

R2bn aqua-farming facility to create jobs

Plans are in the pipeline for a R2-billion (US\$200-million) aqua farm to be developed on 300 hectares (ha) of land in Zone 10 of Coega's Industrial Development Zone (IDZ) in Port Elizabeth.



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Coega Development Corporation (CDC) agro-processing project manager, Dr Keith du Plessis said a feasibility study was completed early last week. "The envisaged facility will focus on the commercial cultivation of marine animals and plants," he said.

Abalone, finfish and seaweed

Du Plessis believes that approximately 5,000 jobs can be created for the local economy through this project. He said the findings of the feasibility study especially showed that environmental conditions were ideal for abalone farming.

"The CDC aims to dedicate 80 ha to abalone farming by 2020, creating about 2,080 permanent jobs. South Africa is widely known to have some of the best abalone and the best product in the world, all of which is exported to the Far East," said Du Plessis.

In addition, finfish farming on a proposed 120 ha in the Coega IDZ can create about 3,000 additional permanent jobs in the long term.

"Another species that could potentially be farmed is seaweed, which is complimentary to abalone farming," he said.

"Seaweed can be used for abalone feed and various pharmaceutical uses."

Du Plessis also said the deep-water Port of Ngqura is of strategic importance and ideal for maintenance of the cold chain required by aqua-farmed produce.

Environmental Impact Assessments

At present, CDC is working on two Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) - one for seawater abstraction and discharge outlet, and another for the land-based activities related to aquaculture.

"There are synergies between the proposed aqua-farming facility and other CDC projects which require large amounts of seawater for cooling," Du Plessis explained.

He said the CDC is working closely with local stakeholders, government and prospective investors.

Dr Ayanda Vilakazi, CDC Head of Marketing and Communications said that the aqua-farming facility is aligned with the government's plans to harness the potential of an 'oceans economy'.

"Earlier this year the South African presidency announced plans to explore parts of the ocean to find economic potential that could lead to the country's gross domestic product.

"Commercial economic activities can potentially contribute R177-billion to GDP, while creating about one million direct jobs. The CDC cannot ignore this potential and is actively working to create opportunities in aqua-based agro-processing and attract investors," he said.

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