

ADDRESS BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE
OVERSIGHT VISIT TO KOPANO CITRUS FARM AND AFRIKAN FARMS,
MARBLE HALL, EPHRAIM MOGALE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY,
SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT

13 August 2026

Programme Director,

MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Ms Nakedi Kekana,

Executive Mayor of Sekhukhune District Municipality, Cllr Minah Bahula,

Mayor of Ephraim Mogale Local Municipality, Cllr Given Moimana,

Kgoshi Rahlagane, Member of the Sekhukhune Local House of Traditional
and Khoi-San Leaders,

Representatives of Kopano Citrus Farm,

Representatives of Afrikan Farms,

Members of the community,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thobela, Ndi Matsheloni, Avuxeni, Good Morning, Goeie More.

It gives me great pleasure to be visiting you today as the most important
people in our society, the foundational pillars who secure our food and
sustain our nation.

A certain Master in the Bible, distributed seeds of silver to His stewards,
bidding them to cultivate the earth until His return. Seasons faded into
memory and now the Master walks the fields to look at what has grown from

His grace. He meets the fearful who hid their coin, and the careless who squandered the yield, searching diligently for the faithful hearts.

At last, He finds the wise steward whose hands are stained with honest soil and whose barns overflow with harvest. Like that patient Master, government has today returned to these fields not to inspect failure, but to witness the fruits of partnership, commitment and faithful stewardship.

We are encouraged that the public resources invested here have been transformed into productive farms, thriving businesses and opportunities that continue to change lives.

Today is therefore not simply another farm visit. It is an accountability visit. It is an opportunity to assess whether government investment is delivering the intended outcomes: more land under production, stronger commercial enterprises, expanded market access, sustainable jobs and inclusive economic growth.

The Seventh Administration has identified agriculture as one of the key drivers of Limpopo's economic transformation. Our commitment goes beyond allocating budgets or constructing infrastructure. Every rand invested must generate measurable returns through increased production, greater competitiveness, new employment opportunities and improved livelihoods for our people.

As we celebrate Women's Month, we are equally reminded that agriculture must become a vehicle for transformation. Across Sekhukhune District, government is supporting 3,994 farmers through the CASP Production Inputs Programme during the 2026/27 financial year. Significantly, 2,329 of

these beneficiaries are women, while 11 of the 27 strategic smallholder producers receiving commercialisation support are women-led enterprises.

These figures tell us that progress is being made. Yet our ambition must be much greater. Women must not merely participate in agriculture, they must own farms, lead businesses, access finance, participate in processing and exports, and become employers who create wealth for future generations.

The same must apply to our young people. Agriculture is no longer confined to traditional farming. It is a modern, technology-driven industry offering opportunities in mechanisation, irrigation, precision agriculture, logistics, agro-processing, research and exports. Our responsibility is to ensure that young people see agriculture not as a last resort, but as a career and a business with limitless potential.

Programme Director,

Our visit here today to Kopano Citrus Farm, represents exactly the kind of inclusive agricultural development we seek to build.

Kopano is more than a successful farming enterprise. It is proof that persons living with disabilities can become commercial farmers, entrepreneurs and employers when afforded meaningful opportunities. We are proud to learn that the cooperative consists of 11 members, including four persons living with disabilities, operating on 178 hectares, with 29.5 hectares currently under citrus production.

Its journey reflects the value of sustained government support. Since acquiring the farm through the Land Redistribution for Agricultural

Development Programme in 2009, government and its partners have invested approximately R32.9 million in land acquisition, irrigation systems, balancing dams, pump houses, mechanisation, fencing, electricity and production support.

Today, those investments are bearing fruit.

Productivity has increased dramatically, from 15 tonnes per hectare in 2025 to 48 tonnes per hectare in 2026, representing more than a threefold improvement within a single season.

The farm harvested approximately 68,000 cartons of lemons, with 85% exported to international markets. Revenue has increased from approximately R2.76 million in 2025 to an estimated R11.56 million this year.

These are not merely impressive statistics. They demonstrate that government support, when combined with committed leadership, technical expertise and market access, can build commercially viable enterprises capable of competing globally.

While as a country we are struggling with the issue of unemployment, we are happy to know that this farm currently provides 12 permanent jobs, alongside seasonal employment during harvesting periods. Behind every job is a family with food on the table, children receiving education and dignity restored through meaningful work.

We are encouraged that Kopano is preparing an additional 10 hectares for citrus production later this year. That expansion must translate into higher production, increased exports and even more employment opportunities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The story of Afrikan Farms further demonstrates the success of Limpopo's agricultural commercialisation programme.

Afrikan Farms is a 100% black-owned commercial vegetable enterprise farming 83 hectares, with 50 hectares under irrigation.

As government, we have invested approximately R14.8 million through three phases of infrastructure development, including balancing dams, irrigation systems, pipelines and the construction of a modern packhouse currently nearing completion.

The return on this investment is already evident.

The farm now produces approximately 2,750 tonnes of vegetables annually, generating an estimated annual turnover of R11 million. It currently sustains 24 permanent and 49 seasonal jobs, while future expansion is expected to create an additional 22 permanent and 70 temporary employment opportunities.

Equally important is that Afrikan Farms has moved beyond production into established commercial markets. The enterprise is SA GAP accredited, is working towards Global GAP certification and has clear ambitions to supply major retailers, expand into the SADC region and access international markets.

This is exactly the model we want to replicate across Limpopo: invest in productive infrastructure, strengthen irrigation, support commercial production and connect farmers to profitable markets.

Programme Director,

Across Limpopo, we have identified 50 agricultural commercialisation projects, with 10 strategic enterprises located here in Sekhukhune District, four of which are led by women shareholders.

These projects remind us that commercialisation is not simply about building infrastructure. It is about building profitable businesses that produce at scale, create jobs, attract investment and compete successfully in local and international markets.

Our vision as the provincial government is clear. Farmers must graduate from subsistence production to smallholder farming, and from smallholder enterprises to fully commercial businesses capable of sustaining themselves long after government support has ended.

As government, we remain committed to walking this journey with our farmers. But let me also emphasise that partnership comes with accountability. Government can provide infrastructure, technical support and funding, but it cannot farm on behalf of farmers. Every supported enterprise must maintain its assets, produce consistently, keep proper records and demonstrate measurable economic returns.

The true measure of success is not how much government spends, but what those investments produce.

Today, as we stand on these farms, we have every reason to be optimistic. We have witnessed how public investment, visionary leadership and hard work have transformed potential into production, production into commercial success and commercial success into hope for our communities.

To the farmers of Kopano Citrus Farm and Afrikan Farms, thank you for proving that government support, when matched by commitment and discipline, can change lives.

May your success inspire many others across Limpopo to believe that agriculture is not only about feeding our nation, but about building prosperous communities, creating jobs and transforming our rural economy.

Together, let us continue cultivating not only our fields, but also the future of Limpopo.

I thank you.