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SA's competitiveness should be raised: Dti

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Pretoria - Government and the manufacturing sector should raise South Africa's competitiveness, says Department of Trade and Industry (dti) Minister Rob Davies.

Speaking at the opening of the permanent exhibition site of the South Africa Technical Textile Cluster (SATTCC) in Irene, Pretoria, on Monday, Minister Davies said he was glad that government supported the clothing and textile industry.

SATTCC is mainly focusing on the military, police, fire fighting, navy, and camping sectors.

The site is also showcasing the impact of government support for the cluster programme. The cluster comprises of five groups namely: Canvas and Tent; Parachute Systems; Stepahead Military Headwear; Gelvenor Textiles and Fields Wear.

Minister Davies said that the dti has established this cluster and others to ensure that members work together in order to promote the sectors.

He said that both government and manufacturers need to raise South Africa's competitiveness and to appreciate the role that government support programmes can play in encouraging the manufacturing sectors to embark on a journey to becoming more export competitive.

Minister Davies also stated that the previous incentive programmes based on the duty credit certificates were not working hence the department adopted a different strategy with the Competitiveness Improvement Programme.

According to Minister Davies, SATTCC could benefit from government in different ways.

"First of all we have this tool of localisation which is called designation. All clothing and textile products which are procured by public entities in South Africa should come from local manufacturers using local raw materials. There also is a need for a deeper conversation with the dti on market access opportunities with some of the countries on the continent. We do have foreign economic representatives on the continent that would be of great assistance with regards to market penetration," said Minister Davies.

Barend Pretorius of Parachute Systems said that the cluster has assisted them in terms of coordination and marketing of their products.

"Working on the cluster configuration is so much easier to move out into the world marketing not only our product but also other members' products. We have agreed that we will market the products of other sector members when we go out of the country," said Pretorius.

SATTCC has also enhanced employment in the sector, thanks to government's interventions.

Other than SATTCC, there are three other clusters under textile and clothing that government is also spending money on in order to promote and enhance the competitiveness of the sector. These clusters are: National Fashion Council; Mohair Cluster and the South African Sustainable Textiles and Apparel Cluster. - SAnews.gov.za