

New research centre to boost food security

PRETORIA: Science and Technology Minister Derek Hanekom will on Tuesday, 15 April 2014, launch the Department of Science and Technology (DST)-National Research Foundation (NRF) Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Food Security at the University of the Western Cape.



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The CoE is co-hosted by the University of the Western Cape and the University of Pretoria.

"The DST-NRF CoE in Food Security will bring together a cohort of experts and researchers to research the systemic and structural factors that shape food access and dietary choice, as well as food security strategies, choices and decisions for poor and vulnerable people," the department said in a statement.

The department said it will not look at agricultural productivity in isolation, but will take a "farm-to-fork" approach.

"Studies show that food insecurity is widespread in South Africa, where more than 60% of the population is urbanised," the department said.

Approximately 57% of South Africans live below the poverty line (meaning that some days there is no food).

According to the department, chronic malnutrition affects one in five young children in both rural and urban areas, and about 80% of households in South Africa are unable to afford nutritionally balanced meals.

"For South Africa to be food secure, food needs to be available both nationally and locally, and people have to have the means to access it (either producing it themselves, or buying or bartering for it).

"People also need to have the knowledge to make informed choices about what they eat," the department said.

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