

Wesgro, Matzikama District strengthens Western Cape aquaculture industry with MoU

Following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Wesgro and its investment promotion team have developed an implementation plan to boost investment in the aquaculture sector of the Matzikama District. As a fast-developing sector in the province - with a focus on mussels, oysters, abalone, seaweeds and prawns - abalone farming is fast becoming a key economic driver.



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"Abalone has become a key export market for the Matzikama District and our department will remain committed to trying to further boost investment into this potentially lucrative market," stated Amanda Tshaya, Wesgro's head of agribusiness investment unit and Matzikama project lead.

Commenting on the Investment Units support of the region, Wesgro CEO Tim Harris said: "Global wild fish stocks remain under pressure and are depleting at an unsustainable rate. In 2017, the Western Cape exported 85% of SA's total fish - including crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic invertebrates. The promotion and growth of aquaculture will play an important role in meeting the rising demand that is being caused by the overexploitation of fish."

Although the MOU was signed this year, Wesgro has played a role in amplifying employment in the region for the past few years. The unit was instrumental in securing a large portion of funding by the Industrial Development Corporation of the Western Cape in 2015 to boost the Doring Bay Abalone farm, which became operational in 2013. The farm facilitated the creation of more than 40 jobs with an estimated investment impact of more than R45 million into the local economy over five years.

Aquaculture sector – an economic opportunity

"Using aquaculture as a basis to create opportunities in coastal and rural towns is important, and the fact that markets are available makes the choice so much more logical. Jobs are desperately needed, and if we all work together, then through progressive realisation success can be achieved," said Joyene Isaacs, head of the department of agriculture in the Western Cape.

Minister of economic opportunities in the Western Cape, Alan Winde said: "Aquaculture in the Western Cape has a lot of potential for growth and job creation, and the MOU between Wesgro and the Matzikama District will contribute towards strengthening this sector in the area. This MOU also ties into our Project Khulisa goals of growing agri-processing and developing new export markets for these products."

Welcoming the commitment by Wesgro, Matzikama municipal manager, Danie Lubbe added: "The Matzikama Municipality fully supports the most valued initiatives by Wesgro to market the economic potential of this market. We welcome the partnership with Wesgro and the positive spinoffs for our communities."

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