

E Cape inland fishing key to food security

PRETORIA: Government says it will pay special attention to marine conservation and developing inland fishing in the Eastern Cape as one way of ensuring South Africa's food security.



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This emerged when Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Senzeni Zokwana paid a two-day visit to that province, where he held meetings with the executive leadership over the creation of employment in the fisheries, agriculture and forestry sectors.

South Africa recently unveiled Operation Phakisa - its Ocean Economy Strategy, which places marine resources at the heart of economic development.

Through Operation Phakisa, government aims to grow the aquaculture sector from R2bn to up to R6bn, with a potential job creation of up to 210,000 by 2030.

"The fisheries sector, including aquaculture, has a critical role to play in meeting one of the greatest challenges confronting the world: food security. Fishing provides vital sources of livelihoods, nutritious food and economic opportunities," Minister Zokwana said.

The Minister said along with agriculture, inland fishing holds the key to job creation, and that government views aquaculture as essential to conserving the country's remaining fish stocks. The Minister said the sector also presents a unique opportunity to arm youth with skills that will grow the economy.

Fish continues to be one of the most traded food commodities worldwide. According to a 2014 United Nations report, about 200 countries reported exports of fish and fishery products in 2012.

Minister Zokwana said the fishery trade is especially important for developing nations. In some cases, it accounts for more than half of the total value of traded commodities.

"In 2012, it represented about 10% of total agricultural exports and 1% of world merchandise trade in value terms, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

"Aquaculture development would ensure we close the fish protein gap that may be created by the declining marine capture fish resources," said the Minister.

Minister Zokwana will travel to all provinces to hold similar meetings, where he will outline plans for job creation and food security for the country.

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