THE FIFTH INKOSI MATOMELA MEMORIAL LECTURE, 2013:
“Poverty alleviation through land ownership and sustainable farming”
NKWINTI, G. E.

GREYTOWN, KWAZULU-NATAL
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His Excellency, Mr J. G. Zuma,
President of the Republic of South Africa;

His Majesty, King Goodwil Zwelithini

Inkosi Simphiwe Zuma of Mpendle;

Inkosi Bhekumuzi Zuma of Nkandla;

The Honourable Acting Premier, Ms S Mchunu;

Deputy-Minister of Finance, Mr Nene

His Worship, The Mayor of UMvoti Municipality;

Esteemed Amakhosi;

Honourable Councillors;

Leaders of Business and Industry;

Ladies and Gentleman;

Comrades and friends.

I feel greatly honoured and privileged once more, to have been invited by
the Zuma Royal House, to deliver the Fifth Inkosi Matomela Memorial
Lecture; this after having been invited to deliver the third Memorial Lecture
in 2011.

I am speaking on the theme: “Poverty alleviation through land
ownership and sustainable farming”

However, please allow me to briefly reflect on my previous address to this
auspicious occasion. During my address, I focused on the life and times of
Nathan Rothschild and that of Inkosi Matomela; and, in that, drew an
analysis of how two persons, living in different parts of the world spaces,
endured relatively similar social and cultural hardships. Rothschild was not
killed by poverty, income inequality or unemployment, no. Despite being
the world’s richest man at the time he succumbed to a boil or abscess in the back! He was, arguably, killed by cultural backwardness: medical science and technology had not yet advanced to the stage they are at today; and, there was less attention paid to basic cleanliness or hygiene, as a preventative measure against contagious diseases. I, then, linked this to the basic human needs, especially for our rural people, namely – food, clean piped water, sanitation services, transport, roads, energy, recreation facilities, and decent housing.

I posed the question then, in 2011, that if Inkosi Matomela were to rise from the grave today, would he recognize his village, and the geo-landscape which he roamed freely during his time? I submitted that if he did, it would mean that we would not have made social progress. I thus want to premise the theme of my address tonight on that very question, and reflect albeit very briefly on what has been done since I posed that question to this occasion in 2011. The broad response is that we continued with the progress that commenced with the advent of democratic majority in 1994, albeit not at the pace commensurate with expectations.

Ladies and gentleman, during 2013 we marked the centenary of the 1913 Natives Land Act, and in so doing, declared that all our efforts will be directed towards making a visible impact in reversing the legacy of this heinous Act. Our war cry for rural development and land reform thus is: “Reversing the legacy of the 1913 Natives Land Act.” On the 20\textsuperscript{th} of June (2013), the President opened the “Walk through tour” or exhibition on the social, economic, cultural and political impact of this Act. The exhibition is
currently on a tour of this country. We invite the audience to make time and visit it, when it reaches your shores.

We are all acutely aware of the effects that the 1913 Natives Land Act has had on Blacks in general, and Africans in particular. Let me highlight some of this:

- dispossess of their land;
- relegation of the majority of the population to an overcrowded 13% of the land;
- severe under-development of areas allocated to African people;
- the destruction of a fledging class of African farmers; and,
- the destruction of the environment; which led to deforestation and soil erosion due to overgrazing and over population.

This is the legacy we must reverse!

Colin Bundy, when reflecting on the 1913 Natives Land Act, eloquently expressed, when he made the point that although the policy (substituting individual tenure for tribal land tenure) was to establish a ‘producer class,’ in the interest of the Reserves being able to support themselves, at the same time, he observed, ‘the principle of “one man one lot” seems designed to prevent the emergence of black farmers so successful that they might compete with white farmers.’

As attempted to demonstrate above, the segregation policy was driven by economic imperatives which were, more and more, becoming ancillary to a ‘grand scheme of things’. There was the perception, ably refuted by
Colin Bundy, that black land tenure was often an economic failure. This is, ostensibly, one of the reasons why trust tenure was introduced and the state intervened. Bundy, on the other hand, observed that ‘the underdevelopment of black farming was a necessary component of, and not distinct from, the process of capitalist development in South Africa’. In a more elaborate passage, Bundy effectively refutes the notion and perception that Africans were incapable of efficient farming (V L Allen: The History of Black Mineworkers in SA):

Peasants responded swiftly to opportunities for participation in the enlarged market and entrepreneurial activities; innovation, diversification and a modest level of accumulation marked the efforts of the more successful peasants …… Most freely in the Cape and Natal, and in disguised forms in the Republics, Africans entered the land market as purchasers; by the early twentieth century it was clear that black peasants ‘were beginning to challenge for land, even on terms dictated by white legislators’. In certain areas and at certain levels of the economy, peasant production played a part that has subsequently been under-estimated by historians: the trade in wool and grain in the market towns of the Eastern Cape, the production of foodstuffs in nineteenth century Natal, the share-cropping peasants in the Orange Free State, and the market production in the western and central Transvaal are examples. Throughout Southern Africa, African petty producers possessed certain advantages over white producers: African societies were rather more efficient in land use than the white, and peasants
responded more effectively to economic opportunities and pressures than most white pastoralist-cultivators.

Ladies and gentleman, having provided this background on the 1913 Natives Land Act, and its legacy that needs be reversed, let me focus on the theme of tonight’s address.

In order to fully address this theme, it is requires of me to unpack the key elements contained therein, and their interrelatedness in achieving our objective tonight.

Jeffrey Sachs, in his book *The End of Poverty*, has the following to say about the definition of poverty:

“As a matter of definition, it is useful to distinguish between three degrees of poverty: extreme (or absolute) poverty, moderate poverty, and relative poverty. Extreme poverty means that households cannot meet basic needs for survival. They are chronically hungry, unable to access health care, lack the amenities for safe drinking water and sanitation, cannot afford education for some or all the children, and perhaps lack rudimentary shelter – a roof to keep the rain out of the hut, a chimney to remove the smoke from the cooking stove – and basic articles of clothing such as shoes. Unlike moderate and relative poverty, extreme poverty only occurs in developing countries. Moderate poverty generally refers to conditions of life in which basic needs are met, but just barely. Relative poverty is generally construed as a household income level below a given proportion of average national income.”
The relatively poor in high-income countries, lack access to cultural goods, entertainment, recreation and to quality health care, education, and other pre-requisites for upward social mobility.” Sachs further states, that, “if economic development is a ladder with higher rungs representing steps up the path to economic well-being, there are one billion people around the world, and that one sixth of humanity are too ill, hungry, or destitute even to get a foot on the first wrung of the ladder. These are the ‘poorest of the poor’, or the ‘extreme poor’ of the planet. They all live in developing countries.”

Ladies and gentleman, following this description of poverty, the question we must answer is, how do we create an enabling environment in order to empower those who haven’t made it onto the first rung of the economic ladder, to do so. I’ll return to this at a later stage during my address.

The second element of the theme I wish to unpack is that of ownership, and in this case, land ownership.


'You might own property in Africa but you'll never be able to possess it'

He poses the question, and answers it: “What is Land Tenure?”
“Therefore, the first 'land tenure', if we could call it this, was by nature communal. Even when early man did begin to utilize and explore the soil in order to produce food for his own use, the land on which he did this did not belong to him, but was registered as communal property. Only much later could individuals own land. Land tenure is associated with the right of ownership.

Thus, land tenure in Europe developed from communal ownership before the Middle Ages to feudal ownership during the Middle Ages and eventually to individual ownership after the Renaissance. In due course, land tenure increasingly implied power. Land tenure became a 'key component in gaining and exerting economic and eventually also political power'. Therefore, 'the pursuit of land tenure was one of the most powerful drivers in human history over many centuries'.

On land ownership, he has the following to say:

“As a legal or juridical concept, the right to ownership entails 'the right a person has to an object, including the competence of possession, use, consumption, disposal and destruction'. In short, this means that in terms of the law, the owner may do with his possession whatever he likes. The right to ownership, particularly the right to own land, had become a very emotional matter for mankind, which has led to many problems and conflicts and still does.”

In South Africa, it was in 1657 that the first ever group of farmers, consisting of some of the officials of the Dutch East India Company (DEIC)
whose service contracts had expired, was 'permitted to go and farm on their own, provided that they sold their produce to the Company'. Land was surveyed and allocated to these farmers.

These farms were regarded as quit-rent or leasehold farms (state property) that could be owned for life. This resulted in individuals, for the first time in the history of this country, 'owning' land in the European sense of the word.

However, this also led to the first clashes between these 'Free Burghers' and the indigenous peoples, the Khoi and San (also referred to as Hottentots and Bushmen). The Khoi and San did not 'own' land - not because they did not want to own land, but simply because owning land was not part of their culture and they, therefore, did not recognize and respect this custom. In their culture, a region with unclear borders belonged communally to the tribe. These undefined borders were continually adjusted as the need dictated.

For the European this was an unacceptable custom. Europeans required definitive fixed borders mutually but, also, between them and the semi-nomadic peoples. This was the beginning of clashes about land tenure that still continue today.

Among blacks, the age-old customs and traditions determined the position, duties and responsibilities of each individual in the community. Land was communal and not individual property and the produce of their agricultural activities was mainly for own consumption and, to a lesser extent, for 'selling' or barter. The tribal chief played a special role in this regard.
However, the anthropologist, Schapera, maintains that: *All land occupied by the tribe is vested in the chief, and administered by him, as the head of the tribe. This he does through his sub-chiefs and headmen who regulate the distribution and use of land in their respective areas.*

*In other words, the tribal area is held in trust for the tribe. However, this system did not mean private ownership of the land for the Chief. He never had an unlimited right to the land.*

In quoting the above passages and long references, one can draw the observation that for the purposes of development, or in this case poverty alleviation, one doesn’t necessarily require direct ownership of land; but rather institutionalised access and the resources (skills, inputs and strategic support), in order to work the land. This is where collaboration between the state and communities; and, between the state and private sector come in. Political institutions are critical in creating and maintaining such economic institutions.

Ladies and gentleman, I have addressed the matters of poverty and ownership, two elements of the theme. In order to complete the theme, and the interrelatedness of the each to the overall objective statement, let me address the part on sustainability.

The United Nations ascribes effectiveness of ‘sustainability’ to the following conditions:
(a) Socio-economic development: health, education and recreation;
(b) Environmental development;
(c) Institutional / political support; and,
(d) Morality and aesthetic relational values.

The United Nations further makes the following points:

‘The world’s population of 7 billion is likely to increase to 9 billion by 2050. The demand for diminishing natural resources is growing. Income gaps calls for decent standard of living for everyone today without compromising the needs of future generations. This means finding better ways of doing things, such as:

- How can we help people move out of poverty and get good jobs, while protecting the environment?
- How can we provide access to clean energy for everyone, and make sure that the energy we produce doesn’t contribute to climate change?
- How can we make sure that everyone can get water, food and nutrition they need;
- How can we make sure that our communities are resilient in the face of natural disasters?

Solving these challenges is a start to building the sustainable future we want. The question that we must answer though is, how do we create a sustainable future through the decisions we make, the initiatives we undertake, and the institutional reforms we implement. Let me suggest a response to this question. We must not only make land available to the
landless, we must provide them with the requisite resources and strategic support. The President has announced that land claims will be re-opened to afford people who missed out the first window and opportunity to claim. He further announced that Exceptions will be explored to going beyond the 1913 cut-off date for descendants of the Khoi and San; and, for heritage sites and historical land marks.

I visited Msinga today, where the first project in terms of the Animal and Veld Management Programme’s Integrated Implementation Plan, or “Operation Mayibuye!” as it has been dubbed, was launched.

Operation Mayibuye! is premised on an integrated roll-out of infrastructure and strategic development support to communal areas and municipal commonages. This programme entails the following implementation interventions:

– Stock water dams and boreholes;
– Fencing and animal handling facilities;
– Mechanisation and related services, such as disaster management;
– Dip tanks, extension support and veterinary services;
– De-bushing and laying out gabions to control soil erosion;
– Soil rehabilitation, regreening the environment and decongesting the 13% by relocating livestock and crop farmers to the 87% areas;
– Fire breaks and hydrants;
– Silos, storage facilities; agri-parks and processing plants; and
Conservation Agriculture in collaboration with professional bodies such as the Agricultural Research Council (ARC).

Over-running grazing land because of poor veld management and lack of livestock control has further exacerbated rural poverty, which could be prevented. The objective of this Programme is to improve land use in communal areas, thus contributing to improved environmental and land use practices. We must regenerate the productive capacity of communal areas and municipal commonages if future generations will continue benefitting from natural resources. We have to take responsibility in this regard.

Ladies and gentleman, the greatest opportunity for an effective implementation of the Animal and Veld Management Programme (AVMP) – lies in an integrated implementation approach, ensuring that all levels of government and the private sector work together, whilst ensuring that communities are the drivers of the Programme. It is in this regard that the proposals by the President of SANCO, Cde Ruth Bengu make sense. She proposes that procurement policies should be reviewed to allow for community-based cooperation to tender directly on projects directed at their communities. Unless this economic institutional framework is reviewed and transformed to facilitate direct economic benefits for the rural poor, the system which benefits a few individuals and elite groups will further deepen the politics of dependency in the rural space and poor communities in general. This direct participation in the economy by communities is in line with the Freedom Charter’s redistributive developmental paradigm.
The AVMP has three projects, which are definite game-changers, in terms of fighting poverty, soil degradation, unemployment and spatial congestion, namely:

a) soil rehabilitation;
b) re-greening the environment; and,
c) spatial decongestion.

We have deeply eroded and deforested communal areas as well as lots of state land which we continue to acquire, but have not always been effective in having it utilised to combat the ills of the 1913 Natives Land Act - poverty, unemployment, income inequality and cultural backwardness, induced by landlessness and resourcelessness. For purposes of emphasis and clarity, that rural people on both farms and villages still go to the bush to relieve themselves, drink water from the stock water dams, old women are killed ostensibly to cure Aids, constitute cultural backwardness which should not be tolerated for a day.

The AVMP offers us a great opportunity to combat these ills!

The good thing is that there are thousands of Communal Farmers who have demonstrated ability, commitment and passion for farming under trying conditions in the historical 13% of the land, in both cropping and livestock. This offers us a great opportunity to reverse the legacy of the 1913 Act more aggressively, effectively and with immediate and demonstrable impact, by off-loading these communal farmers into productive lands in the 87% space, including state land lying fallow to promote smallholder farmers in both crop (maximum of 5 ha’s for
individuals and 50 ha’s for up to 5 persons co-ops) and livestock (maximum of 200 ha’s)

In implementing the Animal and Veld Management Programme, our vision is to bring about a green revolution within rural spaces, where communities are provided with the resources, skills and opportunities to access the ‘first and second rungs of the development ladder’, this in contributing towards a better way of life through increased agriculture-based economic, social and cultural infrastructure in communal areas, including municipal commonages. The change agents for the Programme are the Expanded Public Works Programme, the Community Works Programme, the National Rural Youth Service Corps and the Agricultural Research Council for technical services.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope that some insight into the theme “Poverty-alleviation through land ownership and sustainable farming practices.” But, more importantly what is being done to give effect to this.

I thank-you!
References


3. On African peasant farmers: Colin Bundy and Morton Leagassick have written academic papers on this, also volumes I, II of VL Allen: The History of Black Miners in South Africa


5. Reference has been made to my first Inkosi Matomela Lecture in 2011.