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South Africa

Citrus, marijuana may replace vanishing South African coal jobs

As coal mines and power plants close in the province, which has an unemployment rate of 38%, as many as 24 000 jobs could be lost by 2030, the researchers wrote in the study.

By Mpho Hlakudi, Bloomberg 29 Aug 2024 07:16

Image: Leon Sadiki/Bloomberg

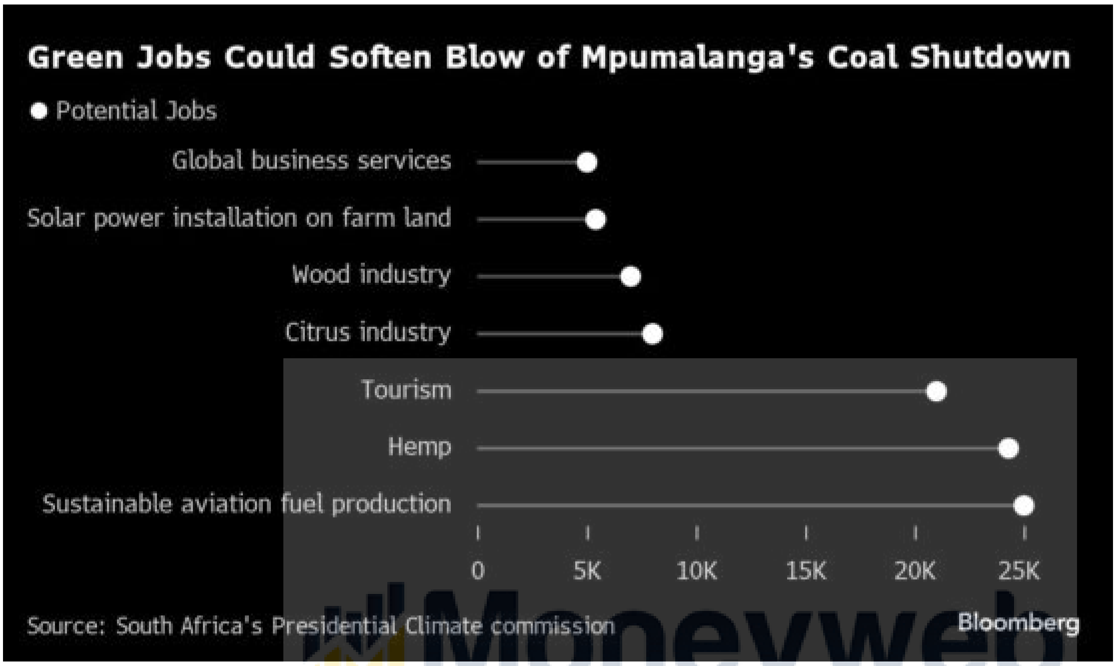
South Africa could replace coal and power-station jobs by investing in citrus and marijuana plantations to produce hemp in its coal belt as the nation, which is the world's 15th-biggest producer of greenhouse gases, tries to wean itself off dependency on the dirtiest fossil fuel, a study showed.

Read: [Coal mine closures to impact 2.5m people, mainly in Mpumalanga]

The eastern Mpumalanga province, which accounts for 87% of the South Africa's production of coal and the bulk of its power generation could also focus on producing aviation fuel from sugarcane and boosting income from tourism, the Presidential Climate Commission said in the study released Wednesday.

Read: [Exxaro says Eskom to foot bill for closure of Arnot coal mine]

As coal mines and power plants close in the province, which has an unemployment rate of 38%, as many as 24 000 jobs could be lost by 2030, the researchers wrote in the study. Jobs will need to be found to replace those, it said.



"Against a backdrop of low growth and high employment, the energy transition away from coal has the potential to deepen existing socio-economic challenges," the researchers said.

Read: [Proposed coal mine in Mpumalanga grasslands back in court]

South Africa and the Mpumalanga province are in focus as an $8.8 billion climate finance pact, known as the Just Energy Transition Partnership, with some of the world's richest nations is a prototype for similar projects that are being pursued in Indonesia, Vietnam and Senegal. Key to those deals are how coal-dependent communities will be shielded from the impact of the transition.

Sectors that could provide jobs in the future, should they attract investment, may provide as many as 95 000 jobs, the researchers said.

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