

Sustainable farming achievable for local co-op

Additional funding for an emerging cattle farmers' co-op in the Theewaterskloof Municipality, which has hopes of breeding cattle for the market, has been provided.



Vernon Hendricks

Funding and ongoing business support from Klipheuwel Wind Farm aims to support the sustainability of this small agricultural concern. The programme is working towards helping the group improve the standard of the herd. The initiative is being guided by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD).

Ensuring long-term growth

More recently, a borehole has been installed and funding provided for additional fencing to replace dilapidated structures. Water security has been prioritised as it remains a challenge in the area, as well as in many other parts of the country. The addition of a borehole will help the co-op secure water access for both livestock and irrigation.

"The new borehole will directly affect our productivity. Plus, our plans to grow crops hinge on access to water," explained farmer Vernon Hendricks, co-op board secretary. He added that the funding will provide fencing and other needed infrastructure, as well as the business training the co-op has been receiving through this programme. This all helps to ensure long-term sustainability and growth.

The farmers are currently rearing a mixed breed of Hereford and Jersey cattle, but their aim is to improve their beef production by introducing Nguni cattle. Hence, the plan is to provide artificial insemination training for the co-op members. Further planning for this stage of the development programme will be managed through close consultation with the DALRRD, which the wind farm is looking to for the necessary expertise.

Community sustainability programmes

Gougakhoi Stock and Crop Co-op in the Riviersonderend area started in 2011 with the hope of breeding cattle for the market, reared on land leased from the local municipality. This is the third agricultural project that Klipheuwel Wind Farm is funding, as it is at the heart of the wind farm's enterprise development programme.

To this end, the wind farm has identified agriculture as one of the sectors that can drive the development within Theewaterskloof communities, while helping to contribute towards food security in the surrounding areas.

"With the right support and mentoring, emerging farmers of outlying communities such as the Gougakhoi co-op can grow, create jobs and benefit community members through local employment," explained Parmas Chetty, economic development manager at Klipheuwel Wind Farm.

Chetty continued: "This project is of particular importance as farming is one of the biggest economic drivers in this area. I believe that ongoing support of this sector will help to address the socio-economic development challenges, including local employment."

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