

PROSPERITY PROMISE: Agrizone offers scope for growth and export markets, says Zuma

Trade Port delivers scores of jobs

KAVITH HARRILALL

THE Dube Trade Port's signature establishment is undoubtedly its agrizone, which has the potential to create scores of jobs for local people.

The agrizone, which covers 16 hectares, features hydroponic produce stretching across 12 hectares and employs about 120 people.

The "farm" is under the helm of farmer and trade port agrizone tenant Derrick Baird, who owns Qutom Farms.

His team produces cucumbers, tomatoes and green peppers that are destined for the shelves of well-known retailers like Woolworths and Checkers.

Erna Grove, agrizone manager, told *The Witness* that the lush "green zone" was usually a hive of activity.

She said the zone would in August welcome a Johannesburg-based flower producer, Braak Plants. This facility has the potential to employ a further 40 people.

The chairperson of the trade port, Bridgette Gasa, told *The Witness* that while certain aspects of agriculture would be automated, this kind of enterprise lent itself to the employment and furthering of skills of many people.

"Agri-processing and agri-business can certainly deliver these intended results.

"It is critical that agriculture integrate people into this proc-



The agrizone of the Dube Trade Port in La Mercy. TOP RIGHT: Bridgette Gasa, chairperson of Dube Trade Port, at the agrizone. BOTTOM RIGHT: Economic Development Minister Ebrahim Patel.

PHOTOS: IAN CARBUTT

President Jacob Zuma with the CEO of the Dube Trade Port, Rohan Persad (left).



ess. The province has so much land. Many of our people even come from an agricultural background. But they must be integrated into the economy, for the sake of food security and economic growth," Gasa said.

President Jacob Zuma, who officially opened the trade port yesterday, said agriculture

would provide both food security and prosperity for the people involved.

"The advantage of the agrizone is the use of limited growing space for the production of high volumes of high quality produce.

"As this project demonstrates, there is real scope for

growth and finding new markets for the produce, including exports. Other than improving food security, agriculture is an important source of exports.

"More importantly, for too long agriculture has been a neglected sector that was a symbol of division due to the contestation over land," Zuma added.