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Agriculture students call for job creation

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By Jeandré du Preez

The availability of jobs for graduates in the agricultural sector was one of the main concerns raised during a recent dialogue between government and agricultural students held at Elsenburg.

During the dialogue, students from 11 agricultural institutions had the opportunity to raise their concerns with the deputy minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, Bhekisi Cele.

Many graduates shared the same story of how they have struggled to find jobs since graduating.

"We need to create opportunities for them, especially financial opportunities," Cele said. Western Cape MEC for Economic Opportunities, Alan Winde, added that a conducive environment needed to be created to meet these students' needs.

"We need to build stronger relationships between the colleges and agri businesses. We want to give them the opportunity because they are the future of agriculture," Winde said.

Chairperson of the Association of Students of Agricultural Training Institutes (ASATI), Sabelwesihle Ngcobo, called for an agricultural 'revolution'. "Cooperation between established commercial farmers, academics and students, needs to happen for agriculture to go forward in South Africa."

Cele also raised the issue of South Africa's aging farming community, saying that the average age of farmers in South Africa was 60 years.

"Anything that does not take youth onboard is bound to fail. It is therefore important that young people are [advanced] in the agriculture sector."

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