

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA, ON THE
OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE FARMING INPUTS VOUCHER
PROGRAMME

ZEBEDIELA CITRUS FARM, LEPELLE-NKUMPI MUNICIPALITY, CAPRICORN DISTRICT

09 OCTOBER 2026

Programme Director,
Members of the Executive Council,
Her Worship the Mayor of Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality, Cllr Dr Meriam Molala
Representative of The National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership, Nkosi
Khulile Mkhathshwa and the Chairperson of the Limpopo House of Traditional and
Khoisan Leadership, Hosi Peni Ngove,
Other traditional leaders represented here
Representatives from the WDB Trust, led by the Chairperson Ms Gloria Serobe
The Zanele Mbeki Development Trust and WIPHOLD,
Our valued partners from the private sector,
Distinguished guests, and above all, our hardworking farmers, mothers, and community
producers,

Greetings to you all.

Being here today gives me so much joy. Standing before you at the historic Zebediela
Citrus Farm, I look around and see the dreams we share becoming a living reality.

When we started this term of government in 2024, we made a clear commitment: we
must direct meaningful support into the things that our country is naturally known for
and excels at. We know South Africa. We know that our people have green fingers, that
household farming is in our blood, and that everyday women like Vho-Nyamukamadi
can feed families and communities right from their backyards. Limpopo, Kwazulu-Natal,
Eastern Cape and North-West are provinces that can do that - and must - feed
themselves. Statistics still rank Limpopo first in household that feed themselves.

Seeing this vision brought to life today, in partnership with visionary leaders and
institutions, takes the words right out of our mouths. We are empowering our
communities at the very nerve centre of food security.

This support will help our household and subsistence producers take full advantage of
the land we have, the climate we work with and the multi-purpose value of water. We
are a water-scarce country, yes - but that has never deterred our farmers.

Our people know the right crops and vegetables to grow to make things happen. They
know how to save seeds for the next planting season, passing down wisdom from
generation to generation.

Isn't it a wonderful coincidence - or rather, a blessing - that we are launching this transformative project in October?

In Tshivenda, this month is called Tshimedzi - the month of the continuous sprouting and growth of crops that began in Khubvumedzi (September). In Xitsonga, it is Nhlangu, named after the nhlangu tree, when trees bloom, bear fruit, and provide sustenance. In Northern Sotho, it is Diphlane, named after phala (the impala) during their traditional breeding season, and after the Mphlane tree, which begins to sprout around this time.

What we are doing here today is giving new life to our household farmers. We are providing them with the vital inputs that will propel them to new heights - a harvest that will see our rural producers assail even greater heights of self-reliance and economic participation.

This programme is anchored on a vital partnership with our traditional leaders, and we are honoured to be guided by Hosi Ngove and our traditional councils.

Traditional leaders are the custodians of our land and the guardians of our communities' well-being. This collaboration reminds us of our heritage.

Growing up, when a person approached the Moshate seeking a residential stand, they were allocated a piece of land. But knowing they might not build immediately, the leadership encouraged them to at least start planting fruit trees in their yards. By the time the main house was built, mango, litchi, lemon and avocado trees were already sprouting, alongside a small plot for vegetables. That is the culture of production we must revive.

Today, we are deeply thankful to our sponsors: the Women's Development Banking Trust (WDBT), which is investing R45 million directly into agricultural input vouchers for 10,000 backyard/household farmers across Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and North West. Working alongside the Zanele Mbeki Development Trust, WIPHOLD, the National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders.

We are also pleased that Women's Development Banking Trust (WDBT) has also specifically earmarked Zebediela wherein 500 beneficiaries have been identified to get that support from today.

From here onwards the process will involve traditional leaders from across the country who shall identify about 11 beneficiaries in each of their councils that will benefit. This will be linked to the Agricultural Extension Officers who shall hold the traditional councils to identify needy and willing beneficiaries to get the vouchers, bringing the total number of beneficiaries to 10,000 across the country.

As we often say: kgomo go tsoswa e itsoshang. Let all of you who are beneficiaries take full advantage of this start-up support. Work hard within the six-month redemption window, produce more and feed your families and communities.

Food security in South Africa begins in our backyard gardens, our villages, and the fields that sustain our households every single day. This programme recognises that our rural producers - the vast majority of them women - are ready to grow more when they are equipped with the seeds, fertilizer and tools to do so.

To our beneficiaries: use this digital voucher wisely, respect the process, and let your harvests speak for the immense potential of our province. Together, we are building a capable, developmental state rooted in the dignity of work and the security of our people.

I could go on to say a lot more but allow me today to leave all this work to speak for itself.

We are happy and proud of this moment!

I thank you.