

Aquaculture boost for youth development

Developments in Eastern Cape aquaculture could offer the province's youth some unique opportunities in the near future. Speaking at an engagement with agriculture and business stakeholders in Port Elizabeth on Friday, rural development and agrarian reform MEC Mlibo Qoboshiyane identified the Eastern Cape coastline as one of the agricultural sector's best assets.



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He said plans had been put in place to get more out of this valuable natural resource. "The national government has already indicated, through Operation Phakisa, that South Africa, and specifically the Eastern Cape with close to 800km of coastline, has resources in our ocean, and we need to see how we can benefit from that."

In the 2017-18 financial year, Qoboshiyane's department intends to invest R9-million in the expansion of production from aquaculture projects across the province. This will include, among other projects, investment in the Karoo-Catch aquaculture facility in the Beyers Naude municipality, and the rehabilitation of the Mthatha Dam fish hatchery.

These investments, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, are aimed at increasing fish production by 792 tonnes a year, generating R42-million and 210 new jobs.

Opportunities for youth development

Qoboshiyane said aquaculture had been identified as an area ripe with possibilities for youth development and training programmes. "Our intention is to see young people taking on a new shape when it comes to aquaculture schemes," he said.

"For instance, we are going to open new schools for aquaculture, as a training ground for the province of the Eastern Cape." Qoboshiyane said his department was working closely with the Department of Education to make this a reality.

The focus would, however, not be solely on aquaculture, but training in various aspects across the board of agriculture. "Each school in a province like ours is supposed to have a school garden, and if we can start to connect at that level we are going to create passionate young people who understand not only growth but the germination of the seed, the harvesting period and the time management involved," he said.

Qoboshiyane also identified other opportunities for youth development, for example 838 jobs linked to fencing projects across the province, about 150 employment opportunities in poultry production at Fort Cox near Middledrift, and R1.9-million set aside for training in the Household Food Security Programme at Fort Hare University.

Marcus Oshry, of Oshry Farms in Port Elizabeth, asked Qoboshiyane why funding for their youth development programmes had dried up last year. Qoboshiyane said he would look into the matter as this posed a good opportunity for the city's unemployed youth.

Andiswa Qoboshiyane, involved in a Uitenhage-based youth development programme, welcomed the MEC's talk of school-level projects. "For the youth to become involved in agriculture you must start at a very young age," she said.

Source: Herald

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