

DEVELOPMENT

Soya bean development targets smallholder farmers in Eastern Cape

A planned multi-million rand commercial soya bean project in the Eastern Cape depends on the outcome of a pilot project to be launched in October, as well as the appetite and priorities of the funders that the Eastern Cape Development Corporation (ECDC) is currently engaging.

This is according to Phakamisa George, a risk capital specialist at the ECDC, after the announcement that the ECDC had signed a co-operation agreement with an Argentinian consortium, A&G International. This agreement targets the production of 25 000ha of soya beans and other grains by smallholder farmers for biofuels, human consumption and animal feed in the province by 2016.

George said the ECDC had begun the process of mobilising the required resources through the presentation of a preliminary business

case, followed by a comprehensive business for the establishment of the biofuels industry to the Eastern Cape provincial government, because the corporation on its own could not guarantee financing of full commercial roll-out.

The ECDC was consulting with public and private sector stakeholders to raise the required capital to ensure that a minimum of 5 000ha of soya beans was planted in 2015 and more than 25 000ha in 2016, George said.

The 500ha pilot project will be launched in the local municipalities of Engcobo, Elundini and Mbhashe in October. A five-member A&G International delegation led by partner Paul Ureel last month spent a week in the province, identifying appropriate sites and surveying the state of farms and soil. The team also assessed the surrounding industry's ability to maintain equipment

and the state of readiness of the local labour force.

The pilot would be run in partnership with the Ncediswa Development Secondary Co-operative in Engcobo, George said. The co-operative representing farmers would provide the land required for production.

Massive grain production in the Eastern Cape should lead to higher capacity at the East London and Port Elizabeth harbours, where new terminals would have to be built, Ureel said.

It was envisaged that an investment of \$1 000/ha (R10 500/ha) would be required and the local contribution would come through co-operatives making land available, while the ECDC would finance the project, Ureel said.

A&G International will provide the technology, which includes training the first operators and importing the first equipment. – *Louerns Schoeman*

TRADE

No free trade agreement between SA and Brazil – yet

Reports in the Namibian press that South Africa has a free trade agreement with Brazil, which could potentially lead to the import of cheap beef, are untrue, according to leading trade law expert Lambert Botha.

A preferential trade agreement had been reached in the early 2000s, but was still pending ratification by the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and Mercosur, a regional trade bloc in South America that included Brazil, Botha said.

Explaining the differences between agreements, he said: "A free-trade agreement provides for a reduction on the import tariff for the

majority of the products earmarked for trade between two countries. A thumb-suck figure of 95% of the products won't be out of line. In the case of a preferential trade agreement, the import tariffs on specific products agreed upon by the interested parties are cut."

Namibian company Meatco's CEO Vekuii Rukoro told a newspaper in that country that South Africa was negotiating with Brazil to allow for the importation of cheap meat.

Botha said the pending preferential trade agreement between South Africa and Brazil provided for meat products, but excluded beef and mutton. – *Annelie Coleman*

POISONING

Addo's fatal poison identified as methomyl

It has been confirmed that the carbamate pesticide, methomyl, was responsible for the deaths of at least 36 jackals, two crows and possibly two bat-eared foxes in the Eastern Cape's Addo Elephant National Park.

The poison was identified by the Agricultural Research Council's Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute after the dead animals' stomach contents were analysed.

A statement issued by the park's managing organisation, South African National Parks (SANParks), said that Addo's management was concerned because methomyl takes 45 to 90 days to break down. Therefore the poison could still be present in the park and cause more wildlife deaths.

"Every conceivable effort has been made to try and find all the carcasses and any trace of the substance, but to date only carcasses have been removed," the statement read.

The organisation added that its corporate investigation services unit was investigating the matter further and that a criminal case had been opened with the police. – *Staff reporter*

BELOW: The Eastern Cape is set to host a 500ha soya bean pilot project in three rural municipalities. If successful, up to 25 000ha will be planted by 2016. FW ARCHIVE

