



**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION,  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, MR BK MANAMELA, ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING AUTHORITY (“AgriSETA”)'S RECOGNITION AWARDS  
DINNER, FAIRMONT ZIMBALI RESORT, ZIMBALI ESTATE, BALLITO,  
KWAZULU-NATAL (“KZN”)**

**Thursday, 3 October 2019**

Programme Director, Ms Leanne Manas;

Chairperson of the AgriSETA Board, Mr Christo van der Rheede;

Members of the AgriSETA Board;

AgriSETA’s Chief Executive Officer (“CEO”), Mr Zenzele Myeza;

Employers and levy payers;

Accredited Training Providers;

Sector specialists;

Accredited learning institutions; and

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen:

**I greet you all this evening**

I must thank the SETA for this honour of inviting us to this occasion of the Recognition Awards Dinner, especially against the background of critical challenges that confront us as the country, such as rising unemployment especially for our young people, and violence, particularly gender based violence.

The President of the Republic of South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa, in his address at the *Presidential Summit on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide* on 1st November 2018, stated that gender-based violence is “*a crisis that is tearing our society apart. It is a crisis that affects every community in our country and that touches the lives of most families in one way or another. Gender-based violence is an affront to our shared humanity*”. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (“LGBTQI”) and community members are the most affected by this scourge.

GBV is a societal matter, hence in this important sector of our economy, you must also increase your efforts for proper socialisation and equal treatment of all workers.

We should also strive to treat children equally, both the girl and the boy child. This must find expression everywhere in our society. It will ensure that, in time, we achieve greater equality, and eliminate the gender gap that contributes to prevailing power relations, which sustain the violence and abuse.

Programme Director, Ladies and Gentlemen our challenge remains that of driving our country’s agenda of **a skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path**, this can only be possible through our collective efforts. Part of our contribution, amongst others, as you might be aware is that the Minister on 22 July 2019, has re-established SETAs

from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2030, including the AgriSETA, implying therefore, that SETA Boards will be appointed for five years, from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025.

We are doing this to stabilise the skills development system so that we can all focus on the delivery of skills in all sectors of the economy, especially in the agriculture sector. This should provide the appropriate policy certainty for all stakeholders in the system to develop ambitious plans, and execute them diligently for effective inclusive economic development.

This sector is very important in driving the country's socio-economic development, hence the government, has identified agriculture and agro-processing as part of its fourteen priority economic sectors.

We see agriculture as the science and art of developing plants and animals (livestock). We have further defined the agro-processing as the processing, preservation and preparation of agricultural production for intermediate and final consumption. The agro-processing industry covers a broad area of post-harvest activities, comprising artisanal, minimally processed and packaged agricultural raw materials, the industrial and technology-intensive processing of intermediate goods and the fabrication of final products derived from agriculture.

We need therefore the AgriSETA to be clear in its Sector Skills Plan ("SSP") and Annual Performance Plan ("APP") in addressing skills related to agroprocessing and the sector in general.

I am aware, as the Chairperson and the Chief Executive Officer (“CEO”) met with us in February, this year, that you have identified the Top Ten Priority Skills (for 2019/20 Financial) such as, amongst others: Mixed Crop and Livestock Farm Worker and Assistant; Horticultural Farmer; Agricultural Scientists; Electricians; Millwrights etc., this is indeed good for the sector. But we did not have a clear sense of the sector’s response to the fourth industrial revolution.

The Board must begin to discuss and make practical proposals to address the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges and exploit the opportunities of the evolving technological changes, commonly known as the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution.

There is no doubt that we have entered a global transformation that is characterized by the convergence of digital, physical, and biological technologies in ways that are changing both the world around us and our very idea of what it means to be human. There is no turning back, we are in the age of the pervasive influence of emerging technologies and artificial intelligence, and the AgriSETA must be equal to the task. We have already about eleven universities offering programmes, with modules such as Block Chain, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things and Robotics, we will continuously expand these offerings, the SETA must find ways in partnering with research institutions to prepare the industry for 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges.

I have been informed that, in the meetings earlier this afternoon, there were discussions that related to the fourth industrial revolution in the agriculture sector. We look forward to more specific plans in this regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the StatsSA 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Labour Force Survey (“QLFS”) released on 30 July 2019 indicated that the agriculture sector when comparing with the first quarter of 2019, increased in employment by 5 000, from 837 000 to 842 000, we hope that the momentum will be maintained, if not improved.

What is worrying, though, is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Gross Domestic Product (“GDP”) figures as the industry’s growth was negative at - 4.2%, we hope with all the interventions, we are putting together, we will soon turn around the situation, as the government is prioritising the sector. The AgriSETA should be an authoritative leader regarding the skills development in this sector, together with all the partners in the skills development system.

We need to do something out of the ordinary, if we are to address the challenge of youth unemployment, as we are aware that for the ages of 15-24 years, the unemployment rate stands at 56.4%, whilst 3.3 million of the same cohort is not in education, employment and/ or training (“NEET”).

As the SETA we have to show young people that this sector is characterised by businesses that require high-level skills and that offer them great opportunities. Many of these skills, amongst others, are artisanal skills. We have to find ways to show our young people the many, varied ways in which they can participate in this sector. Jobs and careers in the sector range from input services to farm-based activities and on to processing activities off the farm. To do this we have to change the perception that a university education is the only avenue to high-level skills.

The AgriSETA's annual Excellence Awards are an important way of doing this, and as the Department we commend you for this initiative. The Excellence Awards reward everything we need to encourage on the path towards building agricultural and agro-processing skills, as earlier indicated. As you all know, South Africa needs young, innovative minds working to come up with ways to find and develop new markets for commercial and emerging farmers, and of ensuring we have better economic and agricultural infrastructure so that farmers' products can get to those markets efficiently.

We also need to find new ways of guaranteeing that producers have access to financial support, and better ways of improving productivity in the agriculture sector, balancing mechanisation and job creation. There are so many ways in which agriculture and agro-processing can stimulate the development of rural economies while reducing the environmental impact of agricultural production. We need to encourage them all.

The AgriSETA is perfectly placed to drive implementation of the government's agricultural sector growth strategy, which is linked to the National Skills Development Strategy III. Already AgriSETA is an important entity in the Department of Higher Education and Training's endeavour to facilitate learning through learnerships, skills programmes, adult education and training, and tertiary studies, as well as in-service training. It is imperative that we turn South Africa's economy around. These awards are an excellent way to show the nation that the agricultural and agro-processing sector is a dynamic, exciting one that is full of the potential to do exactly that. Together we can do more.

**I THANK YOU.**

