

**Budget speech for the 2007/08 financial year by Gauteng MEC for
Agriculture, Conservation and Environment Khabisi Mosunkutu, Provincial
Legislature**

12 June 2007

A. Introduction

I feel deeply honoured to have this opportunity to present to this House my Department's service delivery plans for the 2007/08 financial year. Needless to say delivery on these plans will further extend the tangible benefits that have already accrued to our people as a consequence of our democratic dispensation. Attainment of the goals outlined in the report should also contribute towards consolidating our national sense of patriotism, a patriotism that builds a truly united, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous nation.

This seat of our people's provincial government is tasked to mull over my Department's programme of action at a time when, four days from today, we formally shall be celebrating the youth of our country. This will provide us with an opportunity to remind ourselves of the great heroism that went into bringing us the freedom that we today enjoy and seek to enhance through our works in government.

Masses of our people throughout the classes and strata that constitute our society already are engaged in vigorous deliberations reviewing the path that we have traversed and what else needs to be done to further entrench our democratic dispensation. Of course this will inform the tactics and strategies of our people's movement, tactics and strategies that will, necessarily so, impact on the intensity of the plans that we today are discussing. These discussions will culminate in policy resolutions at the forth-coming national African National Congress (ANC) Policy Conference. We trust that debate around the service delivery objectives set out in this document, whether held in the Gauteng Legislature or on the streets of the province will genuinely contribute towards the ultimate goal we have set for the Department enhancing the quality of life of our people.

In presenting the service delivery commitments for the current financial year, I am also conscious of the context within which we should intensify our work. Addressing the nation during the State of the Nation address (SONA), President Mbeki directed that we should implement 'the Communal Land Rights Act in order to improve economic utilisation of communal land while at the same time expanding assistance such as irrigation, seeds and implements to small and co-operative farmers'.

Note has also been taken of the State of the Province address (SOPA) delivered by Premier Mbhazima Shilowa. In it he directed that the Gauteng Agricultural Development Strategy (GADS) should be, 'implemented to take advantage of the sector's potential for economic empowerment and growth. This aims to boost value-added production in the sector, including through promoting bio-technology, agro-processing and high value and niche market crops.'

B. Past achievements

Discussing my Department's programme of action we perhaps also should reflect on whether as part of a developmental State we have established 'clear, measurable and time bound targets' that will ensure a 'sustainable economy where all South Africans, present and future, realise their right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being. An economy in which increasing social equality and economic growth form a virtuous cycle of development which progressively improves the quality of life of all citizens, rolls back the frontiers of poverty and frees the potential of each person'. This is an extract from some of the ANC inspired discussion documents that constitute background information for the policy debates that I earlier alluded to.

Prior to presenting my Department's budget plans, I perhaps need to briefly highlight some of our milestones of the outgoing financial year.

1. Our contribution to stimulating faster economic growth and to drastically reduce unemployment

1.1 Utilising the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations and processes, the Department approved more than 95 percent of all EIA applications. 70 percent of these were finalised within the stipulated time frames, allowing new developments to proceed especially in the industrial and residential sectors.

1.2 Our Veterinary Services Unit continued to curb the transfer of pathogens and to maintain the credibility of the country's veterinary certification processes, thereby contributing to confidence in the province and facilitating an increase in international trade. To this end 2 618 inspections were carried out and 11 634 health certificates issued during the past financial year. In pursuing the same objectives, 18 871 cattle and 105 samples of pigs were tested.

1.3 Relying on labour intensive methods, R5,7 million was expended on upgrading provincial nature reserves. Two hundred and fifty local residents benefited from the short term jobs that were created and were thus able to put food on the table. Also as a consequence of this upgrading, the number of visitors to the reserves especially learners, increased by 20 percent over the previous financial year. Opportunities were created for 2 782 pupils to attend the conservation awareness programmes held regularly at the reserves.

An amount of R8,9 million has been budgeted for further upgrading of the reserves. As part of this upgrading of the reserves, a tender was issued for a service provider to manage the visitor services at the reserves. We anticipate awarding the tender to a suitable bidder before the end of this financial year. This process will contribute to the development of quality class holiday or weekend destinations to which visitors can come to unwind and enjoy the nature with which our province is so abundantly blessed.

1.4 Our Sustainable Resources Management Unit, responsible for much of our involvement in the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) created 296 jobs during the year under review which resulted in the burning of 181 kilometre of firebreaks and the removal of 21 524 ha of invasive plants. This programme

continues with the Department creating additional jobs for the burning of firebreaks and the removal of solid waste from the Klipspruit River and its tributaries.

It is worth noting that a growing number of developers express their appreciation on the quality of work and the attention given in the development of EIA decisions.

2. What we did to contribute to fighting poverty and building secure and sustainable communities

2.1 The Department's Integrated Household Food Security Programmes were very effective in contributing to the reduction of poverty levels in the province. Through these programmes, 117 projects reaching approximately 2 280 beneficiaries were implemented during the year. People who are mentally and physically challenged were not left out as we extended services to facilities catering for these communities in Lenasia, Laudium and Springs. These projects entailed the distribution of starter packs to beneficiaries who were selected with the help of local authorities.

I am pleased to report that the drafting and compilation of Department's food security strategy is now complete and will be tabled before the Executive Council soon.

2.2 We have frequently submitted that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes are developmental tools that encourage sustainability and the security of our communities. This is borne out by, to cite but one example, a development in Strubens Valley. Having been notified of the illegal deviation and degradation of a river in Strubens Valley ext 7, our environmental management inspectors, the famed 'Green Scorpions' initiated an investigation. Satisfied that violations of environmental regulations and the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) had indeed taken place, we engaged the developers not only for purposes of rehabilitation but also for further development in the area. As a consequence, local developers agreed to work not only on the rehabilitation of the river and a local wetland, but also to construct houses in the area.

3. Building an effective and caring government

3.1 The MEC/MMC forum met twice in the year under review. As a consequence of meetings such as these, we signed four Environmental Management Frameworks (EMFs). As part of our outreach programme, 12 stakeholder meetings were held with various communities of Gauteng. The Department remains committed to increased and ongoing communication with all stakeholders in the province through stakeholder meetings, capacity building programmes and imbizos to maximise awareness of and involvement in the work carried out by our different core business units.

Friends and colleagues, these milestones have been mentioned merely to set a background for the programme of action of the financial year under discussion. Naturally a full report on service delivery for the year 2006/07 will be presented in the Department's Annual Report.

C. 2007/08 financial year

My Department has been allocated an amount of R294,648 million for the 2007/08 financial year, which is an increase of 21,1% on the previous budget. This will be utilised as follows:

- * Programme 1: Administration: R109,706 million
- * Programme 2: Agriculture: R112,174 million
- * Programme 3: Conservation: R40,034 million
- * Programme 4: Environment: R32,734 million

I now will systematically present signposts for the incoming financial year. I will present these markers within the following provincial strategic objectives:

1. Stimulating faster economic growth and drastically reduce unemployment

1.1 Agriculture

It is perhaps apt to point out that because of the very important role that urban agriculture plays in relation to our strategic objectives we have increased the efficiency of implementation of our food insecurity alleviation programmes. As a result, even though we have had to reduce our appropriation for these programmes from R16,5 million in 2006/07 to R14,9 million in 2007/08, we are reaching the same targets as before.

It is an accepted fact that infrastructure has an important and positive role to play in economic development. It is with this understanding that in the 2007/08 financial year, we commit R19, 7m to assist 100 new farmers with agriculture infrastructural development as part of our Farmer Support Programme (FSP).

During his SOPA, Premier Shilowa stressed the need to rollout our planned Agricultural Hubs Programme. We can report that we have already launched the first such hub at which together with the Metsweding District Municipality and the Nokeng and Kungwini local municipalities we signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in terms of which the parties:

- * pledged to co-operate in the planning of the agriculture hubs within the boundaries of the municipality
- * agreed on the provision of essential services such as water, electricity, security, etc in the agriculture hubs
- * agreed to co-operate in the development of infrastructure required in the agriculture hubs
- * agreed to contribute to the sound management of agriculture enterprises to be established in the agriculture hubs.

We aim to ensure that projects established in the agriculture hubs participate across the complete agricultural value chain. Therefore, we have begun with the development of the Agriculture Plan (A-plan) which serves as the business plan for the agriculture hubs. It will comprehensively define the anchor projects within the agriculture hubs. The range of projects and activities within the agriculture hubs includes amongst others training, assistance with inputs, development of co-operatives and building of marketing infrastructure such as pack houses. It is the intention of the Department to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is established within the agriculture hubs to ensure that a conducive environment for

enhanced production is created. Government farmer support programmes such as Micro Agricultural Financial Scheme of South Africa (Mafisa), Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme (CASAP), etc will be focused in the agriculture hubs.

Our basic approach to these nuclei of high quality agricultural activities includes ensuring access to local and international markets for farmers. To further contribute to the realisation of this objective, we will produce six market reports and four market tendency reports during this financial year.

During the 2006/07 financial year, we completed the project of zonation of moderate to high potential agriculture land. This project formed the basis for improving the Gauteng Agriculture Potential Atlas (GAPA) which is one of the decision support tools essential for prompt decision making with regard to the EIAs. Furthermore, this zonation project was a precursor to the agriculture hubs as a constituent element of the implementation of the Gauteng Agriculture Development Strategy (GADS).

The outcome of the zonation process is expected to further help in enhancing our comprehensive agricultural plan, a plan that is a constituent element of the implementation of the Gauteng Agricultural Development Strategy (GADS).

Unfragmented areas of moderate to high potential agricultural land will be utilised in accordance with the framework established for the Metsweding Agricultural Hub, which is to develop the area into highly productive intensive agricultural hubs or corridors of mixed farm sizes with an emphasis on smallholder farming.

To further accelerate the alteration of the race and gender patterns of ownership in the agricultural sector we plan to facilitate the development and evaluation of 116 business plans of emerging farmers. To increase the contribution of agriculture to the Provincial Gross Domestic Product (PGDP), we have recently completed the first Biotechnology strategy. We aim to spend R16 million in the 2007/08 and 2008/09 financial years on the implementation of the strategy. The strategy will address the following areas:

- * developing resources for agriculture and environmental biotechnology
- * increasing public awareness and understanding of agricultural and environmental biotechnology
- * expanding research and development
- * ensuring effective regulations
- * addressing commercialisation and industry requirements
- * developing and maintaining networks.

Also in line with the aim of increasing agricultural productivity and its contribution to the development of the provincial economy, we will during this financial year produce 40 early warning weather reports. We will also provide 2 150 farmers with on site extension service and training at a cost of R364,500.

Working in conjunction with the national Department of Agriculture, we will further facilitate the quicker development of farmers to move them out of 'emerging farmer' status. Based on this co-operation we will also utilise the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) programme to benefit 150 farmers during this financial year. Another 100 farmers should also benefit from the Department's

Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP), whilst 80 more farmers should benefit from the Gauteng Farmer Support Programme during the same financial year. We will furthermore spend R10,5 million in the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) to commission research aimed specifically at addressing various productivity challenges faced by our emerging farming sector.

However, while waiting for resettlement under the LRAD there are already pamphlets doing the rounds about how, when and who the beneficiaries should work with, contrary to the policies that have been designed. The pamphlets are not signed by my Department nor by the Department of Public Transport, Roads and Works. I wish to alert farmers to be vigilant and that those responsible will be tracked down. I hereby wish to table a copy of the relevant document.

1.2 Veterinary services

Our veterinary abattoir inspection unit is working towards acquiring the coveted South African National Accreditation Service (SANAS) ISO 17020 accreditation. Thus far we have successfully passed the document review phase. The inspection service offered by this unit of the Gauteng Provincial Government will be recognised internationally as being of a credible and reliable standard, comparable only with those who have also acquired the accreditation. This ISO 17020 accreditation marks the first step to the full implementation of a Safety, Health, Environment and Quality (SHEQ) management system.

The unit will also embark on a campaign that will target 10 000 animals for examination and treatment as part of animal disease prevention across the province. The focus will be on rabies, brucellosis, bovine tuberculosis, Newcastle disease and other controlled diseases. We will also engage with hostel indunas to explore opportunities offered by the Meat Safety Act (Act No 40 of 2000) with respect to the current practice of illegal slaughter in hostels. Successfully implemented, we should find some of these entrepreneurs graduating and featuring in the formal wholesome meat trade.

The unit will provide twelve reports of certificates that were issued in the course of the year in terms of the Veterinary Procedure Notice (VPN 17) as part of their efforts to facilitate the export of meat products through their certification, inspection, registration and testing programmes.

Additionally, 1 100 tests will be conducted across the province to help ensure a continuous supply of wholesome and healthy food of animal origin.

The budgetary allocation for veterinary work has been increased by 53% from R19 million during the past financial year to R30 million for the financial year under discussion.

1.3 EIA processes

In line with a deeply held view within the Department that EIAs are tools aimed at facilitating sustainable development, we plan to issue a minimum of 300 Records of Decision (ROD) that relate to industrial activities. These will be processed in

accordance with the National Environmental Management Act, as amended and associated EIA regulations and procedures.

Friends and colleagues, you may have noticed when driving around the province the rate of new construction that is taking place currently. What usually escapes our minds is that the application of EIA tools has facilitated these rapid developments, while ensuring that they take place in a sustainable and responsible way.

2. Fighting poverty and building secure and sustainable communities

2.1 Food security

Our Comprehensive and Integrated Food Security Programme includes our Homestead Food Garden and Community Food Garden projects. During this financial year, at a cost of R14,9 million, we commit ourselves to the establishment of 32 Community Food Production Units benefiting 640 households and 9 300 household food projects (backyard gardens), exceeding our previous target of 9 000 by 300 gardens.

2.2 Sustainable use of the environment

Environmental issues have come to the fore of global debates. This in the main is due to the increase in verifiable evidence cruelly brought to our attention that mismanagement of the environment is deleterious both to life and to infrastructure, to weather patterns, rainfall patterns and water availability, amongst others.

Nationally we are taking this issue seriously. To contribute towards negating the negative impacts of environmental mismanagement and as a way of contributing to the provincial strategic objective of fighting poverty and to build secure and sustainable communities, we plan to complete the development of an Integrated Hazardous Waste Management Plan for Gauteng (GHWMP).

We also plan to complete 10 audits of hazardous waste landfill sites as well as 15 audits of sewage treatment plants during this financial year.

With these activities we will be contributing towards protecting the environment without compromising economic and social development.

2.3 Ethno-botany

Another activity that contributes to economic development and environmental well-being is ethno-botany. Available information shows that well over 700 tons of plant products are traded annually in Gauteng. Properly managed, the ethno-botany sector can also contribute to economic development.

Scientists inform us that indigenous people around the world have continuously sought knowledge of the physical reality that surrounds them. Vel Suminguit, an anthropologist and ethno-botany scholar attached to the United Nations (UN), made important observations in relation to such indigenous knowledge systems. Giving background information to a report submitted to the UN, Suminguit observed that 'a major component of this body of traditional knowledge is about the interaction

between human societies and the plant kingdom and more specifically how indigenous peoples perceive, manage and utilise the plants around them'.

Interacting with relevant stakeholders we therefore plan to further build on the medicinal plant project which was launched on 20 April 2007 to inculcate better husbandry of ethno-botany.

Utilising Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) methods we commit to the creation of at least 380 jobs in the clearing of alien vegetation, building of firebreaks and in other soil preservation measures.

The total budget allocated for all work related to sustainable use of the environment is R72,768 million for this financial year.

3. Developing healthy, appropriately skilled and productive people

Being the economic hub of the country has, unnecessarily, meant that we also produce a great number of by products that are harmful to our people's health. Within Gauteng, we have hot spot areas that are notorious for generating polluted air that negatively impacts on the health of our communities.

3.1 Air Quality Management

Whilst avoiding undermining the economic edge that the province enjoys, we plan to issue 300 Records of Decisions (ROD) in compliance with air quality standards and the management and control of pollution especially in relation to industrial activities.

3.2 Hazardous Waste Management Plan and the National Waste Bill

We also intend to complete the development of the Integrated Hazardous Waste Management Plan of Gauteng for purposes of protecting our people's health and the environment without compromising the social and economic advantages enjoyed by the province. The Waste Management Bill will soon become an Act. This will enable the province to deal with the issue of waste management more innovatively.

3.3 Litter-Free Gauteng Campaign and Bontle ke Botho

As part of the Department's initiative to manage the environment and to contribute towards building healthy communities, we launched on 5 June 2007 the Litter-free Gauteng Campaign. It is envisaged that the campaign will also contribute to the creation of a cleaner, healthier and safer environment which as a spin-off, will further attract economic investment and growth. This will result in the creation of additional employment opportunities for residents of the province.

This campaign complements the Bontle ke Botho (BkB) Clean and Green Campaign which focuses on encouraging municipalities, wards and schools to contribute to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). BkB has been running successfully since 2002 and awards prizes in excess of R3 million per annum to schools, wards and municipalities that have shown commitment, through their projects, to a clean and green Gauteng.

3.4 Sewage Treatment Plants and Hazardous Waste Landfill Sites

As indicated above, the Department will complete fifteen audits of sewage treatment plants during this financial year and 10 audits of hazardous waste landfill sites. This will contribute to the entrenchment of the right of the people of Gauteng to healthy and productive communities.

4. Building an effective and caring government

Interactive communication with our mandate givers, the electorate is critical for a caring government such as ours. Indeed, the notion of democracy implies the continuous and unremitting involvement of voters in the complex process of governance and in the current South African context of transformation.

4.1 Communications

To contribute to this objective we will expend over R12,2 million directly communicating with the Department's stakeholders through izimbizo, stakeholder meetings, capacity-building workshops and through print and broadcast media partnerships.

4.2 Legal and Policy Research Services

Friends and colleagues, it is an undisputable fact that we are a stable democracy and that dreams of upending this dispensation is but a delusion. This, however, does not suggest the complete absence of possible anarchists. To ensure continuity and to also continuously review and align policies to strategic objectives, our legal and policy unit will during the current year review all key departmental policies. In addition, the Department will ensure that programmes are in place to inform stakeholders of such changes and thereby empower them to continue to take advantage of the programmes and activities of the Department.

4.3 Gender and skills enhancing activities

As part of further contributing to the attainment of gender equality and skills development, we commit to 280 activities aimed at raising career awareness and interest in the core business of the Department especially in the areas of scarce skills. Particular attention will be paid to reaching women, the youth and people with disabilities.

4.4 MEC/MMC meetings

The programme of bi-annual meetings between the MEC and MMCs of the various local municipalities will continue, as will other formal informal contact with officials of those municipalities. The main aim of these meetings is to strategise and harmonise around critical issues in the interests of co-operative governance and effective and efficient service delivery.

5. Deepening democracy and nation building and realising the constitutional rights of all people

Compliance and enforcement

The work of our compliance and enforcement branch derives, on the main, directly from clause 24 of our Constitution. This clause gives all our communities a right to an environment that is not harmful to their health and wellbeing. The clause also enjoins us to protect the environment for the generation yet to be born.

Towards this objective this branch will dedicate time and space during this financial year to further improving its intelligence gathering capacity. The branch will also work towards capacitating local municipalities to hone their ability to protect communities against environmental swindlers, with particular focus being on the big sharks.

D. Conclusion

Honourable members of the House, in Sepedi we assert that kgomo kgomo ga enye boloko ka moka bloke. In the interest of time, I shall not deviate from this wisdom. Of course, a detailed report is available in the Budget Vote document which should be available to members of the House and the public.

In conclusion, I wish to commend the collective leadership availed by the Executive Council, the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Environment and the Premier.

I also wish to commend the Head of Department: Dr Steven Cornelius for his sterling leadership of the Department. I cannot fail to also commend all dedicated senior managers and staff in my Department.

Allow me to leave you with the brilliant words of Inkosi Albert Luthuli. Addressing a public meeting, organised by the ANC in Soweto in 1958, this Nobel Laureate asked a question and provided an eloquent response to it. I quote Chief Albert Luthuli, 'Is this vision of a democratic society in South Africa a realisable vision? Or is it merely a mirage? I say it is a realisable vision. For it is in the nature of man to yearn and struggle for freedom. The germ of freedom is in every individual, in anyone who is a human being. In fact the history of mankind is the history of man struggling and striving for freedom. Indeed, the very apex of human achievement is freedom and not slavery. Every human being struggles to reach that apex.' This apex if I may add constitutes politically, social and economic freedom.

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