

CO-OPERATION NOT COMPETITION

Yesterday history was made when senior officials of the towns of Otavi, Tsumeb and Grootfontein gathered together at the Makalani Hotel in Tsumeb to plan the launch of an economic cluster between the three towns. Historically the towns have formed the Maize Triangle of Namibia and have been central to agricultural production in the country, however the business people and local authorities have recently decided to increase economic co-operation and transform the Maize Triangle into the “Amaizing Triangle”. The initiative is supported by the Namibian Local Economic Development Agency, the Urban Trust of Namibia, the Namibian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and some community based organisations

Representatives of the three towns identified 15 areas of potential co-operation that included setting up a cluster radio station and newspaper. Also high on the agenda is the establishment of an integrated logistics hub for the storage and repackaging of container cargo (dry port) as well as a truck stop. In order to make this a reality the three towns decided to launch a special purpose company to make the vision a reality. All three towns occupy strategic positions on major national arterial routes.

The new cluster approach will see the towns working together to diversify and increase agriculture and agri-processing. Co-operation between emerging and commercial farmers will be systematically encouraged. Agricultural projects include the following:

- Looking into the feasibility of olive and almond farming and the production of olive oil
- Increasing groundnut production
- Increasing the cultivation and milling and packaging of the popular “mahangu” grain
- Recycling water for agricultural usage
- Tapping into large underground water reservoirs for the production of vegetables for the national market

A new tourism route will be developed and marketed and will include the numerous historic sites, natural attractions, meteorites and cultural sites. “We intend to broaden the tourism offering in the area so that visitors to Etosha and Game farms can enjoy the rich variety of our cluster. We all have something to offer tourists,” said the Honourable Mayor of Tsumeb Mr. N. Shetekela. The NCCI is looking at establishing a sub-chamber with business representatives from all three towns forming a joint chamber.

Another joint initiative will see the three towns in the cluster co-operating to produce electricity and gas from solid waste and looking at solar energy production. Delegates are also hoping that vocational training institutes and universities will consider establishing local campuses in the cluster.

The delegates to the meeting voiced concern at the lack of local value adding to mineral resources like copper and gold, and committed themselves to look at small scale manufacturing of jewellery. Electrical component manufacture using copper also came under the spotlight: “We need to make use of central government incentives and build local manufacturing capacity so that the economy is more inclusive,” said the Honourable Mayor of Otavi Mr. M. Damaseb.

When it comes to service delivery the three towns will increase co-operation around emergency response services, landfill sites, recycling, the provision of water and most importantly around sharing technical skills like engineering services.

Investment promotion is an important part of the co-operation strategy and a land audit will be conducted and various high-value sites identified and marketed for investors who will bring employment opportunities to the towns. This will require the co-operation of national line ministries. “We would like to build and mainstream collaboration with the region and national ministries so that we benefit from their development programmes,” said Ms Sharon Kasanda of the Urban Trust of Namibia.



Delegates at the meeting to plan the economic cluster initiative in the Maize Triangle

Top row: From left to right, CEO of Otavi, Mr M. Matyayi, Ms J. Somses, Mr J. Shikomba, Ms M. Johannes, Ms F. Ambata, Mr K. Utale, Ms S. Guriras, Ms N. Niingungo, Mr. J Muundjua

Bottom row: From left to right, Honourable Mayor of Otavi Mr. M. Damaseb, Honourable Mayor of Tsumeb Mr. N. Shetekela