

Speech by Limpopo Premier Dr Phophi Ramathuba during the Basadi
Temong Support Visit at Nakedi Poultry Farm, Ga-Mabuela-Mapila,
Mogalakwena Municipality

19 August 2025

Programme Director,
MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Ms Nakedi Kekana,
Agriculture Portfolio Committee Chairperson,
Waterberg District municipality Mayor Cllr Jack Maeko,
Mogalakwena Municipality Mayor, Cllr. Ngoako Taueatsoala,
Councilors,
Traditional leadership led by Kgoshi Langa II,
Faith-based leaders,
Nakedi Poultry Farm Owner, Ms Itumeleng Bridget Mahwete
Women in agriculture,
Community members,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thobela, Avuxeni, Ndi matsheloni, Goeie more.

Programme Director, when a woman tills the soil, she does not just plant seeds, she plants hope, she cultivates resilience, and she harvests the future. We meet here today at Nakedi Poultry Farm, led by a young woman of courage and vision, as we continue to celebrate Basadi Temong a

programme that uplifts and empowers women to take their rightful place in agriculture.

This gathering is not just about poultry farming; it is about women taking charge of their destinies, shaping their communities, and feeding the nation.

We do this in the spirit of Women's Month, remembering the more than 20,000 brave women who, on 9 August 1956, filled the streets of Pretoria and marched to the Union Buildings. They rose against unjust pass laws and an oppressive system that denied women equality, dignity, and a voice. Their cry was clear: no nation is free until its women are free, no economy is prosperous until its women are prosperous, and no democracy is complete until its women are equal.

And yet, almost seventy years later, we must acknowledge that the march is not over. The struggle continues. Yes, apartheid's legal chains have been broken, and today women occupy seats in Parliament, serve in Cabinets, lead in boardrooms, and graduate in record numbers from our universities. But too many women, particularly in rural areas, remain excluded from land ownership, denied access to credit, and burdened with inequalities that hold back their full participation in our economy.

Nowhere is this struggle more urgent than in agriculture.

Agriculture is the lifeblood of our rural economy, the foundation of food security, and the backbone of community stability. Statistics show that women constitute nearly half of the agricultural workforce and in some regions of Africa, as high as 80 percent. They are the ones who rise before dawn to fetch water, feed their families, tend to livestock, plant crops, and

sell produce in markets often without recognition, without land rights, without fair pay, and without adequate support.

This is not only unjust but irrational. It undermines our economic potential. Because when women are excluded, half of our nation's potential is wasted.

Our President, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, once reminded us: "When we empower women, we empower a nation. When we educate women, we educate a nation. When we support women in enterprise, we support the economic future of our nation." Those are not just words of inspiration; they are words of strategy. They remind us that investing in women is not charity but it is the smartest investment we can make in our economy.

Programme Director, we are here today at Nakedi Poultry Farm because this project embodies what we mean when we talk about women leading in agriculture. Nakedi Poultry Farm owned by a 32-year-old female farmer, Ms Itumeleng Bridget Mahwete, operates two thriving commodities – a hatchery producing day-old chicks and a broiler production unit. The hatchery has a capacity of 3,440 chicks per cycle, while the farm also runs eight poultry houses, each housing 1,000 birds. Every week, the farm produces around 1,000 broiler chickens.

What makes this story more remarkable is that Ms. Mahwete personally funded the infrastructure of this farm. The Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development supported her with production inputs, and today this farm provides jobs to five permanent workers, five seasonal employees, and one student on experiential training. It actively participates in the broiler value chain, showing us that women are not just farm workers, they are farm owners, innovators, and employers.

This farm is producing more than poultry, it is producing dignity, it is producing jobs, it is producing a new model of inclusive agricultural growth.

Programme Director, our government recognises the urgent need to break down the barriers that hold women back in agriculture:

Secure access to land, water, and credit for women farmers is non-negotiable. Without these, opportunity remains an illusion.

Training and education must be expanded, from financial literacy to climate-smart farming, from market intelligence to entrepreneurial skills. Knowledge is the fertiliser that will grow productivity.

Technology adoption must be embraced not as a luxury for a few but as a necessity for all. Drones, biotechnology, weather prediction tools, and digital platforms for market access must reach rural women farmers.

Laws and policies must protect women from dispossession, exclusion, and discrimination. No widow should lose her land to custom. No young graduate should be denied a loan because she lacks collateral. No cooperative of women farmers should be excluded from markets because of red tape.

Two weeks ago, I met young agriculturalists at the University of Limpopo, many of them women, who spoke passionately about their involvement in farming. They are the future leaders of this sector. They are hungry for opportunity, and they need us, as government, as business, as communities to create space for their success.

Programme Director, as we celebrate Women's Month, let us take inspiration from Nakedi Poultry Farm. Here, we see women not as beneficiaries but as leaders. Not as assistants but as innovators. Not as observers but as drivers of economic activity. Let us move from commemoration to action. From symbolism to strategy. From rhetoric to results.

Because the women of 1956 did not march so that their daughters could inherit half-freedoms. They marched for a future of full equality, full dignity, and full inclusion.

The future of agriculture is not male. The future of agriculture is not female. The future of agriculture is inclusive, collaborative, and innovative and women must stand at its very centre.

That is the Limpopo we must build. That is the South Africa we must deliver.

I thank you.