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Agriculture sector needs to be globally competitive to survive

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Job losses were inevitable if the agricultural sector was not globally competitive and not supported by government, the World Economic Forum on Africa heard yesterday.

Speaking on the sidelines of the WEF event in Durban, **Mauricio Adade**, board chairperson of Africa Improved Foods, said: “It’s about competitiveness. The world is global so if you’re not competitive then you are out of the game.

“To protect local markets, governments must develop policies that provide for import tariffs, anti-dumping and other measures. We need long-term policies that will guide operations on domestic and foreign produce. Failure to have these policies will result in what KwaZulu-Natal experienced.”

KwaZulu-Natal experienced massive job losses in the poultry sector in recent months, including more than 1 000 jobs when Rainbow Chicken reportedly sold 15 of its 25 farms in Hammarsdale because of cheap imported chickens. In the Free State and North West about 1 500 jobs were lost, while in Polokwane about 1 000 jobs were lost.

Adade had earlier been a panelist on a WEF session titled “Africa’s Food Paradox”, with discussions centred around how small-scale farmers could contribute to the African continent’s food basket and what strategies could work to their advantage.

According to the 2015 Global Agricultural Information Network (GAIN) report, over the past two decades, steady economic growth and increased average income in South Africa resulted in the rapid expansion of meat consumption.

In a statement, **Jane Thomson**, Softworx managing director, said South Africa consumed about 2.9-million tons of poultry, beef and pork meat per annum, with poultry meat consumption representing more than 60% of total meat consumption.

Softworx is a software provider which works with various industries, including agriculture.

Thomson said farming and the food industry required technology to perform better.

“To deliver efficiency improvements, technology enhancements across the food industry will need to be drastic. This spans agriculture, aquaculture and the supply chain throughout farming, food production and processing.” 🇿🇦

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