

Agriculture

Despite the fact that KwaZulu-Natal covers such a small portion of South Africa's land area, a significant percentage of the country's small-scale farmers are based here. Agriculture in KwaZulu-Natal is extremely diverse and is reflected in the patterns of its topography. Most of the world's agricultural activities can be practised here. Due to the good reliable rainfall and fertile soils, the region's agricultural sector has become very productive, and is known for its specialist capability in several types of farming. The Province has a total of 6.5 million hectares of land for farming purposes of which 82% is suitable for extensive livestock production and 18% is arable land.



Types of agriculture

The agricultural sector is focused mainly on the following:

- Crops: Sugar, Maize
- Horticulture: Sub-tropical fruits especially pineapples and bananas, Cashew nuts, Potatoes, Vegetables
- Animal Husbandry: Beef, Sheep (mutton and wool), Pigs, Poultry
- Forestry: SA Pine, Saligna, Black Wattle, eucalyptus, poplar,

There is tremendous potential for agricultural expansion in KwaZulu-Natal. It has been conservatively estimated that if the agricultural natural resources were optimally managed, the present production yield could be increased dramatically, thus unlocking the full agricultural production potential of KwaZulu-Natal.

Driven largely by the Ilembe municipality - which stretches from Tongaat to Gingindlovu on the KwaZulu-Natal north coast - and the Province's Department of Economic Development, ambitious plans for a R150 million agroprocessing hub are under way. The hub is intended to provide a demand for chillies, macadamia nuts, essential oils and bananas from black subsistence farmers.

Indigenous Medicinal Plants

Indigenous Natural Products derived from plants have been traded in the Southern African region for centuries. The global healthcare trend towards alternative and natural health remedies provides a unique opportunity for increased export of medicinal plant products from Southern Africa. There is a need for government to invest in research into commercialisation of indigenous



plant products and to provide support to emerging businesses that are selling indigenous plant products on the formal market.

The indigenous medicinal plant trade in KwaZulu-Natal is worth about R62 million annually - more than the annual maize harvest in the province. The product range is enormous and includes over 1000 medicinal plant species Indigenous plants are

a source of fuel, craftwork material, food supplements and food items such as jams and beverages manufactured from indigenous fruits for many people in the Province. The amount of plant material traded in KwaZulu-Natal is estimated at 4 500 tonnes per year. Most of this material is traded in the informal street markets, Durban and Umlazi being the largest of these.

Two thirds of the population of the Province relies on traditional medicine for their primary health care needs. Traditional medicine is deeply rooted in Zulu culture and is unlikely to be replaced by western medicine. There is a widely held belief in Zulu culture that health, disease, success or misfortune are not chance events but the result of the active influence of individuals or ancestral spirits. For this reason, traditional healers are held in high esteem in Zulu culture and are regularly consulted by a large proportion of the population. Diviners (iSangoma) are consulted to find out what a problem might be. An herbalist (iNyanga) is then recommended by the iSangoma to treat the ailment. Indigenous plants are used by the traditional healers to divine and to treat.

Opportunities exist in

1. Promoting the development of processing skills
2. Promoting the Development of Business Skills
3. Protecting Wild Stocks
4. Investing in the cultivation of high-value species
5. Investing in the commercialisation of new products for the higher value formal markets.

eThekwini Municipality: Case Study in Supporting the Indigenous Natural Products Industry

Extensive trade in medicinal plant products takes place within the eThekwini Municipality (Durban, South Africa). It is estimated 1 500 tonnes of plant material is traded per annum, with a value of R21 million (the raw unprocessed products). Value-adding on this raw material takes place through prescription by traditional healers. In eThekwini it has been estimated that some four million products are dispensed through prescription per year, adding R152 million to the value of the trade (total trade value per annum is thus R173 million). It is

estimated that some 13 950 income-generating opportunities are provided by the medicinal plants trade in eThekweni.

eThekweni Municipality Interventions

1. Promoting improved processing of medicinal plant products: eThekweni Municipality has invested in two hammer mills (heavy-duty grinders) for the Herb Market at Warwick Junction.
2. Providing Market Information
3. Promoting cultivation of medicinal plant products:

See <http://www.cpwild.co.za/> for more information.

Dairy and Cattle Farming

Dairy farming is important. Milk is produced near Durban and Pietermaritzburg; butter and cheese are produced inland. The northwest region is largely devoted to cattle raising.

Sugar

The sugar cane growing areas of South Africa namely; KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape, generate an income from the sale of sugar and molasses of over R4.2 billion per annum. The sugar industry is an important provider of jobs as well as the cornerstone of business development in rural areas in which sugar cane is grown. The quest for increasing efficiency has reduced the number of workers per ton of sugar, but expansion in production has limited job losses.

The social programs and the government/private sector joint projects that have been facilitated and implemented by the sugar industry bear testimony to the industry's conscious commitment to the socio-economic and welfare upliftment of its employees. The key challenge for the sugar cane industry remains the maintenance of competitiveness in relation to other world-class producers and industries.

The most important agricultural area lies along the coast, where sugarcane is the major crop. Sugar growing is now of increasing importance in the Midlands. The industry is composed of 15 sugar mills, 13 of which are scattered from the southern border of KwaZulu-Natal to its northern border, and 2 of which are in Mpumalanga. Most of the sugar cane supplied to these mills (85%) is produced



by over 53 000 registered cane growers, the balance being supplied by the mill estates. The production of sugar cane on communally held land has expanded significantly in the past 25 years. Allied to the expansion in cane production in these areas has been the development of a large number of contractors who harvest and transport the cane.