



## agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:  
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**MINISTER: SENZENI ZOKWANA SPEECH  
ARBOR WEEK NATIONAL LAUNCH EVENT 2016  
LIMPOPO, TZANEEN LOCAL MUNICIPALITY  
NKOWANKOWA STADIUM  
1 SEPTEMBER 2016**

The Premier of Limpopo Mr Stan Mathabatha  
The Acting MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development; Mr Seaparo Sekwati  
The Executive Mayor of Mopani District Municipality; Cllr Rakgoale Nkakareng  
The Mayors of Tzaneen, Ba-Phalaborwa, Maruleng, Greater Letaba and Greater  
Giyani Local Municipalities  
Chairpersons of the Portfolio Committee,  
Chairpersons of the National Forests Advisory Council and the Forest Sector Charter  
Council  
Representative of Total South Africa  
Dignitaries  
Ladies and Gentlemen

When Arbor Day was initiated, it was a movement during the Green Revolution that was aimed at promoting tree planting in general. It has become popular to an extent that it is now in government celebrated as National Arbor Week. The popularity of the campaign came about as a result of the role that trees play in environmental conservation and development, social and economic development.

Today as we celebrate Arbor Week we would like to highlight and emphasise the role that trees play in addressing food security, employment creation and addressing environmental concerns such as climate change which manifests itself as global warming.

Programme Director; let me quote from the famous Wangari Maathai the female Kenyan environmental and political activist. I quote: "Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own - indeed to embrace the whole of creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. Recognizing that sustainable development, democracy and peace are indivisible is an idea whose time has come".

In 1977, Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement, an environmental Non-Governmental Organisation(NGO) focused on the planting of trees, environmental conservation, and women's rights. In 1984, she was awarded the Right Livelihood Award, and in 2004, she became the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for "her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace".

It is worth quoting the work of Wangari Maathai to honour women and the role they play in society. We have just been celebrating women's month during August and through the Female Entrepreneur Awards have given recognition to outstanding women who are making a difference in the field of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Earlier on a project that promotes interfacing of agriculture and forestry through Agroforestry was visited in Letsitele area.

This is a project led by a woman, Ms Nomsa Ngwenya who was also the winner of the Female Entrepreneur Award in 2013. We congratulate Ms Ngwenya on her achievements and the Department will consider this initiative when piloting the Agroforestry strategy in Limpopo.

This year we celebrate under the theme “Forests and Water”. The theme helps us to focus certain specific messages to the general public regarding forestry and the ecosystem. Our country has been severely affected by drought which led to water resources being affected adversely. As we promote tree planting we encourage the planting of indigenous species that save water, and the engagement in practises such as Agroforestry which builds in diversification and resilience, especially for small and medium farmers and growers.

This year the Department is finalising the development of the Agroforestry strategy, together with an implementation plan. The roll-out of the strategy will be tested with identified pilots and will take effect from the next financial year. The final product will be a culmination of extensive consultations with all relevant stakeholders such as farmer and grower representative organisations, Non-Government Organisations, academic institutions and Community Based Organisations

It is expected that the strategy will promote multiple land use, address food security, increase fibre in the country and most importantly offer short-term alternatives for growers who have to wait for a long period of time before realising their harvest in the timber production enterprises.

Programme Director, in the year 2015 South Africa hosted the XIV World Forestry Congress in KwaZulu-Natal, eThekweni Municipality. The theme for the Congress was “Forests and People: Investing in a sustainable future”. From the Congress it was decided that in order to leave a living legacy, certain initiatives need to be developed and sustained to the benefit of society in South Africa. The following projects will be profiled in 2016/17 and 2017/18 for this purpose:

- The One tree-One child, which focuses on the greening of schools
- The Move it -Moving matters which is a project that involves 40 schools in Soweto on physical education. Trees and vegetable gardens will be integrated into the project
- The furniture making project led by SAFCOL in Mpumalanga
- The Forest of Remembrance projects in KwaMakhutha and Ingquza Hill
- The living laboratory for research on Agroforestry in partnership with the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (George Campus).

Programme Director, the Department in conjunction with the Institute of Environment and Recreation Management (IERM) conducted the national Arbor City Awards Competition this year. The main objective of the programme is to provide incentives and encourage Municipalities to undertake greening initiatives, especially in previously disadvantaged areas. By so doing, the Department and other role players are trying to promote environmental conservation and development thereby securing a healthy living environment for all. It is a known fact that in the past dispensation the provision of services was not done in an equitable manner. The same approach applied to the provision of greening services.

This year 26 entries were received for the competition comprising of four Metros and 22 Category B municipalities. The Arbor City Awards should not be viewed as a competition, but more of a programme that provides incentives to those who have gone an extra mile regarding greening of their areas of jurisdiction. It is not all about winning and losing prizes, but more about encouraging greening and especially in previously disadvantaged areas.

The department hopes that through this programme the following greening objectives can be achieved:

- Municipalities will be encouraged to implement greening interventions.
- Every municipality will have a greening plan linked to the Integrated Development Plan.
- Greening programmes and projects at the local level will be extended to previously disadvantaged areas including townships and informal settlements.
- Compliance with relevant environmental legislation.
- Raising of general awareness about the importance and value of greening in residential settlements.
- Networking and sharing of information (during the adjudication process and project visits)

The Arbor City Awards is definitely not only a competition, since through the adjudication process gives an opportunity to share experiences and provide a platform for networking and improving partnerships between National and Local Government and institutions such as the IERM. All the participating Municipalities will benefit from programmes within the Department especially where specific areas of support and needs were identified. To improve participation in the rural areas, a new Category for Rural local Municipalities has been introduced. It is expected that this will balance participation by both urban and rurally inclined municipalities in the programme.

We take this opportunity to congratulate the winners and all Municipalities who participated in the programme. As I said before we do not view this initiative as a competition, but a platform that provides interaction and dialogue between national, provincial and local spheres of government in extending greening services to our communities.

Programme Director, the Arbor Week Campaign and the Arbor City Awards competition would not be a success without our partners and sponsors. We would like to thank in particular our national sponsor for Arbor Week, TOTAL South Africa. I would like to also thank all sponsors for making a contribution towards the success of the Arbor Week campaign.

Thank You