

Outeniqua Research Farm boosts WCape dairy sector

Western Cape Agriculture Minister, Dr Ivan Meyer recently visited the Outeniqua Research Farm operated by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDoA) near George. The farm, recognised for its research on dairy production from planted pasture, has yielded crucial insights into both pasture and the concentrate component of dairy feed.



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Minister Meyer said: "Agriculture is a science, and science must be backed by evidence-based research. Our research aims to help grow the agricultural sector and support producers in developing their businesses and creating jobs. By providing our producers with high-quality scientific support, we aim to work with our producers to find innovative solutions to ensure that the sector can flourish."

Specialist dairy researcher at the Outeniqua Research Farm, Professor Robin Meeske highlighted that the profitability of milk production is under pressure due to increasing input costs. As a result, research projects at Outeniqua Research Farm focus on sustainable profitable dairy production from pastures.

Improving pasture quality and yield on farms

"The main profit drivers are pasture production per hectare, cows per hectare and milk production per cow. High-quality pasture is the greatest contributor to the cows' daily nutrient requirements. To meet their energy requirements, high volumes of concentrates are fed to cows which are often three times more expensive than pasture."

"Pasture research focuses on optimal pasture yields from known pasture species, especially the various ryegrass species. Animal research is conducted into the supplementary concentrate that is fed to the cows. We are looking into possible alternatives for some of the ingredients to make the cost per kilogram of feed lower without compromising milk yield or milk composition," added Professor Meeske.

Researchers at Outeniqua are in contact with industry role-players, and this ensures that the research being conducted is relevant to the dairy producers.

"Research findings at Outeniqua Research Farm contribute to improving pasture quality and yield on farms. More efficient use of concentrates and adjusting concentrate composition and level of concentrate feeding is key to the profitability of milk production from pasture. The industry is kept up to date with our latest finding at the annual Farmers' Days hosted by the research team at the Outeniqua Research Farm," concluded Minister Meyer.

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