

SPEECH BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA,  
DURING THE VISIT TO TAFELKOP FARMERS ASSOCIATION  
(HEREFORD FARM), ELIAS MOTSOLEDI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY,  
SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT

15 APRIL 2026

Programme Director,

The MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Ms Nakedi Kekana,

Executive Mayor of Sekhukhune District Municipality, Cllr Minah Bahula,

Mayor of Elias Motsoaledi Local Municipality, Cllr David Tladi,

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture and Rural  
Development, Ms Bella Kupa-Mabuza,

Senior Traditional Leader and Deputy Chairperson of the Limpopo House of  
Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders, Kgoshi Rammupudu,

Esteemed hosts, the farmers and management of the Tafelkop Agricultural  
Development Project,

Distinguished guests,

Members of the media,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thobela, Avuxeni, Ndi matsheloni, Silotshile, Goeiemôre, Good morning.

In the fertile embrace of Sekhukhune, where the soil carries the memory of  
struggle and the promise of renewal, we gather today on land that speaks,  
land that tells a story of resilience, courage and the unwavering  
determination of a people who refused to be defined by their past. This is not

just farmland; it is living history, a symbol of restoration and a testament to what is possible when communities rise to reclaim their dignity.

The story of the Tafelkop Farmers Association is not an ordinary one. It is a story rooted in bravery and foresight. In 1997, while many waited for systems to respond, 32 pioneers took a bold step to reclaim their space in the agricultural economy. You returned to land where you once laboured, not as workers, but as rightful owners and producers. Today, that courageous decision stands as a shining example of what community-led development looks like.

We are here today to honour that journey and to celebrate the progress made since the historic issuance of title deeds in May 2021. You are no longer defined by dispossession, but by ownership, responsibility and opportunity. You are the custodians of this 191-hectare asset and with that ownership comes the power to transform not only your lives but the broader economy of this region.

Programme Director, Farmers' associations such as the Tafelkop Farmers Association are the backbone of rural economies. They are engines of local economic growth, drivers of job creation and pillars of food security. When organised and supported, they have the potential to transform communities from spaces of dependency into centres of productivity and self-reliance. It is through structures like these that we can build sustainable livelihoods and ensure that our people are active participants in the economy.

This historic momentum of land restoration continues across our province. Only last week, on 10 April 2026, we witnessed another milestone at Farm Zwartkop in Thabazimbi, where the Deputy President of South Africa, Paul Mashatile, joined by our MEC, Ms Nakedi Grace Kekana, handed over title deeds to the Sebilong Communal Property Association. This restored over

340,000 hectares of land to 1,071 beneficiaries, an important step in redressing the injustices of the past.

However, as we always emphasise: ownership without production is a dormant asset; ownership with production is true liberation. Ownership is only the beginning; the real work lies in productivity and sustainability.

Government has demonstrated its commitment to this vision. Through the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the national department, we have invested over R65 million into this scheme. This includes the transition from dilapidated infrastructure and costly electric pumps to a modern, gravity-fed irrigation system, reducing operational costs and improving efficiency.

We have invested in bulk water reticulation, irrigation systems and shade nets across 31 plots. We have built pack sheds and ablution facilities to ensure compliance with South African Good Agricultural Practices (SAGAP) standards, because if we are to compete globally, we must produce at a world-class level. In addition, 40 kilometres of fencing have been erected to protect your produce and livelihoods.

The impact of these investments is already visible. We are seeing butternuts, cabbage and sugar beans reaching retailers and supporting school feeding schemes. Yet, we must acknowledge that we are only beginning to unlock the full potential of this project.

As the 7th Administration, we are committed to building a Limpopo that works for all. When I look at Tafelkop, I do not just see land but I see a strategic agricultural hub that can drive industrialisation, create jobs and stimulate inclusive economic growth.

We are therefore shifting towards outcome-based support. If we succeed here, Tafelkop will become a blueprint for irrigation schemes across the province. It will demonstrate that we can move from subsistence farming to commercial success.

Programme Director,

Food security is the foundation of a healthy society. A community that can feed itself is a community with dignity. A project that creates 128 permanent jobs is a vehicle for social transformation.

Our investment of R54 million is an investment in your potential. Together with the MEC, we will ensure that every cent spent translates into visible production and sustainable livelihoods.

To our farmers, we have heard your concerns regarding water pressure and access to inputs and we are actively addressing these challenges. However, we must also be clear: the era of dependency must come to an end. Each hectare must be treated as a business. Each opportunity must be maximised.

We want to see the Tafelkop brand in our local markets and on the plates of our children. We want to see you not only as producers, but as employers and contributors to economic growth.

While we currently see between 45 and 60 workers, this project has the potential to create over 120 permanent jobs and 640 seasonal jobs. This is how we defeat poverty, not through grants alone, but through production, innovation and hard work.

As Nelson Mandela once said, “After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.” Receiving your land was the first hill. The next is to build a thriving, competitive agricultural enterprise.

The tools are here. The infrastructure is in place. The opportunity is before you. What is required now is commitment, discipline, and unity of purpose.

As I conclude, let us remember that the Hereford of the past was a reward for conquest, but the Tafelkop of today is a triumph of justice, persistence and peace.

Let us work together to turn this district into the breadbasket of Limpopo. Let us honour the courage of the 32 pioneers of 1997 by ensuring that every hectare of this land is productive, vibrant and full of life.

The future of Limpopo is growing in this soil. Let us nurture it with purpose, protect it with dedication and harvest it with pride.

I thank you.