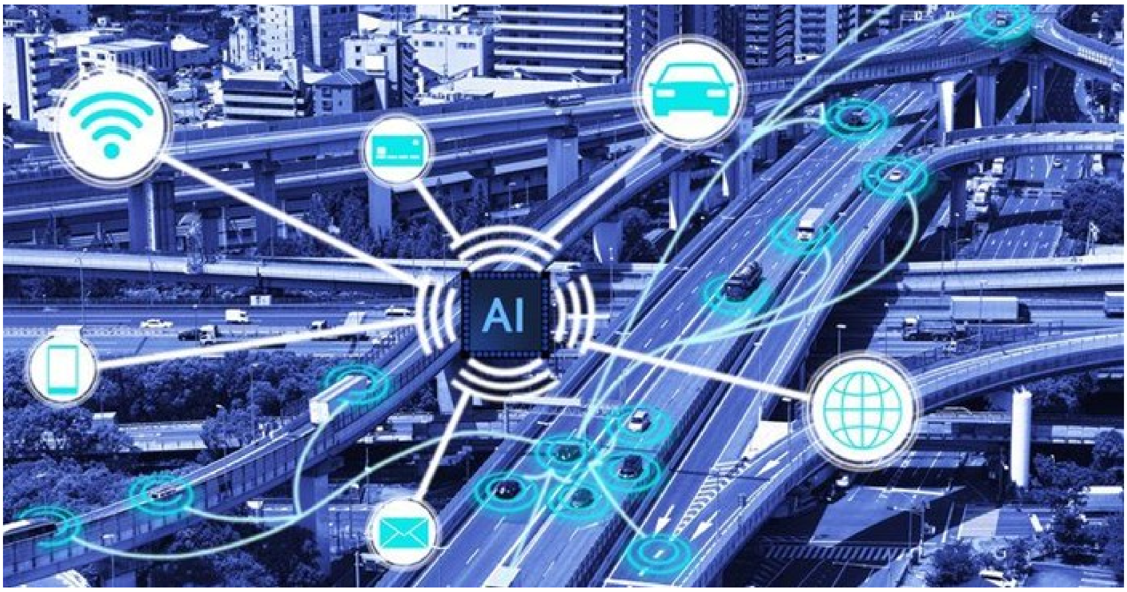
BIZCOMMUNITY

The Vaal Cannabis Capital - the linchpin of SA's first smart city

By Katja Hamilton

31 Mar 2022

Vaal Cannabis Consortium co-ordinator, MK Malefane confirmed that he and the Gauteng Premier, David Makhura - together with relevant ministers of parliament - will soon be meeting with SA President, Cyril Ramaphosa for a high-level round-table meeting regarding the drafting of a new Cannabis National Masterplan.



Source: iStock.

This follows the Constitutional Court Ruling in September 2018, which declared legislation criminalising the use, possession, purchase and cultivation of cannabis unconstitutional.

Malefane was speaking at the Cannabis Expo at GrandWest Casino in Cape Town, where he was in a panel discussion clarifying government's investment into cannabis.

Malefane said relevant industry stakeholders were not happy with the current draft of the Cannabis National Masterplan, and that a clear way forward was needed on the role cannabis would play in South Africa and how it would be regulated.

Consensus, he said, needed to be achieved with The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) on the regulation of cannabis. SAHPRA is tasked with regulating (monitoring, evaluating, investigating, inspecting and registering) all health products and clinical trials in South Africa.

Objectives of the new Cannabis National Masterplan

Key objectives of the Cannabis National Master Plan include, among others:

- Increasing the volumes and variety of cannabis products destined for both local and export markets;
- Establishing and increasing the capacity of South African farmers to produce dagga and hemp;
- Creating opportunities for the creation of small-and medium-sized enterprises across the cannabis value chain;
- Establishing and increasing the manufacturing capacity of the South African cannabis industry and designating cannabis and hemp products with the designated local content legislative framework.

Negotiations regarding the Cannabis National Master Plan will unpack how agricultural land is to be earmarked and prepared for cannabis cultivation and, within this framework, clarify the public-safety benchmarks of growing cannabis as a medicine as opposed to growing it for the purposes of industrialised hemp in South Africa.

Within this context, the Drug and Drug Control Act will be taken into account as will the legislation for industrial hemp which falls under the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (and whose role it is to issue and monitor permits for the production of hemp in South Africa), and the Private Use Act.

There is currently no legislation for adult use of cannabis.

Consensus is needed from all stakeholders, Malefane said.

The Vaal Cannabis Capital

"The Cannabis Masterplan will unlock the full potential of the regulatory framework which is conducive to unlocking the full potential of the cannabis industry. SAHPRA will be brought into the equation to make sure they do what is required."

"To this end, The Vaal Cannabis Capital is set to launch in three months," Malefane added.

"The future of the Gauteng Economic corridor is the Vaal and we are spearheading the Vaal Cannabis Capital with an initial funding commitment of R3bn.

"We are focusing great attention on the large-scale cultivation of 100ha of land as well as on processing, construction and manufacturing facilities so that [cannabis] growers throughout the country - even across the border in African countries - can have a place where their quality product can have a buyer and a market, both locally and in exports.

"In the process we will have launched a cannabis health and wellness resort, the first and best of its kind in the world. We're laying the groundwork and have acquired existing lodges to incorporate into a single resort destination with cannabis and health and wellness in the offering.

"Already we've raised R45bn in investment commitment to the Vaal and our target in the next three month is to reach a R100bn investment commitment with cannabis as the anchor."

Expo offers glimpse at booming business potential of cannabis
Lauren Hartzenberg 29 Mar 2022

Malefane said the Vaal Cannabis Capital is an anchor project to the soon to be Vaal River Smart City, a multi-billion investment in the Vaal triangle earmarked as Gauteng's Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

SA President, Cyril Ramaphosa announced in his 2019 and 2020 SONAs that South Africa will be looking to develop the formation of a number of smart-city developments for the country.

The Vaal River Smart City

In 2019 at the second SA Investment Conference, in an interview Malefane said: "A smart city is to imagine a Dubai and a Singapore combined in terms of Fourth Industrial Revolution, new technology, but most importantly sustainability."

A smart city therefore is a municipality that uses information and communication technologies (ICT) to increase operational efficiency, share information with the public and improve both the quality of government services and citizen welfare.

Broadly speaking, a smart city is a technologically modern urban area that uses different types of electronic methods, voice-activation methods and sensors to collect specific data.

This includes data collected from citizens, devices, buildings and assets that is processed and analysed to monitor and manage traffic and transportation systems, power plants, utilities, water supply networks, waste, crime detection, information systems, schools, libraries, hospitals, and other community services.

At the time Malefane said the Vaal River Smart City would include major research and development campuses for pharmaceutical, medicinal and health products and hospitals.

In October 2021, in a report Gauteng Premier David Makhura noted that the Vaal River Smart City would focus on emerging technologies, including:

- A new logistics sector;
- A hub of the cannabis industry;
- A hub for the hydrogen economy in the Gauteng region.

“The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and Gauteng provincial government, in collaboration with Sedibeng District Municipality, have already established the Vaal River SEZ Company and the programme management unit, in line with applicable legislation, to help co-ordinate and fast-track all the planning and rollout of specific shovel-ready projects that will catalyse the entire smart city and SEZ,” Makhura said.

The launch of The Vaal River Smart City will potentially see South Africa aim to align itself over time with some of the world's most efficient smart cities in the world. Topping most lists when it comes to smart cities is often Singapore. Since launching its Smart Nation initiative in 2014, Singapore has introduced a wide range of smart technologies in both its public and private sectors.

Training and education in the cannabis sector

Laying the foundation for this, Malefane lauded PSL Training, which has its campus in Gauteng, as being the only accredited academy offering training in growing medicinal cannabis. PSL Training alongside its industry partners (Dicla training farms, Boabab Training Group and ODB NPC), officially launched the NQF Level 4 course on Medicinal Cannabis Plant Production.

This is an AgriSETA accredited skills programme that awards successful students with a nationally recognised certificate of competency.

"We're also finalising the design and launch of the Vaal Cannabis Agency, which will focus on research and development, training and education, and on the empowerment of emergent [cannabis] growers and SMMEs in the cannabis and hemp sector."

To this end, Malefane said the Democratic Republic of the Congo has asked for mentorship so they can participate. He said the country has set aside 250 000ha of land for this sector.

"We're going to train and bring the best of African brains to South Africa," Malefane said. "This is to ensure that people of African descent globally finally have a leading city that is sustainable, very profitable; commercial.

"This is not just for South Africa's benefit, but for the benefit of Africa and people of African descent."

ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

Katja is the Finance, Property and Healthcare Editor at Bizcommunity.

- Dubai bounces back: Arabian Travel Market spotlights surging visitor numbers - 8 May 2024
- SA Post Office: Union deal halts layoffs at the 11th hour - 24 Apr 2024
- Transition to ZiG currency sparks trade disruption in Zimbabwe - 11 Apr 2024
- Nthabeleng Likotsi champions the first majority Black women-owned mutual bank - 18 Mar 2024
- African Bank: Championing youth-led small-business solutions at GEC+ Africa - 14 Mar 2024

View my profile and articles...