

# Nedbank invests R8.3 million in Sustainable Agriculture Programme

Nedbank has announced an R8.3 million investment into the WWF-SA Sustainable Agriculture Programme, which has been launched to promote and support sustainable agricultural production practices in South Africa.



Speaking at the official launch of the partnership, WWF-SA's senior manager for Sustainable Agriculture, Inge Kotze, illustrated the need for creative partnerships of this nature to address the challenges confronting global food production and South Africa's own food secure future. "A recent United Nations report stresses the urgent need for the world's farmers to be empowered to produce more food per unit of land, water and agrochemicals, while confronting widespread physical resource scarcity, a changing climate, and rapidly increasing input costs. These challenges overlaid with the degradation of our natural ecosystems and biodiversity make modern day agriculture more precarious than ever."

## Partnerships are vital

John Hudson of Nedbank Agriculture pointed to the vital role that collective and collaborative partnerships have to play in helping to enable sustainable agriculture that contributes to reduce environmental and natural resource impacts. This is why Nedbank is partnering with the WWF-SA Sustainable Agriculture Programme, as a further commitment and investment in supporting South African environmental and social sustainability initiatives.

"No single individual or organisation has the capacity to deliver the level of change required to make a real and lasting contribution to the sustainability of our country's agriculture, which is why this partnership with WWF-SA is designed to unlock the full power of collective, public-private partnerships, collaborative investment, and support and recognition for those that demonstrate commitment and innovation in meeting the agricultural challenges facing South Africa and the world in the 21st century," Hudson said.

## 98% of water is allocated

According to WWF-SA only 13% of the South African landscape is suitable for arable or permanent cropland, and two-thirds of all our surface freshwater resources are currently utilised for irrigated agriculture. This is an unsustainable situation when one considers that 98% of the country's current water resources are already allocated and there is increasing pressure from other sectors such as mining, industry and urban needs targeted for rapid growth and development.

"There is an urgent need to redefine and refocus our vision in terms of the future of food and the role of agriculture in reaching that future," Kotze said. "This is why the programme is aimed at enabling better production, rather than merely focusing on increased output alone. By promoting and supporting a vibrant and profitable agricultural sector in this way, we can all help to address potential food security challenges, while at the same time protecting the country's natural resources, and unique biodiversity."

## Economic and political instability

The need for an innovative intervention like the WWF-SA programme becomes patently clear when one considers that current global population growth trends mean the world will need to produce more food in the next four decades than it has done in the past 8 000 years - and this needs to be achieved against a backdrop of unprecedented economic and political instability and increasingly scarce natural resources.

According to Hudson, it is Nedbank's intention to help address this challenge by effectively motivating, promoting and rewarding agricultural best practice and innovation and supporting these by means of ongoing investment and the development of farming and business systems that deliver measurable positive impacts for the greater public good.

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