

Wesgro secures R350m in agri investment deals

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Despite tough economic times and a crippling drought, the Agribusiness Investment Unit (AIU) is more than halfway to reaching their target of R500 million for the year.

Job creation

Dr Meyer is also proud to reveal that as a result of the investment secured, 525 direct jobs is expected to be created. This is welcomed news, as we seek to lower our province's unemployment rate even further.

The agribusiness sector is a key component of the Western Cape's economy and is responsible for 220 734 jobs in the province with 216 088 in primary agriculture, which equals 16,4% of all jobs in the province.

Listen to the statement made by the Western Cape minister of Agriculture, Dr Ivan Meyer, below:

Companies that invested

The following four companies have signed declarations setting out their expected investment and job creation impact during the first two quarters:

- Almond Creamery is South Africa's home of locally made plant-based nut milk. They have invested R20m, which in turn will create 20 jobs.
- Felbridge (Pty) Ltd is a medicinal cannabis cultivator. They have invested R120m, which in turn will create 150 jobs.
- Italian Cheese Academy produces and sells Italian cheese. They have invested R10m, which in turn will create five jobs.
- Tomis Group is a market leader in supplying quality lamb and beef products. They have invested R200 million, which in turn will create 350 jobs.

Priorities of the Agribusiness Investment Unit

The AIU is funded by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and housed within Wesgro. Over the first half of the year, they have:

- Held 43 meetings with national government, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and sector development agencies.
- Attended various industry events to keep abreast of the sector, recruit new projects and foster relationships with stakeholders and funders.
- Undertaken 96 corporate engagements from small, medium and large JSE-listed businesses across the province.
- Hosted ten delegations from the following countries: Qatar, United States, Turkey, Morocco, Poland, Mauritius, Ivory Coast, and Brazil.

- Undertaken five corporate engagements with businesses operating in the halal industry in a bid to strengthen the Western Cape as a hub for halal-focused products and services.
- Engaged with three agri-tech businesses in the UK, including among other companies Herdsy, Papa Ram Pump and Airponix System, to innovate technology in the agricultural space in South Africa.

Growing the agricultural industry

"During 2018 agribusiness in the Western Cape contributed R37 billion worth of exports, which makes up an estimated 29% of all outputs in the province. The sector is a key economic driver and positively impacts the employment rate. This being said, Wesgro is committed to prioritising and growing the industry further. We would also like to thank the Department of Agriculture for their continued support," says Tim Harris, CEO of Wesgro.

Western Cape government head of the Department of Agriculture, Joyene Isaacs: "I believe the realised investment in the agricultural sector confirms the opportunities available and as partners (Wesgro and the department), with different skill sets, highlights the consolidation of efforts for better results. Partnerships remain the fundamental principle in driving economic development.

"It pleases me that the partnership continues to bear fruit. The Western Cape remains open for business and through hard work and dedication the team continues to attract new opportunities, new investments and more jobs.

"Likewise, increasing market access is critical to our endeavours to create more jobs. A 5% increase in agricultural exports will lead to almost 23,000 jobs being created in the Western Cape economy. Despite the drought, agriculture continues to attract foreign direct investment. Good governance, resilience, innovation and market access for agricultural products promote foreign direct investment."

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