Pig farmers urged to improve genetics, infrastructure

WINDHOEK, Namibia — Although Namibia still had to import 1,049 tonnes of pork from January to May, 38 percent less than in the same period in 2016, the country could in the near future play a role to help feed an ever-growing hungry world.

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This is the message of Dr Albert Schutte of the Pig Improvement Company (PIC), the largest pig breeding company in the world. He was a guest speaker at last week's Namibian Pork Producers Association's annual general meeting (AGM) in Windhoek themed *Feed the world: A long term approach*.

Pork industry must be beefed up

Schutte said the current low maize prices - down by some N$900 per ton since last December - should be an inspiration to Namibia's small industry to grow its piggery units, currently some 2,000 sows.

Small-scale farmers came from far and near to attend the meeting and obtain valuable information about pig farming.

Schutte says the idea is not that pigs should replace cattle, sheep, and goats but the pork industry must be beefed up to play an important role in feeding the world.

"We are expected to produce more from less and therefore we have to increase our growth efficiency and improve our numbers born live as well as reduce mortalities. This can only be achieved with very healthy pig units, operating at full capacity and which are disease resistant, so that we can produce more kilogrammes per sow per year," he noted.

Producers still face challenges

From January to May there has been a 2.2% increase in local pork slaughtering with numbers increasing from 1,608 to 1,644. This is as a result of various local abattoirs also slaughtering pigs, in addition to the two piggeries that are registered with the Meat Board of Namibia (MBN). Despite the increase in the tonnage of pork slaughtered locally, pork producers are still faced with relatively high feed costs despite the drop in maize prices, which account for 75% of their production costs.

Delayed payments by importers as a result of the current financial crisis also threaten the cash flow of the producers and this negatively impacts the entire production process.

The pork imports between January and May made up 39% of the total market share whereas local slaughtering accounted for 61% of the total market share.

The Pork Market Share Promotion Scheme ensures that imports are reduced as importers are compelled to first purchase locally produced pork carcasses before an import permit is issued.