Abattoirs that are performing above our expectations get recognition at the annual Provincial Abattoir Rating Scheme Awards, to be held later in the year.

Consequently illegal slaughter investigations and clamp down with stakeholders inclusive of South African Police Service, Department of Health, and Municipalities will continue to be intensified to reduce the risk of unsafe meat sold to our communities.

Diseases of economic and zoonotic importance were kept under control during the past financial year. For this reason the province managed to keep its export status to the SADC, including other African countries, Asian and some European regions.

Disease management will be intensified by conducting 675 151 (**675-thousand-151**) vaccinations and 4 801 649 animal inspections and testing **184-thousand-233** animals. **92-thousand** of these tests will be performed by our very own Nooitgedacht laboratory, in Ermelo.

We also continue with the Compulsory Community Service Programme for newly qualified Veterinarians, which started last year. Working with the national Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, January 2017 saw Mpumalanga receiving 22 newly qualified Veterinary graduates, and they are serving our most rural communities on a twelve-month contract.

An amount of **R130 million** is allocated to Veterinary Services to ensure that it continues to promote veterinary public health and food safety.

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Honourable Speaker, our Environmental Affairs programme plays an integral role in achieving sustainable development since it promotes a well-managed, sustainable environment through programmes implemented by the Department.

Climate Change

The Declaration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states that – and I quote: *“Climate Change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and its adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development”*, End Quote.

As a response to reduce the level and extent of vulnerability as well as improving the ability to cope with the expected changes, the Department, in partnership with the Department of Environmental Affairs and GIZ, we developed a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in 2015.

The implementation plan for the strategy was completed last year, and we are in the final stages of developing the Climate Change Response Strategy. In this financial year we will complete the Climate Change Mitigation Strategy.

Honourable Speaker, to mitigate Climate Change, the Department planted 3-thousand-583 trees in the previous financial year. This exceeded the 2 000 target set due to the immense support from our partners.

Given that the youth is key in our fight against Climate Change, we saw 690 schools from across the province participating in the Climate Change Literacy Environmental Empowerment programme.

Air Quality

To ensure the realization of everyone's right to air that is not harmful to health and well-being, it is imperative that there is effective implementation of environmental legislation in terms of air emission licensing and the use of innovative approaches like air quality monitoring.

In previous financial year the Department maintained and operated five (5) state-of-the-art Air Quality Monitoring Stations within the Highveld priority air quality area. Those stations will continue to operate, giving us scientific and credible air quality data.

In addition to the existing Highveld priority area air quality management plan, the Department will develop the Mpumalanga Provincial Air Quality Management Plan.

Environmental Empowerment

Through the Environmental Empowerment programme, **89** job opportunities were created in the course of environmental programmes and **213** clean up campaigns were facilitated. The Provincial Greenest Municipality Competition (GMC) was successfully completed.

We congratulate the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality for representing the province well in the national competition. They obtained 2nd position, winning **R3-million** which will be used to improve the municipality's Environmental programmes and performance.

All 18 local municipalities in Mpumalanga will continue to benefit from environmental programmes and quarterly monitoring in terms of environmental performance for the National Greenest Municipality Competition.

An Amount of **R112-million** is set aside for the Environmental Services.

CONCLUSION

As I conclude Honourable Speaker, I wish to appeal to this August House to approve the 2017/18 budget of **R1 124 801 (One Billion, one hundred and twenty four million, eight hundred and one thousand Rand)** which is allocated in nine programmes as follows:

Programme 1: Administration: R158,133 (One hundred and fifty eight million, one hundred and thirty three thousand rand)

Programme 2: Sustainable Resource Management: R69,080 (Sixty nine million and eighty thousand rand)

Programme 3: Farmer Support and Development Services: R531,621 (Five hundred and thirty one million, six hundred and twenty one thousand rand)

Programme 4: Veterinary Services: R130,260 million

Programme 5: Research and Technology Development: R63,608 (Sixty three million, six hundred and eight thousand rand)

Programme 6: Agriculture Economics: R11,048 (Eleven million and forty eight thousand rand)

Programme 7: Structured Agriculture Training: R26,349 (Twenty six million, three hundred and forty nine thousand rand)

Programme 8: Rural Development Coordination: R21,969 (Twenty one million, nine hundred and sixty nine thousand rand)

Programme 9: Environmental Affairs an amount of R112,733 (one hundred and twelve million, seven hundred and thirty three thousand rand)

The Total Budget for approval is **R1 124 801,00 (One Billion, one hundred and twenty four million, eight hundred and one thousand rand).**

Honourable Speaker, this budget will enable us to drive the programmes that constitute the work of the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs.

I would like to thank our Honourable Premier, Mr D.D Mabuza, and Members of the Executive Council for their guidance and support.

I also like to express my appreciation to the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs, under the leadership of Honourable David Dube.

The team in my Department as led by the Head of Department Ms SP Xulu for the support and commitment and also our external stakeholders, organized agriculture and farmers; let us continue working together to support our farmers.

My appreciation also goes to the African National Congress study Group under the leadership of the Chief Whip, Honorable Mkhathshwa for the guidance and support they have given us.

Lastly, I want to thank my family, particularly my wife for the reliable support they have given me. Indeed they have been a pillar of my strength.

I Thank You!!!