

EC allocates R4.5m to grow the cannabis industry

Province hopes dagga production would create jobs

The Eastern Cape government is forging ahead with plans to tap into the cannabis industry to get the province's ailing economy moving and create much-needed jobs.

Calls for SA to legalise dagga have intensified in recent years, with activists saying should government give the proposal the green light, the provincial economy, which has been devastated by the Covid-19 pandemic, would benefit.

This, they argue, would lead to a jobs boom.

While growing dagga for commercial purposes is still illegal in SA, the Constitutional Court ruled that people can plant it for personal use.

Delivering the department of rural development and agriculture budget and policy speech in March, MEC Nonkqubela Pieters said plans were afoot to fully tap into the cannabis industry.

"The department is working with the department of public

works to transform Lusikisiki College into a cannabis college.

"In the 2021-22 financial year, the department allocated R4.5m to develop the cannabis industry," she said.

Pieters said the department was spearheading the development of the cannabis industry by providing production inputs to 26 hemp permit holders in the province.

Bhisho was also working with five hemp permit holders wanting to renew their permits with the SA Health Products Regulatory Authority.

Sowetan's sister publication, Business Day, reported earlier in April that the department of

agriculture, land reform and rural development had released a draft national cannabis master plan which proposes legislative measures to lift the restrictions on the commercialisation of cannabis and hemp. This is seen as a big step towards the proposed commercialisation of cannabis and hemp.

With the Eastern Cape, especially Mpondoland, having most of the estimated 900,000 small-scale dagga farmers – the commercialisation of the industry and legalisation of dagga would benefit them as the draft master plan intends. – Daily Dispatch



Growing dagga for commercial purposes is still illegal in SA. /123RF