

The Weekly

FS GAME INDUSTRY THRIVES

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A positive contribution ... The CEO of Tirhani Auctioneers tirhani mabunda believes the game auction is growing every year

The 26th annual provincial game auction held at the Willem Pretorius Reserve near Ventersburg last weekend highlighted the positive growth in the emerging game farming industry. The two-day event, presented by the Free State Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs in association with Tirhani Auctioneers, saw 865 animals from nature reserves across the province snatched up by bidders and game farmers from across the country.

On the first day, 74 hunting packages were auctioned off for R2.4-million consisting of trophy hunts, biltong hunts, and trophy buffalo bull hunts scheduled to take place in eight of the 14 provincial nature reserves.



Going once, twice ... Bidders buying animals at the annual two-day game auction

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The second day saw the auctioning off of 491 live game of 16 different species. The game was sold for R5.9-million, including 23 buffalo and a three-and-a-half-year old white rhino for R90 000. The auction is held as part of the Free State's game management plan, which manages game population.

"The province has a limited number of game reserves. Most do not have natural predators and as part of conservation we scientifically calculate the carrying capacity of each game reserve to avoid overpopulation.

The number of game auctioned in each reserve varies each year. We then auction off designed packages to game farmers and professional outfitters for both breeding and hunting purposes," said the acting director for conservation at the department, Flip Crouse.

The game farming industry, which employs over 100 000 people in the country, is a lucrative industry with impressive long-term returns. Entry into the game farming industry is fast becoming more accessible to those interested in reaping its rewards and emerging game farmers in the Free State are accommodated in the province's bid to grow the industry.

The province has structures in place to assist them, such as a mentorship programme that connects emerging game farmers with well-established ones. Furthermore, qualifying emerging farmers in the province are also loaned game to breed.

Tirhani Auctioneers is an auction company owned by Tirhani Mabunda. This is the third year that they have hosted the auction. "I'm proud of my association with the Department of Economic Development and Economic Affairs with regards to the annual auction. The department's efforts in growing the game farming industry are genuine and sustainable. When building something, it is always important to avoid taking short cuts. Emerging black farmers who are not at a level to buy game are regularly invited to the auction as part of their education about the industry," said Mabunda.

In the 2012/2013 Budget Vote speech, MEC Mamiki Qabathe said the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs is looking to develop a Free State Game (Venison) Brand. She added there was an interested European party that wants to invest in the project by establishing a deer farm in the province, and sourcing deer and other game from other sources for export to the European market.

The department is also discussing the possibility of canning deer and other game meat for the local and export market. Game restaurants are also a venture that the department is looking into.

Hunting also plays a great part in the province's economy. The hunting packages auctioned off are sold by professional outfitters who will then market and sell them to overseas clients.

The Department of Treasury is also on board offering assistance to the growth of the game farming industry. "The Department of Treasury is very proud to be associated with this auction. We can see the steady growth of this industry, and are confident that our contribution to assisting emerging game farmers will assist both them and the province to create more opportunities within the game farming industry," said Treasury CEO Humphrey Kgomongwe.

During the previous provincial game auction, the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs donated game to 13 emerging black game farmers and loaned ten buffalo to the owner of Three Sisters Game Ranch in Smithfield, Siphon Dube. They also donated 60 springbok and ten zebra to four farmers in Thaba Phatswa, Koffiefontein, Zastron, and Bloemfontein respectively.

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