

Emerging farm 'mushrooms' in North West

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Mushroom farmer Peter Rammutla is a man on a mission. He is on a crusade to breathe new life into the agricultural community - an industry which many people regard as reserved for the older generation.



Edible Fungi (Image: Wiki Images)

Rammutla is one of the emerging commercial farmers who answered the call by the North West department of agriculture and rural development last year to come up with new projects.

His project employs 18 local people at Luka village, near Rustenburg and indications are that he might have to employ more people. All this in just 10 months since the project started.

He gets orders from Johannesburg and Pretoria and supplies mushrooms to top companies around the country.

The project operates from a six-hectare farm on land belonging to the platinum-rich Royal Bafokeng nation.

The project's production house has six growing rooms, with each room producing up to 2.5 tons of mushrooms.

Mushroom farming

Rammutla said he became interested in mushroom production while he was travelling the world.

"I grew up as a farmer because my father was farming cattle and crops but I preferred mushrooms because of their speciality, after I saw them being produced in America where mushrooms are plentiful," he said.

Born at Luka, Rammutla's love for farming began developing when he was just 15. His grandfather was a subsistence farmer in the area.

"I strongly believe that there is a need for more new blood from historically disadvantaged communities in the agricultural

community," he said.

However, the road to success for the retired teacher was not an easy one and getting funding proved a great challenge, particularly for his kind of business.

"I needed special panel boards, which were sound-and light-proof to house the mushrooms. Mushrooms grow on a compost made from wheat chaff and the ground has to be moist, so it was a highly financial-intensive product to start," he said.

The department approved funding of R3.6-million to be used to cover key production expenses. Royal Bafokeng also contributed an additional R1.4-million for water provision, fencing electrification and payment of the project employees for the first six months of operation.

Rammutla said the harvesting of his mushrooms takes place just after 18 days after they start growing.

Source: Sowetan via I-Net Bridge

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