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A three-pillared revival of the economy

The largest chunk of the spend has been budgeted for the Food Security and Crop Massification Programme



A raft of initiatives to revitalise the economy of the North West was announced last week by Premier Supra Mahumapelo in his State of the Province Address that plays to the province's strengths: agriculture, culture and tourism.

This three-fold strategy aims to invest in productive infrastructure and projects that will boost the economies of even the smallest and most remote communities in the province.

Leading the charge in the agricultural sector is the province's department of rural environment and agricultural development.

The largest chunk of the spend — R28-million — has been budgeted for the Food Security and Crop Massification Programme, which aims to support growth in agricultural output in local communities.

Allied to this is the R3-million committed to the development of livestock breeding material and R5-million for the establishment of a feedlot in Mahikeng.

The province has also partnered with the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) to develop a competitive poultry and red meat processing value chain supported by emerging black farmers and communities.

Plans are also afoot to develop a competitive crop processing industry focused on soya, oil seeds, wheat, animal feeds and advanced maize processing.

Aquaculture makes up the third leg of this IDC-supported development programme.

Mahumapelo announced that more than 36 farmers had benefited from 26 farms that had been acquired under the Land Redistribution Programme and that an additional 36 farms had been acquired through the Land Restitution Programme. Altogether, this comprises 470000 hectares of land.

Arts, culture and tourism

Agricultural development would benefit further from a proposal to use South African National Defence Force land and resources as hubs to promote viable rural economies.

The cultural arm of this economic development strategy is to be driven by a dedicated provincial statutory body “tasked with the responsibility of building a sustainable arts and culture economy in the province”, the premier announced.

“We are determined to use the endowment of skills and talent in our province in the arts to build a thriving industry to benefit the people of Bokone-Bophirima (North West),” he said.

The provincial department of culture, arts and traditional affairs has budgeted R5-million to establish the Mahika-Mahikeng Music and Cultural Festival, and R1-million for the Motswako and Setswana cultural and dance brands.

The department will also be establishing arts and culture forums in all 383 wards across the province, from which related co-operatives will be established and supported.

The tourism sector is one that already enjoys considerable success given North West’s abundance of wildlife and gaming activities. The Sun City complex is undoubtedly the jewel in the crown, and there are new initiatives intended to expand the tourism opportunities and attractions in the region. The premier announced that the province had recently awarded its fifth casino licence, which is expected to contribute further to its tourism portfolio.

This portfolio will be strengthened through the province’s ambitious four cities development initiative, which aims to establish new cities in Taung, Mahikeng, Dr Kenneth Kaunda Metro and in the Bojanala district.

“The [Bojanala] Eco-Tourism City will integrate existing tourism and conservation estates around the Pilanesberg, Madikwe, Moruleng and all neighbouring villages,” Mahumapelo said.

“[It] will require minimal additional funding from government, because eco-tourism infrastructure is already available in the area. Government will facilitate consultation forums

with dikgosi (chiefs), land owners and tourism property owners in the areas for their participation and inclusion within the boundaries of the envisaged city.”

These tourism-focused efforts would be supported by the development of a provincial tourism strategy. This has already been initiated by a call for proposals, and the establishment of the tourism growth and development agency.

The premier announced that the IDC had also committed to continue to fund and develop tourist attractions focusing on culture and accommodation services, with a particular focus on villages, townships and small dorpias (towns).

An event will be hosted on April 27 this year to honour those leaders who passed through the province into exile during the struggle era.

Also in April, the province will be unveiling a sculpture in honour of Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati for the contribution she made in building a national democratic society.

“The department of culture, arts and traditional affairs will be tasked with co-ordinating government efforts to recognise all leaders, continuing the search for those still missing and exhuming identified graves to bring closure for the families [of those who died in the struggle],” said Mahumapelo.

The province’s programme of reconciliation, healing and renewal will also result in a “massive campaign to change the names of areas inconsistent with the values of our democracy and our Africanness”, he added.

Traditional authorities are expected to play a central role in all aspects of the arts, culture and tourism economic revival, as owners of land and bearers of cultural values.

Radical plan puts artists first

Premier Supra Mahumapelo struck a note with recording artists by announcing plans to provide unprecedented support to this sector of the community. “We announced last year plans to acquire Mahikeng Rhino Recording Studios. The process of acquiring this facility has proven to be more complex than initially expected, given the nature of how this facility was originally disposed of by the Public Investment Corporation,” he said.

“Government has since taken a decision to establish its own recording studios across all municipalities in the province whilst we engage on all complexities in this matter.”

This process will start with establishing four recording studios as part of the province’s Rebranding, Repositioning and Renewal programme.

The premier announced that the department of local government and human settlements had been asked to identify and make available unoccupied RDP houses, which will be converted into 19 Municipal Recording Studios over the next five years.

He elaborated on these plans after his address, saying that a two-pronged approach would be adopted.

“It is to help those in villages, townships and small dorpias but at the same time those who cannot get services from the existing studios. So government will be providing that service at close to nothing, so we can then grow our capacity in [the cultural economy],” he said.

Mahumapelo added that he had discussed this strategy with recent five-time Metro FM Awards winner Cassper Nyovest, who had said this kind of support would create an environment conducive to growing artists.

“But we don’t want it to end there: we want to help artists with their music shows [by providing] government halls for free,” he said. “We should be able to help them with marketing, and some sound stage and engineering work and we should be able to help them with the management of their business so that we offload the pressure from them.”

Given Nyovest’s success, there is no doubt the province has the ability to produce artists — irrespective of the genre — able to scoop awards and thrill fans.

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