



**premier**

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## **MEDIA ALERT**

**DATE : 22 MARCH 2012**  
**TO : ALL MEDIA**  
**EMBARGO : IMMEDIATE**

### **KZN TEA INDUSTRY TO TAKE THE WORLD BY STORM**

KwaZulu-Natal Province is set to become a critical player in the tea industry following successful negotiations with Japan based major players in the industry today, 27 March 2012.

KZN Premier Dr Zweli Mkhize is currently in Japan on an official visit aimed at strengthening economic, cultural and government-to-government relations between Japan and KZN.

Managing Director of Rooibos Tea, Clinton Gass, who is also the chairperson of the South African Chamber of Commerce in Japan, said international major role-players in the industry who are based in Japan have offered to support KZN to ensure that the province increases its tea production capacity.

"There are opportunities for KZN to supply black tea to the global market. The province's vast land, favorable altitude and climate make it suitable for the production of both green and black tea. In order to match international standards, Japan is committed to supplying the latest technology and equipment for processing and storage. Many large beverage companies have shown an interest in purchasing green tea extracts and to provide marketing and sales support to KZN based tea estates," said Gass.

Gass further singled out Ntingwe Tea Estate in Inkandla as proof that KZN had a potential to become a serious player in this industry. Ntingwe is now rated among the ten best tea in the whole world and has attracted interests from buyers in London and the United States.

Dr Mkhize said government had identified tea industry as having the potential to speed up rural development and create job opportunities for rural communities.

"We are grateful for the support from Japan's world-renowned tea farmer Watanabe Kisakuen for supporting our efforts aimed at stimulating the tea industry over the years. His support for Ntingwe Estate is well documented and has resulted in the employment of more than 600 local people. With his ongoing support I am convinced that we will achieve our goal of increasing the agricultural output from the province. Stats show that here in

KZN, the manufacturing of food and beverages was up 8.4% from a year ago, which can partly be attributed to the apparent turnaround in the province's agriculture."