

# Industry growth goes nuts

Macadamia nut plant production in the province rises in leaps and bounds from R32m in 1996 to R4bn in 2015

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**MACADAMIA** nuts production in the Eastern Cape has been rising rapidly in the past two decades.

During the media launch of the annual Macadamia Harvest Festival, investors announced macadamia harvest results from the crop nut planted in the 180ha of land under production in Ncera.

South Africa's macadamia industry has grown rapidly from an annual production sale value of R32m in 1996 to over R4bn in 2015.

Despite drought in the province and the country at large, the Eastern Cape government-funded Ncera Macadamia Farm harvested 58 tons of high-export macadamia nuts in this year's harvest.

Macadamias were introduced to South Africa in the 1960s and the industry has since burgeoned into arguably the fastest-growing tree crop industry in the country.

South Africa is competing with Australia as the world's largest producer.

Eastern Cape rural development and agrarian reform department spokesperson Mvusiwekhaya Sicwetsha said during the media launch, partners would announce the launch of the inaugural annual Macadamia Harvest Festival.

He said that it was the first of its kind in the country, to celebrate community achievements within the macadamia industry and broaden macadamia production knowledge in rural communities.

"The announcement by investors will include the release of the results of macadamia production in the province, including results of the new macadamia production launched in Amajingqi outside Willowvale in 2016," Sicwetsha said.

Sicwetsha said the provincial and

national government continued to invest in the commercial production of macadamia in the province by funding infrastructure, primary production, processing of the nut and production expansion.

Macadamia trees have already been planted on 100ha of land in Amajingqi while the remaining 200ha is targeted for completion this year.

First production is estimated to begin by 2020.

Eastern Cape rural development and agrarian reform MEC Mfibo Qoboshinyana, whose department invests in macadamia production, local chief Princess Nomaxhosa Jongllanga and Ncera Macadamia board chairperson Joe Jungolo will announce the harvest results in Ncera, marking the end of the harvest season.

The majority of the country's macadamias are produced in three provinces: Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal.

The Eastern Cape's climate, especially along the eastern coastal belt from Bizana to just beyond East London, is also suitable for macadamia production.

However, most of the potential production land is situated within the former homelands of the Transkei and Ciskei and few commercial macadamia farmers have been able to access this.

The province's contribution to this lucrative industry has been insignificant.

Meanwhile, East Cape Macadamia has developed a business model aimed at increasing provincial involvement in the industry and empowering rural communities in the process.

The nuts will be exported internationally and hundreds of sustainable jobs for villagers will be created.

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