

## **Abalone Project Gets R52m Injection**

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A local private equity firm's environmental and new energy technology fund has invested R52.5 million (approximately \$7,5million) in a Western Cape-based abalone farm, Abagold Limited, enabling the expansion of its abalone production capacity for exports and to set the global standard for cultivated abalone production.

The investment from Inspired Evolution's R700 million equity fund, Evolution One, will help protect a species that is in severe danger of depletion, having been significantly exploited by poaching.

The fund also provides expansion capital to enterprises involved in cleaner energy generation and efficiency.

"We identified Abagold as one of the advocates of sustainable aquaculture backed with a long history of pioneering the breeding of abalone in captivity as well as a commitment to environmental and social responsibility," says Michael Brooks, CEO of Inspired Evolution. "The pedigree of its management team, dedication to creating value for stakeholders and increasing international demand for abalone contributed to our investment decision."

Evolution Fund's investors include the IFC, Castleway, the Global Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Fund (GEEREF) and development funds from Norway, Switzerland and Finland. The African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Industrial Development Corporation of Southern Africa (IDC) are also investors.

"Inspired Evolution brings added value through its knowledge of sustainable investments and renewable energy technologies," says Christo du Plessis, MD of Abagold. "Understanding the cultural significance of abalone, Abagold is committed to responsible growth through innovation, science and mariculture best practice with our aim to achieve sustainable wealth for our employees and shareholders through balance."

Evolution One Fund's commitment as a financier will enhance the financial viability of Abagold's export expansion from its Hermanus base. In addition Brooks added, "Investing via a BEE Trust in partnership with the IDC will benefit previously disadvantaged South Africans stakeholders."

Inspired Evolution raised its first \$94 million fund for deployment into environmental and new energy technology opportunities throughout South Africa and SADC countries.

Following the execution of investments into Enviroserv, Red Cap and Abagold, Inspired Evolution is actively seeking to identify other new, compelling investment opportunities in South Africa and throughout SADC.