

Presidents Congress Report 2019

Honoured Guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is again a pleasure to address our members at this 2019 Congress.

As a fellow farmer, cognisant of the experiences of political instability, policy uncertainty and persistent poor performance of economic indicators during the past year, one can identify with the subdued mood encountered amongst our members during the recent roadshow held across our province.

Often disheartened by lack of government support, embattled farmers have been subjected to relentless assaults on their constitutional rights to property; face continued possibility of threats to personal safety and security; are constrained by effects of climatic change and are seemingly uniquely compelled to provide solutions to injustices of the past.

Entrenched corruption, as unveiled in the Zondo commission, has incapacitated the functionality of state organs and services.

The passive approach seemingly taken to act on these revelations erodes confidence in existing judicial structures so necessary to fortress the validity of our country's constitution.

It is within the context of this restrained environment that farmers must operate and tirelessly lead to advance agriculture for future generations.

It is therefore equally vital that your organisation, Kwanalu, remains relevant, positive and continues to resolutely lobby protection for the rights of its members and advancement for the agricultural sector.

The creation of a land desk, as proposed and adopted during Congress 2018, is set to roll out within the next few months.

Members are reminded that funding for this initiative was always going to be a challenge and, in understanding the increased burden placed on farmers to fund their own future through organised agriculture, additional resources will be sourced from donations (farmer organisations and commodities) and other stakeholders within the agricultural value chain.

Kwanalu staff will thus be better resourced to attend to the array of land related issues facing farmers.

Resumes already received from potential candidates to head up the land desk are promising, and an appointment is imminent.

From surveys received, there is a clear sentiment that commercial farmers want to farm into the future and are willing to participate in initiatives which promote economic development, yet not in isolation. Emerging farmers are equally enthusiastic, but are in many instances, disillusioned with paltry support given by governing bodies, political interplay and spurious undertakings, and are increasingly looking to farmers to provide linkages to enter the agricultural value chain.

An enabling environment must be established for value chain development through policy, regulatory and institutional support by the public sector. Greater involvement of the public sector in agriculture, to develop and improve the agricultural value chain through partnerships,

will bring some reprieve to the inherent, incognito dictate that farmers are solely responsible for land reform.

Whilst there are farmers generating pragmatic opportunities to address land reform, capacitating new and developing farmers / managers and constructing sustainable business models for food production and security, there are those unwilling to participate and further still those who would rather elect to criticize progressive initiatives to develop emergent farmers.

A recent meeting held between Kwanalu and newly elected MEC of Agriculture and Rural Development, Honourable Sithole-Moloi was both encouraging and explicit in the need for government and commercial farmers to work together to develop our sector. We welcome the opportunity to collectively build our provincial economy and trust for value added outcomes. Kwanalu wishes the MEC well for her new position.

Essential to overcoming the challenges facing our sector is a unified voice from an organisation invested in the interests of its members. Its longevity and succession are contingent on unity and leadership.

Agriculture needs to continue to take the lead in unifying farmers from diverse commodities, people groups and economic activities; to strengthen communication channels with local security and policing structures, government institutions and officials; and actively participate in sharing its resources and skills with local communities.

Disharmony within communities often exist where such interactions with local structures are broken, and farmers can be pivotal in restoring some semblance of order.

Farmers again are encouraged to become involved with local and provincial organised agricultural structures to provide the direction and knowledge necessary to fully unlock the potential of agriculture within our borders.

Farmers are hard-pressed for survival and it requires the synergistic efforts of each farming community to collectively carry the burden of our profession. The future of agriculture in this country hinges on strong, principled and selfless leadership – a visibly diminishing resource in organised agriculture today.

The proliferation of fake news, with varied contrived agendas, has the potential to divide and polarise individuals and communities.

Responsible validation and dissemination of information is indispensable to constructive engagement and members are encouraged to utilise the media platforms available through Kwanalu to access information which has been researched, well considered and deemed accurate.

The recent introduction of Kwanalu whatsapp broadcasts has garnered popular support from members for ease of access.

As I near the end of this message I wish to convey my intention not to make myself available for re-election to lead this distinguished organisation during the next presidential term. Although the journey over the past four years has been challenging, it has been richly fulfilling and I have considered it a privilege and honour to serve our members and communities.

I have encountered many remarkable ambassadors for agriculture along the way, passionate about people and their vocation to produce food. It is this element that will provide the support and courage needed for the incoming leader and help navigate strategy for our future.

My thanks go to the Advisory Council for their inputs, the Kwanalu Board for their deliberated support and selfless service to our members, vice-presidents Phenias Gumede and PJ Hassard for their leadership and our staff ably led by CEO Sandy la Marque and her team of Lyn Vincent, Rita Kali, Delyse Botha, Roy Dandala and Koos Marais for the tireless work done for the benefit of our members.

The work ethic of this team is unparalleled and KwaZulu Natal agriculture can only bestow vast appreciation on them for the effort and work done to help provide a future for our farmers.

Kwanalu appreciates the efforts of all stakeholders and role players in agriculture striving to provide a better environment to live in.

The family unit is the backbone of society, and as custodians of our sector we need to be diligent and intentional to protect and uphold family structures and values. Our appreciation goes to our families who often sacrifice much for the efforts of organised agriculture.

And finally, never lose hope for our future as we continue to trust Our Lord to direct our paths, carry us through difficult times, and then to enjoy reaping the rewards of sowing good seed.

Thank you!!

Andy Buchan
President
Kwanalu