



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Speech Delivered by the Deputy Minister of Tourism - Food Safety Graduation Ceremony in Limpopo

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Former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, once said: "A society that is cut off from its youth severs its lifeline".

I greet you today, during Youth Month 2015, in the name of Youth Development. It is our job as government, parents, teachers and civil society to connect the young people of our country with the opportunity to become a lifeline for South Africa and Africa. We need to tap into the hidden potential that exists in each and every one by empowering them to become the custodians of our future.

I am very proud to be here with you today as we pay tribute to these 27 young people from the Limpopo Province who took up the challenge to train as Food Safety Assurers, and have succeeded with flying colours. You are indeed role models to other young people in your communities, showing them that it is hard work that opens the doors to the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, the tourism sector in South Africa is thriving. In 2014 we contributed 9,4% to the Gross Domestic Product, but what is more significant is that 1 in every 10 jobs in our country has been created directly or indirectly by the growth of tourism. As we continue our work to transform the tourism sector to be more inclusive, the number of doors that we will be opening for young people like these will also increase.

We can only do this in partnership with all the relevant stakeholders – from local and provincial government, tourism business owners, skills development agencies, and to our communities. Even media houses in the mainstream or community have a role to play in amplifying our message of development and ensuring that we spread the stories of positive changes that we are making in the lives of ordinary South African citizens.

The Food Safety Assurers programme is an excellent example of this kind of partnership in action. During the 2010 World Cup, we welcomed the world to our country. At this time we also received many enquiries about legislation and practises around food safety in South Africa. This type of concern talks directly to our sector as it refers to our capacity for quality assurance and responsible tourism.

As the tourism industry relies on the hospitality sector for its success, we identified a gap in the development of skills that would make the implementation of a food-safe South Africa more streamlined. Many of the services we offer in tourism revolve around the provision of food and beverages. Without the necessary checks and balances in place, with food being packaged, prepared and stored in the correct manner, disease through food poisoning can easily be spread.

You will agree that sick visitors would have a disastrous effect on the reputation of South Africa as a tourism destination. So we chose to act! In partnership with Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa (FEDHASA), the South African Food Safety Corporation (SAFSCO) and Provincial Government departments, this has given birth to the Food Safety Assurers development programme.

As a pilot project in Kwa-Zulu Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces, we took on an initial group of 100 unemployed tourism and hospitality graduates for training, and a further group of unemployed Environmental Health graduates from Universities to act as mentors.

I am proud to say that all 100 trainees have now completed the programme and we are travelling to these three provinces to celebrate their graduation with them. These 100 young people are pioneers, as they are the very first Food Safety Assurers to be developed in South Africa. An entirely new career stream has been created with this programme in the hospitality sector.

On behalf of the Department of Tourism I would like to extend a big thank you to the businesses and product owners in the industry who have been so willing to support this initiative! Trainees on the programme have been placed in a tourism establishment such as hotels, lodges or guesthouses in order to gain practical experience while they learn the ropes.

In fact, the response from participating businesses about the contribution made by these young people during their training has been overwhelming. At a business breakfast we had with the industry, the establishments have come out in support of this new career stream, having seen the health index of their businesses increase while the students were in training. Many have also found that having an FSA around allows the Chefs to focus on their cooking without having to be concerned about food safety as the FSA takes care of that aspect.

You will be happy to hear that 50% of our graduates in Limpopo have been guaranteed employment by their host establishments. The department will look into assisting the remaining learners to unlock other opportunities such as further studies or participating in outreaches to rural areas to spread the message about food safety.

For those host organisations who are still thinking about providing their FSA with an employment opportunity, I would like to urge you to do the right thing as this will continue to benefit your business while you are creating employment and assisting government to achieve its priorities of halving youth unemployment.

It also gives me great pleasure to announce that the programme has been accepted as a fully-fledged skills programme by the Food and Bev SETA. With the resounding success of this pilot project, the Department of Tourism now plans to roll the programme out in all 9 Provinces in the 2015/16 financial year.

The Food Safety Assurers is only one example of the projects that the Tourism Department is working on to create opportunities for young people. We are also here in Limpopo Province to launch another exciting programme – the Tourism Buddies Learnership. This will see 500 learners participate in a 12

month programme in either Food and Beverages or Accommodation Services that is accredited by CATHSSETA.

Your Province – Limpopo – has been selected by the Minister of Tourism to host this year's World Tourism Day celebrations in August. This will place the attention of the nation on your region and the role it can play in tourism growth. It is your chance to showcase the many opportunities that exist here.

Every tourist that you attract to your Province – be it a fellow South African or an international visitor – has the power to multiply the contribution to your local and provincial economy by supporting the extended tourism value chain that already exists here. Those tourists not only spend their money visiting your local attractions, or stay in your accommodation establishments; they also buy food or local crafts, support your local shopping centres, participate in your cultural or sporting activities, employ the services of your local tour guides, and fill up their hire cars at your petrol stations.

Ladies and gentlemen, there can be no denying that tourism is an exciting sector to be in right now. While other industries are faltering, our year-on-year growth of 6% in 2014 again exceeded average world tourism growth figures.

This growth is not only a result of the increasing number of domestic and international visitors; it is also due to the fact that we continue our efforts to make the industry sustainable and responsible. Not only accountable in terms of protecting our rich and diverse environment, but more especially socially responsive towards the needs of those in our communities who are marginalised.

To our sector stakeholders here in Limpopo, I want to say "keep up the good work" we are making good progress.

And to our graduates – "continue to make us proud by taking the next step, and then the next so that you move from this Food Safety Assurers programme to bigger and better opportunities, even becoming tourism business owners yourselves one day."

I thank you

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