

SPEECH BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA AT THE AGRI 5 EXPO,
TZANEEN COUNTRY LODGE, GREATER TZANEEN MUNICIPALITY

20 NOVEMBER 2025

Programme Director,
MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Ms Nakedi Kekana,
Mopani District Executive Mayor, Cllr Pule Shayi,
Greater Tzaneen Municipality Mayor, Cllr Gerson Molapisane,
Founder & Managing Director of Agri 5 Expo, Mr Tsholofelo Mokobe,
Traditional Leaders,
Faith-Based Leaders,
Farmers,
Business Community,
Distinguished Guests,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Avuxeni, Thobela, Ndi Matsheloni, Good Morning, Goeie môre,

Today, I stand before you with great pride and joy, for we are witnessing a true revolution in the agricultural sector. It is said that "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step", and indeed, that first step has been taken by the many emerging farmers gathered here.

What we are witnessing today is the courage, determination, and resilience of people who refuse to be defined by challenges, but instead choose to define their future through action, innovation, and hope.

Programme Director, Agriculture is the heartbeat of our nation, the silent poem written on our landscapes, and the timeless rhythm that sustains our people. It is a sector that carries within it the memory of generations, those who tilled the soil with hope, those who planted seeds with dreams, and those who believed that the land would always speak back with abundance.

For emerging farmers, agriculture is more than a business; it is a legacy, a calling, and a pathway to dignity and economic freedom.

We cannot overstate the importance of agriculture to our provincial economy and to the livelihood of rural communities. When an emerging farmer succeeds, we are not simply producing food, we are producing wealth, opportunity, and transformation. We are restoring land, rewriting stories, and reshaping the economic landscape of Limpopo.

Today, we gather at this Agri 5 Expo to affirm that agriculture remains the anchor of hope for thousands of emerging farmers who aspire to transition from small-scale growers into fully fledged commercial producers.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Agri 5 Expo, now in its 12th year since its founding in 2013, stands as an important platform for empowering African farmers. It has consistently created a bridge between emerging farmers and new technologies, practical skills, and access to fresh produce markets in major cities.

It is here where emerging farmers are exposed to agro-processing opportunities, learn about import and export requirements, and engage with private sector partners who can help unlock the next chapter of their businesses.

Limpopo remains one of the leading agricultural provinces in South Africa. We produce 75% of the country's mangoes, 65% of its papayas, 60% of its avocados, 36% of its tea, 60% of its tomatoes, 35% of its oranges, and significant quantities of bananas, litchis, and potatoes.

These are not just statistics; they are proof of the potential that lies within our soil and within our farmers, especially African farmers who continue to push boundaries despite many obstacles.

We are aware of the challenges confronting you. Climate change has brought unpredictable droughts, pests, diseases, and environmental degradation. Financial institutions often turn emerging farmers away due to a lack of collateral and access to credit.

Infrastructure challenges, insufficient irrigation systems, and high input costs continue to make farming difficult. Market access remains a stumbling block for too many farmers who struggle to reach high-value markets or receive fair prices for their produce.

And I stand before you today to say: Government is responding. To every emerging farmer here today, please know that the doors of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development are open.

Our MEC and her team are committed to walking with you, providing extension support, expanding farmer training, improving access to markets, and strengthening programmes that address drought resilience, soil health, and water infrastructure.

We are also working closely with partners like the Agri 5 Expo, whose mission of upskilling farmers, exposing them to agro-processing opportunities, and connecting them to value chains aligns with our vision of inclusive agricultural growth. Through platforms like this, farmers can build networks that lead to employment creation, youth empowerment, and long-term commercial viability.

To our youth: agriculture is not an old-people's sector. It is an innovative, technologically driven industry that requires your creativity and energy. Through this Expo, you are being exposed to opportunities in agro-processing, packaging, and export markets, sectors that can transform rural communities into thriving economic hubs.

To every farmer seated here today: do not be deterred by the difficulties you face. Every commercial farmer you admire once stood where you stand. They too survived droughts, financial hardship, and market limitations.

Your persistence, your courage, and your belief in the land will carry you forward. One day, it will be you supplying supermarkets across our major cities, you exporting citrus or avocados to global markets, and you creating employment for others.

As the provincial government, we remain steadfast in our commitment to building an agricultural sector that is inclusive, competitive, and

sustainable. Together, we will transform emerging African farmers into the commercial agricultural leaders of tomorrow.

I thank you.