MKRI MONTHLY

August & September 2026 Issue

Moses Kotane Research Institute

Research · Innovation · Excellence



"The knowledge hub for economic growth in KZN"

This newsletter highlights the key events and strategic engagements undertaken by the Moses Kotane Research Institute (MKRI) during August & September 2026.

The activities align with the institute's mission of advancing research-driven solutions, skills development, digital innovation, and socio-economic empowerment in KwaZulu-Natal.

Top News

- IBHUKU WOMEN AUTHORS EXHIBITION FESTIVAL & MKRI BOOK LAUNCH
- SPAZA SHOP ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT MASTERCLASS
- HERKATHON 2.0



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ANNUAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

The 11th Annual International Conference, convened by the Moses Kotane Research Institute in partnership with IPADA and the Office of the Premier, brought together academics, researchers, policymakers, government representatives and public-sector practitioners from across Africa.

Under the theme "Africa's Growth, Development Complexities and New Perspectives," the conference provided a platform for meaningful dialogue on Africa's development challenges and the opportunities presented by research, innovation, technology, data and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Across four days, delegates exchanged knowledge, challenged perspectives, shared research and explored practical approaches to advancing inclusive, sustainable and evidence-based development across the continent.

UKZN INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP FORUM





Moses Kotane Research Institute proudly participated in the UKZN Innovation & Entrepreneurship Forum, hosted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal in partnership with eThekwini Municipality. MKRI's Innovation Specialist, Ms Asebenzile Mkunyana, joined a panel discussion highlighting support available to young innovators and entrepreneurs, including funding through the Commercialising, Innovation and Research (CIR) programme, technology commercialisation, and intellectual property protection.

SKILLS CENTRE AND CAREER DAY EXPO



The Moses Kotane Research Institute participated in the Skills Centre and Career Day Expo 2026 at Savannah Park, hosted by Maritime Careers and Skills Development in partnership with Ingwe Idlangamabala and the House of Prayer. The event connected students with career opportunities, industry insights and potential employers. MKRI engaged with aspiring researchers and professionals, showcasing its postgraduate student development, internship and digital skills programmes while providing guidance on research opportunities and evolving labour market demands.

PROVINCIAL DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, in partnership with the Moses Kotane Research Institute (MKRI), hosted the Provincial Digital Transformation Strategy Workshop on 10 September 2026 under the theme “From Strategy to Execution: Accelerating Digital Transformation 2025–2030.”

MKRI, as the strategic knowledge partner, provided research insights, facilitated dialogue and led technical discussions to support an evidence-based, implementable strategy. The workshop focused on leveraging digital transformation to improve government efficiency, strengthen data-driven decision-making and cybersecurity, bridge the digital divide, and enhance accessible, citizen-centred service delivery.

The Strategy was presented by MKRI CEO Dr Thandeka Ellenson and Acting Executive Manager Ms Zama Dlamini to provincial government CIOs, public entity CEOs, local government IT practitioners and government partners, emphasising the need to translate digital infrastructure and technology into meaningful improvements in governance and citizens’ everyday experiences.







EDTEA INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY AND CONSUMER AWARENESS PROGRAMME





The Moses Kotane Research Institute participated in the EDTEA Integrated Service Delivery and Consumer Awareness Programme in Jozini Local Municipality, uMkhanyakude District, led by KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Rev Musa Zondi. The programme brought essential government services closer to communities, with MKRI supporting digital inclusion through the handover of tablets to learners to enhance access to digital learning resources. Senior citizens also received food hampers, reaffirming government’s commitment to improving community well-being and access to essential services.

OCEANS STORY LAB INDUSTRY WORKSHOP



The Moses Kotane Research Institute, in partnership with the Bukelani Institute, hosted the Oceans Story Lab Industry Workshop held at the MKRI Conference Centre. The workshop introduced young people to real-world education, career, and entrepreneurship pathways in the thriving Ocean Economy. By creating a collaborative platform to connect directly with industry leaders and share sector knowledge, the session highlights MKRI’s ongoing commitment to equipping youth with actionable insights and empowering the next generation to access high-impact opportunities in the maritime and blue economy sectors

WORLD MARITIME DAY CELEBRATION





MKRI participated in the World Maritime Day celebration, hosted by the National Department of Transport, under the International Maritime Organization's theme, "Turning Policy into Practice,". The programme highlighted the need to translate maritime policies into meaningful action and measurable outcomes.

Deputy Minister Mkhuleko Hlengwa emphasised the practical inclusion of women in the maritime industry and the importance of strengthening the full maritime transport and logistics value chain to support South Africa's trade and economic development.

Learners' presentations on future maritime career pathways further highlighted the need for government, research institutions and industry to invest in the next generation of maritime professionals.

As a research and innovation institution, MKRI contributes to the maritime sector through research, knowledge generation, skills development and evidence-based interventions that support policy implementation, economic development and inclusive participation in the maritime economy.

UMKHOSI WOMHLANGA





The Moses Kotane Research Institute proudly attended the uMkhosi Womhlanga 2026 at eMashobeni Royal Palace in uPhongolo Municipality. This important cultural gathering brought together thousands of maidens in a spectacular celebration of dignity, respect, discipline and pride in African culture, while creating an important platform for the transmission of indigenous knowledge and cultural values from one generation to the next.

MKRI was among the exhibitors who were present, and showcased its services, programmes, and initiatives aimed at empowering individuals, fostering skills development, and creating pathways to meaningful opportunities. Through its continued commitment to research, innovation, and capacity development, MKRI remains dedicated to contributing towards a skilled, empowered, and sustainable future

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATORS FORUM





The Moses Kotane Research Institute participated in the Local Government Communicators Forum at uMkhanyakude District Municipality, where Dr Khonjelwayo highlighted the importance of research in strengthening effective government communication. The engagement resolved to pursue collaboration between MKRI, GCIS and the Office of the Premier (OTP), build communicators' capacity in communication research, coordinate thought leadership sessions to encourage research investment, and use MKRI's research findings to inform a provincial communication dataset.





ANNUAL PRINCE MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI DAY

The Moses Kotane Research Institute participated in the Annual Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi Day of Remembrance on 27 August 2026 at KwaPhindangene Royal Residence in Ulundi, honouring the late Prince's legacy and contributions to KwaZulu-Natal. Through its exhibition, MKRI showcased its economic research, digital centres, skills development initiatives, career opportunities and Research Thursday knowledge-sharing platform, reaffirming its commitment to research, innovation and sustainable provincial economic development.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER OFFICES LAUNCH





The Moses Kotane Research Institute in partnership with THENSA, Tshaya Mashabela Attorneys, the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, NIPMO, START, and Innovate Durban hosted the Sector Specific Engagement on Enhancing Commercialisation & Industry Involvement of Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs). The event brought together industry partners, technology transfer professionals, and university innovators from DUT, MUT, and UniZulu to bridge the gap between academic research and commercial application. The engagement aimed to strengthen innovation pipelines by showcasing breakthrough local technologies ranging from greywater grading systems and agricultural solutions to functional foods while fostering strategic university-industry dialogue on intellectual property commercialisation .MKRI's involvement highlights the Institute's dedication to building strong partnerships with industry & universities in advancing regional innovation ecosystems and driving sustainable socioeconomic development across KwaZulu-Natal.

KZN BLA WOMEN'S DESK EVENT



The Moses Kotane Research Institute took part in collaboration with the KZN Black Lawyers Association (BLA) Women's Desk Event under the theme: "From resilience to Justice: Reclaiming space, Recognition and Economic Equity for Black Women Lawyers". The programme brought together public and private legal practitioners, corporate lawyers, academia, and legal fraternity stakeholders to foster dialogue on transformation, research-led insights, and leadership within the legal profession.

The event provided a platform to advance women's empowerment, leadership, and professional development. MKRI's participation reinforces its commitment to research, innovation, knowledge sharing, and strategic partnerships, contributing to an inclusive, forward-thinking, and transformed legal sector in KwaZulu-Natal.

TECHNOVATION GIRLS KZN REGION CELEBRATION

The Moses Kotane Research Institute participated in the Technovation Girls KZN Region Celebration at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) Ritson Campus, hosted by the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics in partnership with Mbasane. The event brought together young innovators, academics, and industry stakeholders to celebrate the next generation of women leaders in technology. Technovation aims to empower young girls to become leaders and problem-solvers by leveraging technology and entrepreneurship. As part of the initiative, young girls develop mobile applications designed to address key social issues and improve society, driving sustainable change within their communities. MKRI's engagement highlights the Institute's dedication to building strong partnerships with universities, advancing digital innovation, and empowering young women to shape the future of tech in KwaZulu-Natal.







10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MBALI INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE





MKRI CEO, Dr Thandeka Ellenson, delivered the keynote address at the 10th Anniversary of the Mbali International Conference. Addressing delegates during the conference evening programme, Dr Ellenson spoke on "Entrepreneurial Mindset and How Entrepreneurship Contributes to the Economy of the Country." She highlighted the importance of cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset to drive innovation, create sustainable economic opportunities, and empower individuals to contribute meaningfully to South Africa's economic growth.

MANDENI CAREER EXPO





The Moses Kotane Research Institute, in collaboration with the Mandeni Municipality, participated in the Mandeni Career Expo. Targeting Grade 9 and Grade 11 learners, the expo was designed to guide high school students toward making strategic subject choices and career decisions that align with modern industry demands. This highlights MKRI's initiative to equip youth with the insight needed to access high-demand career pathways and explore entrepreneurial opportunities for sustainable community development.

OSS/DDM CABINET DAY IMBIZO





Moses Kotane Research Institute proudly participated at the OSS/DDM Cabinet Day Imbizo at the Solomon Linda Sportsgrounds in the Umzinyathi District today, a program led by the KwaZulu-Natal Premier, Hon. Thamsanqa Ntuli.

The event focused on direct engagement between government leaders and communities, including inspections of development projects, assessments of government programmes, and discussions with residents and service providers. A public session allowed community members to raise concerns, with leaders outlining actions to address service delivery and social issues.

MKRI exhibited on-site, where it actively showcased its diverse portfolio of services and programmes. Through this platform, the Institute engaged directly with community members, offering insights into its work while fostering opportunities for collaboration and the exchange of knowledge.

FORBES WOMEN RISING DIALOGUE



MRKI female executives at the Durban Dialogue entitled Women Rising, hosted by Forbes at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Umhlanga conference centre. The dialogue touched on various sectors of the economy where there is still room for women to develop. It is always fruitful for the MKRI to be represented in such stakeholder engagements, as a Research and Development institute.

JA SOUTH AFRICA - INNOVATION BOOTCAMP





MKRI exhibited at the JA South Africa - Innovation Bootcamp 2026, in partnership with ABSA, held at Phoenix Technical School.

The Bootcamp served as a high-impact platform designed to equip learners with career insights, financial literacy, and practical workplace skills to enhance youth employability and economic participation

MKRI engaged with learners to showcase the Institute's mandate in research, innovation, and youth development. Through interactive engagements, MKRI contributed to conversations around evidence-based policy, skills development, and sustainable career pathways

SPAZA SHOP ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT MASTERCLASS





The Moses Kotane Research Institute continued to support entrepreneurship and local economic development through its Spaza Shop Development Masterclass that was held at its conference centre and digital centres. The Masterclass was aimed at equipping the existing and aspiring spaza shop operators with practical business skills, knowledge of funding and support opportunities, and connections with key stakeholders.

Through initiatives such as these, MKRI seeks to strengthen township and community-based enterprises, promote sustainable business growth, and contribute to inclusive economic development across KwaZulu-Natal.

GBWCCI WORKFORCE SUMMIT





The Moses Kotane Research Institute attended the Global Business Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GBWCCI) Workforce Summit at the Durban ICC, held under the theme "Tomorrow's Workforce – Bridging the Gap." The summit focused on addressing skills gaps, fostering collaboration and innovation, and preparing a future-ready workforce.

Dr Thandeka Ellenson shared insights from her entrepreneurial journey, highlighting financial discipline, protecting business ideas, customer service and effective pricing. Ms Sue Singh, Acting Manager: Skills and Capacity Development, facilitated a panel discussion on alternative career pathways. The discussion explored diverse pathways into employment, entrepreneurship and skills development in response to the evolving world of work.

QHAWEKAZI HERKATHON 2.0





The Moses Kotane Research Institute hosted the Qhawekazi HERkathon 2.0, empowering young women to develop innovative solutions addressing challenges in gender-based violence, healthcare, water and resource management, and access to infrastructure and information.

The two-day event celebrated creativity, collaboration and problem-solving. Congratulations to Sinenhlanhla and Njomane DevOps, the two first-place winners. Through this initiative, MKRI continues to promote youth empowerment, women in innovation, and practical skills development to address real-world challenges.

IBHUKU WOMEN AUTHORS EXHIBITION FESTIVAL & BOOK LAUNCH

The Ibhuku Women Authors Exhibition Festival 2026, hosted by the Moses Kotane Research Institute in partnership with Valhalla Arts and the KwaZulu-Natal Growth Fund, celebrated the 121st birthday of Moses Kotane by convening 48 accomplished women authors from South Africa and beyond. Designed to showcase the richness of African literature and empower female storytellers, the festival featured book launches, author exhibitions, keynote addresses, panel interviews, and cultural activities. The event also highlighted a publication milestone that reflects MKRI's dedication to producing evidence-based research for policy and public administration. Ultimately, the festival aligned with MKRI's strategic goals to promote reading and elevate African voices, establishing a vital platform where authors, researchers, policymakers, and the public could connect to leverage literature and research for social and economic development.







WOMESA SA AGM





The Moses Kotane Research Institute participated as a strategic partner in the WOMESA South Africa Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2026, held on 26 August at Coastlands Hotel, Umhlanga. Through its exhibition, MKRI showcased its contribution to research, innovation and the sustainable use of KwaZulu-Natal's ocean and maritime resources. The event promoted women's empowerment, leadership and skills development in the maritime sector, reinforcing MKRI's commitment to strategic partnerships, inclusive growth and job creation.

STAFF HERITAGE DAY CELEBRATION HIGHLIGHTS







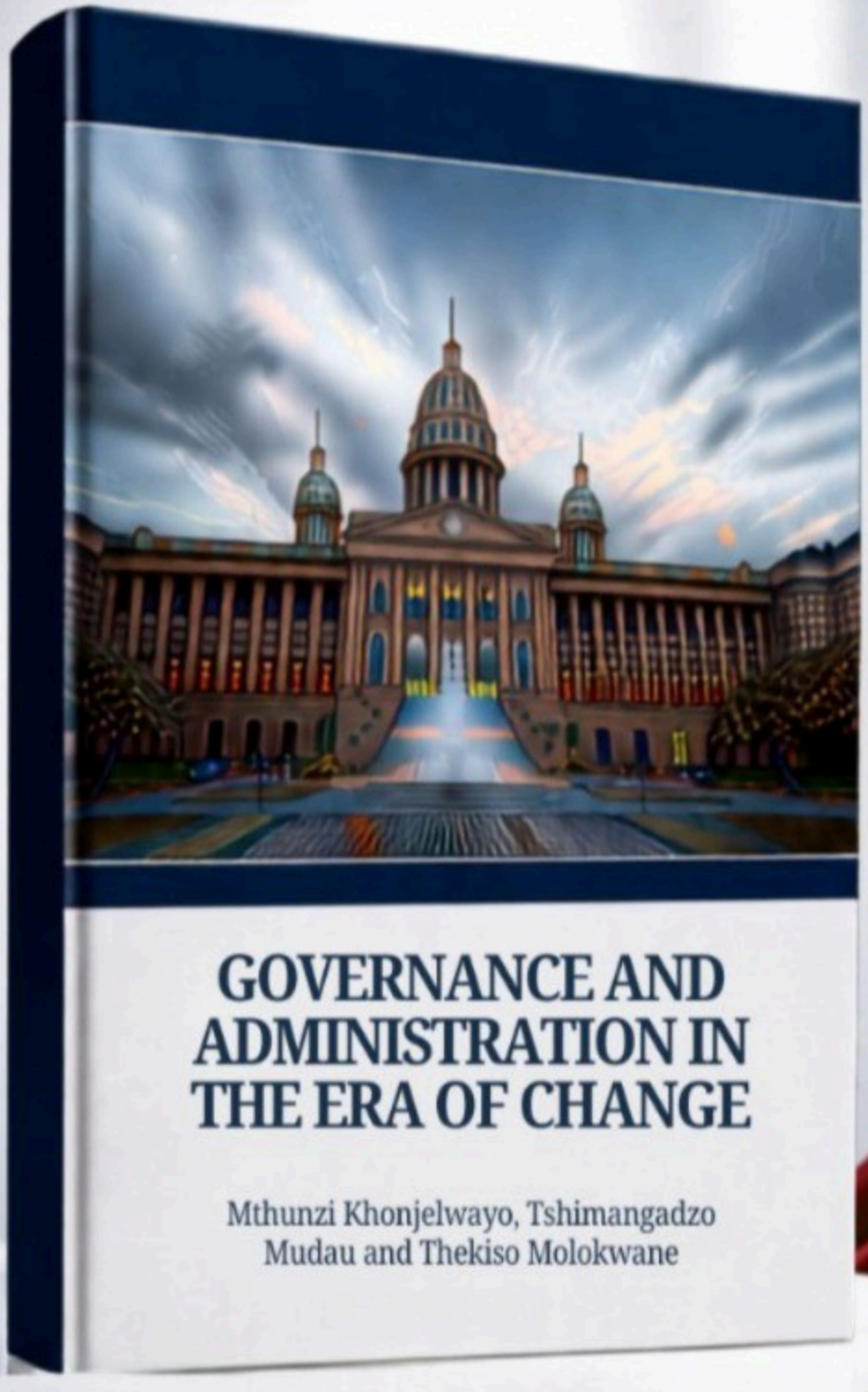






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CLEAN AUDIT

The MKRI Board is proud to announce the achievement of a Clean Audit outcome for 2025/6 and extends a word of gratitude to the internal and external stakeholders for this achievement.

DR VUSUMUZI JOSEPH MTHEMBU
Board Chairperson



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MARKET INTELLIGENCE REPORT

SUMMARY

The purpose of the KwaZulu-Natal Market Intelligence Report is to provide an evidence-based overview of the provincial economic and market environment and to identify key market trends, opportunities, investment prospects and constraints affecting economic activity across KwaZulu-Natal. The report provides a baseline for strengthening the availability and use of market intelligence to support evidence-based economic planning, investment facilitation, enterprise development and policy decision-making.

The assessment focuses on the structure and performance of the KZN market, including its economic significance, market segments, consumer and demand environment, competitive landscape, investment and business climate, emerging trends, market risks and investment opportunities. Secondary data constitute the primary evidence base, supplemented by consultations with selected district and development agencies to identify local economic priorities, existing market intelligence, data sources and information gaps.

Results

The assessment shows that KwaZulu-Natal has a large and diversified economy supported by a substantial population, established industrial and services sectors, strategic ports and transport corridors, agricultural resources, tourism assets and a significant consumer market. The province remains an important contributor to the South African economy, with particularly strong positions in services, manufacturing, trade, logistics, agriculture and tourism.

The market is, however, characterised by substantial spatial and structural differences. Economic activity is concentrated around major urban and industrial centres, particularly eThekwini, while rural districts have stronger associations with agriculture, tourism, informal economic activity and natural-resource-based industries. These differences create distinct market opportunities and require a differentiated approach to investment and economic development.

The analysis identifies agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing, tourism, logistics and transport, renewable energy, ICT/BPO, mining and resource-based activities as important areas of current and emerging opportunity. Recent provincial strategies and investment initiatives further highlight digital transformation, green technologies, advanced manufacturing, MSME development and value-chain localisation.

At the same time, the province's ability to realise these opportunities is constrained by infrastructure and logistics challenges, energy security, unemployment, skills gaps, access to finance, crime and security concerns, regulatory and institutional constraints, climate risks and gaps in local-level market intelligence.

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SUMMARY

Analysis of Market Intelligence

Market Overview

KwaZulu-Natal's economy is characterised by a diversified production and services base. The province has established strengths in tertiary activities, manufacturing, agriculture, trade, logistics and tourism. Its strategic location on the east coast and the presence of the ports of Durban and Richards Bay provide important connections to national and international markets.

The province's economic infrastructure, including major transport corridors, industrial areas and Dube TradePort, provides a foundation for investment and trade. However, infrastructure and logistics constraints can affect the efficiency and competitiveness of these assets.

The market has also evolved from a historically agriculture- and trade-oriented economy towards a more diversified economy in which services, manufacturing, logistics and business services play increasingly important roles. This diversification provides opportunities for value-chain development and economic transformation but also creates different infrastructure, skills, technology and investment requirements across sectors.

MARKET STRUCTURE & VALUE CHAINS

The KZN market comprises large enterprises, MSMEs, formal and informal businesses, public institutions and consumer markets. These segments are interconnected through production, procurement, employment, distribution and consumption.

Agriculture provides input into agro-processing and food markets; manufacturing is linked to supplier networks and logistics; tourism generates demand for accommodation, transport, food, retail and entertainment; and logistics connects producers and businesses to domestic and international markets.

Strengthening these linkages is important for increasing local value addition and enabling smaller enterprises to participate more effectively in provincial value chains.

MARKET SEGMENTATION

The analysis identifies several important market segments: large enterprises, MSMEs, formal and informal businesses, urban and rural markets, export markets, tourism markets and emerging sectors.

Large enterprises remain important contributors to production, investment, employment and value-chain development. MSMEs are significant for enterprise formation and employment, but the availability of longitudinal information on business survival, turnover and growth remains limited.

The informal economy provides important livelihoods and local distribution networks, particularly in township, peri-urban and rural areas. However, limited administrative data make it difficult to assess its full economic contribution.

Urban markets are concentrated around major economic nodes and provide stronger concentrations of consumers, businesses, services, manufacturing and logistics. Rural markets provide opportunities in agriculture, tourism, informal trade, rural services and emerging enterprises. The different characteristics of these markets reinforce the need for geographically differentiated market intelligence.

CONSUMER AND DEMAND ENVIRONMENT

Consumer demand is influenced by population size, employment, household income, affordability, demographic characteristics and geographic accessibility. KZN's large population creates substantial potential demand, although high unemployment and unequal income distribution constrain purchasing power among many households.

Demand opportunities therefore differ between urban, township, peri-urban and rural markets. Tourism contributes an additional source of demand through expenditure on accommodation, transport, food, retail, entertainment and related services.

The analysis indicates opportunities for businesses able to provide affordable, accessible and relevant goods and services, particularly in underserved markets.

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INVESTMENT AND BUSINESS CLIMATE

KZN has several investment advantages, including its strategic geographic position, ports, transport infrastructure, industrial base, agricultural resources, tourism assets and large consumer market.

Investment opportunities are nevertheless affected by infrastructure reliability, energy costs, logistics performance, skills availability, crime, access to finance and regulatory requirements. The investment environment therefore differs considerably across sectors and districts.

The investment matrix demonstrates that sectors require different enabling conditions. For example, agriculture and agro-processing require infrastructure, finance and climate resilience; tourism requires safety and supporting infrastructure; manufacturing requires energy and logistics; renewable energy requires grid capacity and finance; and ICT/BPO depends heavily on skills and connectivity.

EMERGING TRENDS AND MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

The assessment identifies several trends shaping the future KZN market. These include renewable energy and green technologies, digitalisation, advanced manufacturing, agro-processing, tourism diversification, logistics development, MSME development and value-chain localisation.

These trends present opportunities to diversify the provincial economy and strengthen connections between existing economic assets and new areas of demand. Agriculture and agro-processing can increase local value addition; tourism can expand into new experiences and destinations; manufacturing can move towards higher-value production; renewable energy can support energy resilience; and ICT/BPO can expand knowledge-intensive economic activity.

At district level, opportunities differ according to local economic assets. Agriculture and agro-processing, tourism diversification, renewable energy and forestry emerge as recurring areas of opportunity, while BPO, mineral exploration and selected agricultural activities present more emerging or location-specific opportunities.

MARKET RISKS AND CONSTRAINTS

The main constraints affecting the KZN market include infrastructure and logistics inefficiencies, energy insecurity, skills shortages, unemployment, access to finance, crime and security concerns, regulatory and institutional barriers, climate and environmental risks, and inadequate market intelligence.

These constraints affect sectors differently. Infrastructure and logistics challenges increase business costs and reduce market accessibility, while energy constraints affect business continuity and productivity. Skills gaps can restrict technology adoption and movement into higher-value activities. Crime can increase operating costs and affect tourism and physical trading environments. Climate risks can disrupt agricultural production, infrastructure and supply chains.

The report therefore finds that identifying priority sectors alone is insufficient. Sector development must be accompanied by interventions that address the specific constraints affecting businesses and value chains.

Investment and Business Climate

The principal investment opportunities identified include:

- agriculture and agro-processing;
- tourism and tourism-related services;
- manufacturing and supplier development;
- renewable energy and energy-storage solutions;
- ICT, BPO and digital services;
- logistics, warehousing and freight services;
- mining, mineral processing and beneficiation;
- forestry and related value chains;
- clothing and textiles;
- creative industries;
- township and rural economy development; and
- green-economy activities.

The opportunities are not evenly distributed across the province. Investment facilitation should therefore consider the comparative advantages, infrastructure, skills, markets and constraints of individual districts rather than applying a uniform provincial approach.

The report particularly highlights the importance of moving beyond investment attraction towards investment readiness, including infrastructure, skills, regulatory support, market access and local supplier participation.

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MKRI MARKET INSIGHTS REPORT

KEY FINDINGS

KWAZULU-NATAL



1 KZN HAS A DIVERSIFIED AND STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT ECONOMY

Supported by manufacturing, services, agriculture, tourism, trade and logistics.

2 THE PROVINCIAL MARKET IS SPATIALLY DIFFERENTIATED.

Economic opportunities and constraints vary considerably between urban, peri-urban and rural areas and between district municipalities.

3 EXISTING ECONOMIC ASSETS PROVIDE A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR INVESTMENT.

Particularly ports, transport corridors, industrial capacity, agricultural resources, tourism assets and the provincial consumer market.

4 MARKET OPPORTUNITIES ARE INCREASINGLY ASSOCIATED WITH VALUE ADDITION AND DIVERSIFICATION.

Particularly agro-processing, advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, digital services, logistics and tourism.

5 MSMEs AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY ARE IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF THE MARKET.

But inadequate longitudinal and firm-level data limit understanding of their performance and growth.

6 INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY, LOGISTICS AND SKILLS REMAIN IMPORTANT CONSTRAINTS.

To business competitiveness and investment.

7 INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES REQUIRE SECTOR-SPECIFIC ENABLING CONDITIONS.

The constraints affecting agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, renewable energy, ICT and logistics differ and require differentiated interventions.

8 MARKET INTELLIGENCE REMAINS FRAGMENTED.

Particularly at municipal and district level. Gaps exist in municipal economic indicators, informal businesses, sector-level data, consumer expenditure, investment implementation, MSME performance, spatial data and consistent time-series information.

9 A STRONGER AND CONTINUOUSLY UPDATED MARKET INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM IS REQUIRED.

To support evidence-based investment, planning and monitoring.

CONCLUSION

The report concludes that KwaZulu-Natal has significant economic and market potential, supported by its diversified economy, strategic location, infrastructure assets, natural resources, tourism base and large population. However, the ability to translate these assets into sustained investment, enterprise growth and employment is influenced by infrastructure constraints, energy security, skills availability, market access, finance, crime, regulatory conditions and uneven economic development.

The province's opportunities are therefore best understood through a sector-specific and spatially differentiated market intelligence approach. Agriculture and agro-processing, tourism, manufacturing, logistics, renewable energy, digital services and other emerging sectors provide opportunities for diversification and value-chain development, but their realisation depends on addressing the enabling conditions identified in the report.

The findings further demonstrate the need for reliable and regularly updated market intelligence at provincial, district and municipal levels. Strengthening the evidence base would improve the ability of government, businesses and development institutions to identify market opportunities, assess investment readiness, monitor economic performance and respond to emerging risks.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen the KZN market intelligence system by developing a standardised framework of provincial, district and municipal economic indicators and establishing regular data-update mechanisms.

2. Improve investment readiness and facilitation by developing investment-ready projects, strengthening regulatory processes and providing accessible information on sector and district opportunities.

3. Strengthen infrastructure and logistics in areas with high economic and investment potential, particularly transport, energy, water and digital infrastructure.

4. Promote value-chain development and local supplier participation by connecting MSMEs with large enterprises, procurement opportunities and priority-sector value chains.

5. Align skills development with market demand by strengthening collaboration between industry, government and training institutions in sectors with current and emerging skills requirements.

6. Support technology adoption and emerging sectors through digitalisation, renewable energy, green technologies and innovation-focused interventions.

7. Adopt a place-based approach to economic development by aligning investment and enterprise-support interventions with the economic characteristics and opportunities of individual districts.

8. Establish continuous monitoring of market conditions covering economic growth, employment, inflation, investment, trade, sector performance, infrastructure, energy, logistics and emerging risks. The report specifically emphasises that market conditions are dynamic and require ongoing monitoring rather than a once-off assessment.