

## **Wine Steward Youth Training Programme adds to the tourism skills pool**

**05 March 2019**

The Deputy Minister of Tourism, Elizabeth Thabethe, visited the Highlands Wine Estate in KwaZulu-Natal to oversee and have a firsthand experience on the practical training component of the department's Wine Service Youth Training Programme.

The objective of this three-year programme that targets 300 unemployed youth is to upskill and ensure that they are employable within the hospitality and wine industry. Successful graduates will be equipped with theoretical and practical skills on the Wines of the World, Viticulture, Food and Wine Pairing, Bar-attendant skills training and customer care. This programme is aligned with the National Development Plan, which sees tourism as an integral pillar of our economy.

During the visit, the Deputy Minister interacted with the learners to establish the challenges they encounter with the training. Key was the number of learners who drop out of the programme, as well as the limited number of host employers interested in placing learners for practical experience. This programme consists of 70% practical and 30% theory.

"The National Tourism Sector Strategy has among others, identified a need to address skills shortages in the tourism sector by training and building capacity of unemployed youth and graduates in especially critical and scarce skills in the hospitality and tourism services sector. This led to the inception of our youth training programmes", explained the Deputy Minister.

Motivating the learners was the Highlands Wine Estate wine maker, Thornton Pillay, who has been making wine for five years. He took the learners through a presentation of the wine making process, which includes growing and maintaining a vineyard.

The excursion ended with a wine tasting, a first for many learners who were also taught about the pairing of wines with meals.

Since its inception in May 2017, this programme has created about 121 534 jobs, while 157 employers had hosted learners in their establishments for the practical component of the programme.

"Tourism is versatile and creates jobs, so I urge you to grab the opportunities afforded to you with both hands. We are giving you a chance in life to be the change agents in your communities as well as ambassadors of tourism," concluded Deputy Minister Thabethe.

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