



agriculture,
forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Key note address to the eight biennial landcare conference

BY

MINISTER S. ZOKWANA

FREE STATE - BLOEMFONTIEN

25 SEPTEMBER 2018

The Premier of Free State Province, Ms Sisi Ntombela ;

The Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

The Hosting Member of Executive Council of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, DR Benny Malakoane;

Other Members of Executive Council of the Department of Agriculture

Executive Mayor of Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, Cllr; Ms Olly Mlamleli

All Mayors present here;

Traditional leaders present;

Directors –General present here;

Provincial Heads of Department present here;

LandCare International delegates

Members of the African LandCare Network;

LandCare Partners and governmental agencies;

LandCare project beneficiaries

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen

The eight Biennial National LandCare conference do have a formidable theme and guiding mantra, '**LandCare partnerships and technology pathways enabling all communities to restore agricultural and environmental health for lasting food security.**

Once again we are proud that we manage to host this prestigious event over the years, reinforcing our commitment to the sustainable management of our natural resources, as the cornerstone of agriculture and human survival.

Ladies and Gentleman

Restoration partnerships across political, organisational and all boundaries will determine the eventual success of agrarian reform, job creation and the LandCare programme. LandCare is a community based initiative, supported by government and the private sector to optimise productivity and enhance the sustainable use of the natural resources. Partnerships will enable the LandCare programme to secure desperately needed financial resources and technical support from a wide range and variety of partners. The decline in funding for this programme over the past years must be stopped and I wish to turn the tide through a radical increased of funding as we revolutionise the share of agricultural funding within the fiscus and private investment. The slogan of partnerships is also the key principles of six indivisible principles of the LandCare programme.

During the previous conference I stated that we are setting land degradation neutrality targets, this has been finalised and agriculture is committed to deliver against the obligations of this United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Together with our partners we must lobby for a faire share of international and local funding to enable us to honour our commitments and realise the Sustainable Development Goals expressing the future we want, as adopted by United Nations General Assembly in 2015.

Our objectives to host this eighth Biennial National LandCare conference are informed by systematic challenges which need to be confronted urgently and comprehensively. I urge partners to reflect deeply and develop resolutions that will address the dire status of our farming land, effects of the recent drought, unsustainable farming practices, the involvement of youth, women and communities to restore and regenerate the agricultural system. To this end, the following has been identified as areas for deliberation:

1. Knowledgeable and informed communities through LandCare partnerships.
2. LandCare partnerships restoring environmental health.
3. LandCare partnerships restoring agricultural health for lasting food security.
4. LandCare research and technology partnership pathways.

Distinguished guests

To confront the current challenges we need a well-coordinated cross sectoral natural resources management programme. We can no longer afford duplication and narrow sectoral approaches. We need to increase awareness and consciousness about the current and future impacts of declining land resources on poverty and hunger. I urge all MECs and provincial Heads of Department to reassess and ensure conformity between their Natural resources management organisational structures in order to improve the governance of natural resources and to offer professional services as required by the communities. LandCare services such as farm planning, Conservation committees and conservation agriculture must be regarded as cornerstones for all agricultural developments. All agricultural development plans and interventions must be guided by the status and potential of the land resources as guided by Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act, 43 of 1983.

The cost of inaction to land degradation cannot be tolerated any longer in the current era of climate change because we all depend on the ecosystem services offered by land such as water, food, medicines etc. I pledge for strong partnerships and reiterate our government commitments with all partners to triumph over unemployment, inequality and poverty through the restoration of our natural capital

Ladies and gentlemen,

My Department has made gains through implementing the National LandCare programme by contributing to job creation, food security and

bringing back unproductive land to production, encouraging youth involvement in agriculture and promoting upscaling of conservation agriculture. We are also finalising the Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Bill (PDALB) to replace Subdivision of Agricultural Land Act, 70 of 1970, Conservation Agriculture Policy and its implementation plan and review of related legislations such as Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act.

The programme contribution to key country strategic priorities and progress on resolutions made during the previous conference is as follows:

JuniorCare – we are proud to report that as a result of our previous resolution to intensify support to the youth almost 100 schools are now supported as part of JuniorCare. This focus area empowers the youth of South Africa by providing them with facilitation and leadership skills and practical experience in food production.

JuniorCare is implemented in the Provinces to promote sustainable land use through school gardens, nurseries, awareness and life skills development. JuniorCare has managed to reach 48259 youth over the past two years.

Land rehabilitation

The LandCare programme managed to rehabilitate 58267.13 hectares over the past two years by improving the carrying capacity of veld to support livestock and the protection of land vulnerable to erosion.

Job Creation

The LandCare programme created 4495 job opportunities over the past two years which translates to 2132.62 full time equivalents.

LandCare committee and Awareness

The LandCare programme establish 63 LandCare project committees and reached 52039 people during awareness campaigns over the last two years.

In conclusion

Partnership is the only means to restore and regenerate our natural resources needed to improve rural livelihoods, ecosystem services and food security. Through these partnerships our farmers and partners will be in a position to utilize the available agricultural land while ensuring that the resources are capable to produce economically under specific uses (crop or livestock) over an extended period of time without degradation to the natural resources

I wish all of you prosperous deliberations that will result in practical resolutions and exponential growth in the LandCare movement.