

Land supports wildlife business for community

THELMA NGOMA

THE government is identifying 10 million hectares of suitable land for previously disadvantaged individuals and communities to participate in as owners of sustainable wildlife-based business ventures.

The Department of Environmental Affairs and stakeholders in the environmental sector believe that the environmental sector is ideally placed to increase the ownership percentage of black women, youths and communities in the country's economy.

Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs Barbara Thompson said that the sector employs about 100 000 people across the value chain with enormous potential.

"Support programmes such as infrastructural development (like game fences and ecotourism facilities), game donation/loaning, skills development and training, access to markets and funding will be facilitated to ensure sustainable businesses," Thompson said.

The sector's value chain is centred on game and wildlife farming/ranching



GROWTH: Environmental Affairs Deputy Minister Barbara Thompson says the wildlife sector employs about 100 000 people.

activities that relate to the stocking, trading, breeding and hunting of game and all the services and goods required to support this value chain.

The key drivers of this value chain include domestic hunters, international hunters and a growing retail market

demand for wildlife products.

"It is believed that the domestic hunting market was about R6.4bn, while the international hunting market was approximately R1.4bn in 2013.

"In addition to hunting, game farmers can generate income from the sale of

game meat, wildlife products and live game," the deputy minister said.

The retail and export game meat market was estimated at R230m in 2013.

Thompson said the sector has major domestic and international market multiplier effects and the job creation characteristics of the tourism industry make it a sector with large economic transformation potential.

"Unfortunately, the structural inequalities characterising our economy has placed several barriers, including insufficient land access, ownership and inefficient utilisation of land and lack of infrastructure development support for entrepreneurs of black South Africans," Thompson said.

"In particular, the high capital costs for acquiring land, fencing and game species are major barriers to entry and transformation.

"Overcoming these barriers to entry or challenges requires coordinated efforts from the government, private sector and communities."

Mayibuye Game Reserve in KZN received R10m funding from the Department of Environmental Affairs.

The deputy minister said the game reserve had made significant progress since the R10m funding, as a 35km wildlife fence had been erected, a gate house and offices were being built, two houses have been refurbished and 15 field rangers trained and employed.

A commercial Business for Good site has been refurbished and wildlife introductions have been initiated.

"In terms of employment, 76 temporary expanded public works programme jobs have been created through erection of the fence," Thompson said.

"This has unlocked a further R100m private investment for the development of the eco-estate."

The local community, the Ximba people, were awarded a land restitution claim in terms of a settlement agreement in April 2007.

The Mayibuye community trust entered into a 99-year lease with the developer and the strategic development partner, whereby the land will be developed into a game reserve with a component of residential property, commercial sites and hotels.

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