agriculture
Department:
Agriculture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X250, Pretoria, 0001; 20 Steve Biko Street, Pretoria, 0001
Tel: 012 319 6000; E-mail: queries@nda.gov.za; Web: www.nda.gov.za

MEDIA STATEMENT **13 November 2025**

DEPUTY MINISTER HANDS OVER AGROCHEMICALS TO CONTROL THE SPREAD OF BANANA BUNCHY TOP VIRUS (BBTV)

Banana growers in the Ugu District, KZN, had a collective sigh of relief when they received agrochemicals to control the Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV), which is destroying their banana plantations in commercial, smallholder and subsistence operations. Banana trees take 13 months to produce bananas, but theirs are dying halfway through with huge losses in profit income and input costs not providing return on investment.

The support in the form of donations of agrochemicals from the Honourable Deputy Minister, Ms Nokuzola Capa, which will go a long way in controlling BBTV by the farmers, was a welcome gesture. The deputy minister convened an inspection and stakeholders consultative meeting on 26 September 2025 and made commitments to intervene.

Less than two months later, on 11 November 2025, Ms Capa returned to Ugu District banana growers armed with tons of agrochemicals to eradicate the banana aphid, which is the vector responsible for the spread of the devastating BBTV in the region. Dignitaries who accompanied her included the Director-General of the Department of Agriculture, Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi, the mayor of Ray Nkonyeni Local Municipality, Cllr Zodwa Mzindle, and Inkosi Xolo from the KwaXolo Traditional Authority.

The deputy minister handed over 3 000 litres of chemicals to subsistence and smallholder farmers from Ray Nkonyeni, Umdoni and Umzumbe local municipalities. This is after 3 000 litres of agrochemicals have already been delivered and handed over in October to commercial farmers. The deputy minister emphasised on the collaborative effort between Government, academia, industry and the community in general. This collaborative effort will ensure that effective strategies to control diseases such as BBTV are implemented timeously.

The deputy minister acknowledged that the distribution of chemicals is only part of the solution. Moreover, the DoA is committed to continue collaborating with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and commercial, small-scale and subsistence farmers to strengthen training and awareness. Education and awareness will be extended even further to the local community on diseases such as BBTV.

She also emphasised that farmers, both commercial and smallholder growers, must continue to work together for the betterment of the banana industry as it is the cornerstone of economic development in the Ugu District, taking advantage of the already available resources in the province. She also committed that the department, working together with the provincial department, will organise a visit by growers to other African states to learn from them on how they manage diseases such as BBTV.

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For media enquiries, please contact:
Mr Moses Rannditsheni
Director: Media and External Communication
Cell: 063 623 3012
Email: MosesR@nda.gov.za

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