

Food security training programme equips youth in hospitality, creates better-trained workforce

The Department of Tourism's skills development project has seen 29 of South Africa's youth graduate from the one-year training programme as food safety assurers in the Free State and Northern province.



Fabrizio Magoni via [Unsplash](#)

The Food and Beverage Seta (FoodBev Seta) accredited qualification with specialisation in goods manufacturing process, carries an NQF level 1, a personal hygiene and food safety practices NQF level 2, as well as a good storage and distribution process in food environment which is an NQF level 3. The modules consist of a total of 203 credits.

The programme consisted of 30% theory and 70% practical training where learners were introduced to the fundamentals, core and electives unit standards which are particular to food safety. This qualification is recognised by all cookery or food-related sectors in South Africa, from small restaurants to large-scale hotels. It promotes career development for the beneficiaries. The highest accreditation in the programme was for certificates in food processing environment, NQF level 5 focusing on conducting audits and optimisation of product and process quality within a quality management system.

"Our graduates are a living symbol of hope that we can bring for our people, by creating opportunities through training. This training programme proves just how much can be achieved when government, the private sector and communities work together to make our country a better place to live in," said Derek Hanekom, tourism minister, during the graduation ceremony.

Improving tourism sector strategies

The programme is one of the priorities identified in the Tourism Sector Human Resource Skills Development initiative and is aimed at putting into action, the improvement of visitor experience pillar of the 10-year National Tourism Sector Strategy 2016-2026.

"It was a challenge to find host employers to take in trainees, but hospitality establishments in the region opened their hearts and their doors. For that, I thank every one of the establishments who made training possible. We trust that you will reap the overall benefits of a better-trained workforce in the long term," said Hannekom.

Speaking of behalf of the host employers, Clinton Potgieter of Sun International indicated that as part of their training, students performed their own audits and provided feedback on specific areas of improvement as a testament to the training that they have received and the integrity that they will eventually contribute to the tourism industry. The latest outbreak of Listeriosis should serve as a constant reminder of Food Safety and its importance and impact it has on tourism in South Africa and the daily food risks."

The graduation was followed by a tourism community imbizo where Hannekom, together with the provincial department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA), emphasised the role of the tourism sector in supporting the National Development Agenda, and answered to various community challenges and proposals for growing the local tourism value chain and offering.

Tourism industry opportunity, support

"Tourism offers opportunities to create and support jobs, to put food on the table, to develop communities and grow our economy, and eventually to give all people in our country an equal chance to make the best of their lives," added Hannekom.

The programme with a total of more than 500 learner enrolment has reported competency pass rates of more than 90%, and a majority of the learners getting permanent employment with various acclaimed hotel and accommodation establishments. The final rounds of graduations will be held for the provinces of the Eastern Cape and Western Cape on 11 and 3 June respectively.

All the speakers and stakeholder emphasised that collaboration between the three spheres of government and business as a key tool to ensure the successful delivery of the tourism product as well as the overall government services to the people of South Africa.

As part of the Youth Month activities, the Department of Tourism will host a workshop on 14 June with the industry, on energy resource efficiency training, which will be rolled out in the Free State, targeting 20 youth from across the province.

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