

Operation Phakisa making waves in Oceans Economy

Two years into its launch, Operation Phakisa Oceans Economy is making inroads and growing the aquaculture sector. To date, 450 direct jobs have been created and 2,000 additional tons of fish have been produced. This is a 35% increase for the sector, while a contribution of R500 million has been made to the country's GDP.



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This was announced by Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Minister Senzeni Zokwana on Wednesday during his Budget Vote speech in the National Assembly.

The Oceans Economy is one of the three streams of Operation Phakisa and takes the country closer to unlocking the potential of South Africa's oceans, which has the potential to contribute up to R177 billion to the gross domestic product (GDP) and create over one million new jobs by 2033. The focus in the oceans economy has meant a new wave in aquaculture, making it one of the fastest growing food production sectors.

Aquaculture, also known as aquafarming, is the farming of aquatic organisms such as fish, crustaceans, mollusks and aquatic plants. Aquaculture involves cultivating freshwater and saltwater populations under controlled conditions and can be contrasted with commercial fishing, which is the harvesting of wild fish.

"The sector presents a good opportunity to diversify fish production to satisfy local demand (import substitution), food security, export opportunities, create jobs and contribute towards GDP," the Minister said.

Opportunity to bring in new entrants

The Minister said the new growth in aquaculture presents an enormous opportunity to bring new entrants in the sector as it grows and expands. It also presents an opportunity to bring in the youth, women and historically disadvantaged people into the sector.

"The sector can accommodate new entrants because of the nature of activities that are diverse from small scale to commercial, as well as different technology, methodologies, and species."

Managing drought risks

Meanwhile, Minister Zokwana said his department has put in place disaster risk mitigation measures to avert drought risks and to ensure that they are better dealt with when they occur. "The drought conditions in 2015 and 2016 had a devastating impact on agriculture production throughout the country. These drought conditions, dare I say, appear to linger in the Western Cape as we gather today."

The department will cooperate and lend support to the Western Cape, as it deals with the drought, the Minister assured.

During this financial year, the department will also develop a Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) strategic framework, which will contribute to the regulation, promotion, coordination and implementation of an effective CSA programme. Furthermore, in this financial year, government will finalise the Climate Change Adaption and Mitigation Plan.

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