

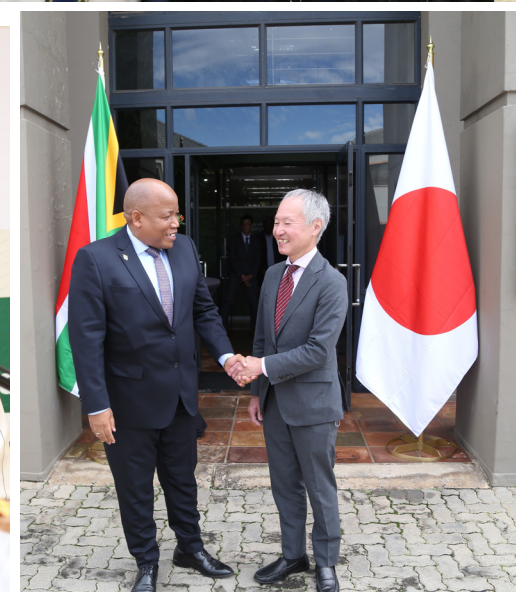


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FROM THE MINISTER'S DESK

of imported doses since late February to eight million. With an additional five million doses expected to arrive shortly, the country will have landed approximately 13,5 million vaccine doses by May when combined with the Botswana Vaccine Institute (BVI) doses secured previously. This represents one of the largest animal vaccination campaigns in our country's history and reflects the seriousness with which Government, and industry are approaching the protection of the national herd. The cooperation between Government, organised agriculture, veterinary professionals, industry stakeholders and farming communities has strengthened considerably over recent months. This growing alignment is crucial because diseases of this nature cannot be managed in isolation or through fragmented systems.

This spirit of cooperation increasingly extends beyond our borders as well. A delegation of our animal health experts travelled to Brazil for an intensive knowledge exchange focused on FMD management, livestock traceability systems and surveillance methods. Brazil's success in managing animal health risks and maintaining export competitiveness offers valuable lessons for South Africa as we continue strengthening our own systems. This visit forms part of our broader effort to build international partnerships that support science-based biosecurity and long-term resilience across the livestock sector.

At the same time, the department's work extends far beyond disease management alone.

I had the opportunity to attend National Maize Producers Organisation (NAMPO) Harvest Day 2026 alongside members of the ministry team and colleagues from the department, and once again it proved why NAMPO remains one of the highlights on the agricultural calendar. There is simply no other gathering quite like it. From the latest machinery and precision technology

The past month has once again reminded us that agriculture operates at the intersection of opportunity and vulnerability. Across the country, we have seen both the immense resilience of the sector and the very real pressures facing producers, farming communities and the broader agricultural economy.

Much of our focus continues to be directed towards the national response to Foot and mouth disease (FMD). While the scale of the challenge remains significant, there is growing evidence that the systems we are putting in place are beginning to strengthen our ability to respond more effectively and at greater scale.

Over the past month, South Africa secured a further two million vaccine doses from Turkey, bringing the total number

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Cont from pg 2.

to livestock displays, innovation hubs and packed discussion forums, NAMPO showcased the incredible energy, ingenuity and resilience that continue to define South African agriculture.

This year's event welcomed more than 81,000 visitors and over 900 exhibitors under the theme: "Resilience through Innovation", and there was certainly no shortage of innovation on display. Whether walking through the technology zones, engaging with producers, or sitting in on discussions regarding biofuel, grain markets and farmer development, one thing became very clear: South African agriculture is constantly adapting, improving and finding new ways to stay globally competitive despite the pressures facing the sector.

What also stood out throughout the week was the strong sense of community and partnership. NAMPO remains a space where farmers, agribusinesses, banks, researchers, organised agriculture and Government can engage openly and practically about the real issues facing the sector. Many of the conversations were serious, ranging from input costs and logistics challenges to financing pressures and market access; however, there was also a strong sense of optimism, creativity and determination about the future of agriculture in South Africa.

A particularly exciting aspect of this year's NAMPO was the growing focus on technology, technical skills and the next generation of agricultural innovation. From precision farming and digital systems to mechanisation and training initiatives such as NAMPO-Tech, it is clear that agriculture is evolving rapidly and creating entirely new opportunities for young people entering the sector.

Most importantly, NAMPO once again reminded us that agriculture is ultimately about people: the producers, workers, innovators, entrepreneurs and communities who continue to drive the sector forward every day, often under very difficult conditions.

At the same time, the past month also underscored the growing impact of climate-related events on farming communities and rural economies.

The devastating storms that struck the Western Cape caused widespread damage to infrastructure, orchards and local communities, particularly in the Witzenberg Local Municipality and Breede River Valley regions. The collapse of crucial electricity infrastructure and the pressure placed on cold storage facilities has created serious risks for the apple and pear industry at a particularly sensitive point in the export season.

During my visit to the region, I was struck not only by the scale of the damage, but also by the resilience and determination shown by farmers, workers, municipalities and local communities under extremely difficult conditions. These events serve as a stark indicator that climate resilience, infrastructure maintenance and disaster preparedness are becoming increasingly important components of agricultural sustainability.

Colleagues, agriculture continues to operate in an environment defined by uncertainty and increasing pressure from high input costs, particularly fuel and fertiliser. Nonetheless, despite these challenges, the sector continues to demonstrate remarkable resilience and determination.

Across the department, important work continues to be done every day under often difficult and demanding circumstances. Whether supporting vaccination campaigns, strengthening surveillance systems, assisting farmers, coordinating with provinces, advancing market access or responding to disasters, many officials across the department continue to play an important role in supporting the sector and keeping crucial systems functioning.

There is still significant work ahead of us, and we should be aware of the many remaining challenges. However, there are also encouraging signs of progress in a number of areas, particularly where collaboration, urgency and practical problem-solving are beginning to gain momentum.

I want to thank those officials who continue to approach their work with professionalism, commitment and a genuine sense of responsibility to the sector and the people who depend on it. During demanding periods such as these, your contribution matters.

Together, we continue to move forward.



Minister John Steenhuisen engaging with farmers during the Mpumalanga FMD vaccination drive.



Members of Parliament and the leadership of the Department of Agriculture during the Budget Vote 29 in Parliament.



MINISTER STEENHUISEN AND DEPUTY MINISTER CAPA TABLE R7,8 BILLION BUDGET



Deputy Minister Nokuzola Capa during the department's Budget Vote in Parliament.



From left: Ms Dina Pule, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Minister John Steenhuisen and Deputy Minister Nokuzola Capa during the Budget Vote 29.

Samuel Kgatla

The R7,8 billion Budget Vote 29 presented in Parliament on 15 May 2026 by Minister John Steenhuisen and Deputy Minister Nokuzola Capa is set to support efforts to curb livestock diseases, speed up land transformation, and strengthen food security. The Budget Vote 29, which was adopted by the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, paired optimism with a pragmatic view of current realities. The speech echoed President Cyril Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address, where agriculture was highlighted as a key economic driver.

The 2026/27 agriculture budget allocation has been reduced to R7,8 billion from R7,96 billion in 2025/26. Of the total budget, nearly 57% (R4,46 billion) has been set aside for transfers and subsidies, mainly directed to provinces and the Land Bank. Key programmes received significant portions of the allocation, with Food Security and Support accounting for 42%, Agricultural Production and Biosecurity receiving 33%, Administration allocated 13%, and Economic Development and Marketing receiving 12%. In addition, R92,2 million has been earmarked for farmer training and mentorship initiatives.

The Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) continues to be one of Government's key initiatives aimed at supporting emerging farmers. In the 2026/27 financial year, R2,3 billion has been allocated to assist about 33,000 Black producers, while 58,000 vulnerable households are expected to benefit from food garden support. The programme also aims to bring 40,000 hectares of land into production. The National Treasury has provided capital to the Land Bank of South Africa, with nearly R10 billion allocated to support Black farmers. The funding is intended to improve access to agricultural finance, promote land reform, and boost participation of emerging farmers in commercial agriculture.

Minister John Steenhuisen said the budget is focused on strengthening agricultural value chains rather than simply increasing production. "If we are serious about building a more inclusive agricultural economy, then access to finance remains one of the most important constraints we must address. Over the past year, the Blended Finance Scheme has continued to demonstrate the value of coordinated partnerships between the government, development finance institutions and the private sector," he said.

Deputy Minister Nokuzola Capa said farmers need training to equip them with modern farming techniques and knowledge that can improve productivity. "They also require capacity building to adopt sustainable practices that reduce environmental impacts, manage agricultural risks, develop skills to run farm operations effectively, and build resilience to climate change. The goal is to strengthen food security, reduce poverty, and promote economic growth," she said.

Ms Dina Pule, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, welcomed the Department of Agriculture's Budget Vote but urged the department to speed up progress on infrastructure and senior management appointments at Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC). "This continues to be a challenge, as do the high vacancy rates and funding issues at the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) and the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC). The department must provide us with quarterly updates on structure, vacancies and progress towards strategic targets in the 2026/27 year," she said.



MORE THAN 300 HEAD OF CATTLE VACCINATED IN MPUMALANGA FMD CAMPAIGN

Samuel Kgatla



From left: Eswatini Minister of Agriculture Mandla Tshawuka, a livestock farmer from Shabalala Village and Minister John Steenhuisen, during the FMD mass vaccination in Hazyview.

to improve coordinated responses against FMD and other transboundary animal diseases affecting the region. Our drive now is to get a regional approach to FMD. Part of the success of what we learned from our trip to South America was that you only beat FMD if you adopt a regional approach to this," he said.

Mandla Tshawuka, Eswatini Minister of Agriculture, said he was impressed by how South Africa is managing the FMD outbreak and praised the strong regional cooperation between South Africa and its neighbouring countries. "I thank South Africa for inviting us, and this is the way forward. We are collaborating with our neighbouring countries, such as Eswatini, in the fight against FMD. Animals do not recognise borders, and FMD is severely affecting us as a small country. We have currently achieved 60% vaccination coverage, and we plan to learn from what South Africa is doing," he said.

Prof. Chilundo, a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries in Mozambique, said that FMD affects food security and noted that South Africa, Eswatini and his country share common borders. "FMD cannot be addressed by one country alone. Mozambique launched its national vaccination campaign on 29 April 2026, demonstrating the country's commitment to combating the disease. Most of our FMD cases have occurred around the Kruger National Park and near Eswatini," he said.

Mr Michael Temba, who brought his cattle to be vaccinated, expressed his appreciation for the department's decision to bring the vaccination campaign to the Shabalala kraal in the Hazyview area. He said he is hopeful that the fight against FMD can be won if farmers, the private sector and the government continue to work together.



From left: Mr Siphon Monareng, MEC Brenda Moeketsi, Minister John Steenhuisen, Minister Mandla Tshawuka, Ms Phindile Mbowane and Prof. Abel Chilundo during the FMD vaccination campaign rollout.

More than 300 head of cattle were vaccinated during Minister John Steenhuisen's seventh ongoing mass Foot and mouth disease (FMD) vaccination campaign held at Hazyview in Mpumalanga on 11 May 2026. The campaign forms part of Government's continued nationwide effort to contain the spread of FMD, protect livestock and support farmers across affected communities in Mpumalanga. Minister Steenhuisen was accompanied by the Member of Executive Council (MEC) for Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs, Ms Brenda Moeketsi.

The Mpumalanga vaccination drive stood out for its regional collaboration, with participation from the Kingdom of Eswatini Minister of Agriculture, Mandla Tshawuka, and a representative from the Mozambican Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries, Professor Abel Chilundo. Their involvement highlighted the growing importance of cross-border cooperation in managing and preventing the spread of animal diseases in Southern Africa. Mpumalanga is among the provinces affected by FMD in South Africa, and the vaccination rollout is expected to help the province strengthen its efforts to control and combat the spread of the disease.

Minister Steenhuisen expressed satisfaction with the ongoing national mass vaccination rollout campaign against FMD and said that the collaboration with neighbouring countries will strengthen efforts to combat the disease.

"Government is working to strengthen collaboration among countries within the Southern African Development Community



MINISTER STEENHUISEN HONOURS TWO TOP SHEEP SHEARERS FOR THEIR WORLD CLASS PERFORMANCE



Minister John Steenhuisen honoured world class performers in the wool industry.



From left: Mr Izak Klopper, Mr Bonile Rabela, Minister John Steenhuisen, Mr Teboho Nyatsa and Mr Adries Pretorius during the recognition ceremony in Stellenbosch.

Samuel Kgatla

Two South African influential sheep shearers have been recognised for their world-class performance, showcasing exceptional speed, precision and mastery in one of agriculture's most demanding skills. The Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen, acknowledged both Mr Bonile Rabela and Mr Teboho Nyatsa for their world-class performance in the wool industry on 23 April 2026 at Beyerskloof Wine Estate in Stellenbosch.

The ceremony recognised South Africa's continued dominance in sheep shearing, celebrating a sixth consecutive world title in hand shearing at the Golden Shears World Shearing and Wool Handling Championships in Masterton, New Zealand. Rabela, from Sterkspruit in Eastern Cape, defended his world title as best hand shearer and works for Quattro Wools in Northern Cape. Nyatsa from Burgersdorp, also from Eastern Cape, won a silver medal and works for Nyala Rural Shearing Services in Rouxville, Free State.

World-class shearers are judged on more than just speed: they are evaluated on wool quality, animal welfare, efficiency and technique. Top performers like Rabela and Nyatsa often compete internationally, where South African shearers have built a strong reputation. Recognition from the government also signals a broader push to elevate agriculture as a professional and skilled sector, especially for younger generations who might not traditionally consider it as a career path.

Both Rabela and Nyatsa expressed gratitude for the recognition, saying it motivates them to work harder. They also acknowledged support from their employers, Government and the National Wool Growers' Association (NWGA).

Mr Izak Klopper, Shear Training Manager at NWGA was honoured for his leadership of Rabela and Nyatsa. He praised their skills, expressed gratitude to the wool industry for exposing them to international opportunities, and welcomed their first ministerial recognition. The world class sheep shearing champions are looking forward to showcasing their skills at the next championships in Australia in 2029.

Minister Steenhuisen applauded Rabela and Nyatsa as ambassadors of South Africa's wool industry, highlighting their discipline, consistency and excellence. He emphasised that their success reflects not just individual achievement, but a sustained national standard, strong training systems and the depth of talent in South African agriculture. "We are marking a sustained standard of excellence that very few countries, in any field, can maintain.

You represent the strength of our wool industry, the quality of our training systems, and the depth of talent that exists within South African agriculture. You are not only skilled professionals, but you are also elite athletes in one of the most physically demanding and technically precise disciplines in global agriculture," he said.

Mr Andries Pretorius, an Agricultural Training Officer from the Grootfontein Agricultural Development Institute (GADI) was honoured by the minister for representing South Africa for nine years as a judge at the Golden Shears World Shearing and Wool Handling Championships.

Kedibone says farming is no easy feat as one must grapple with challenges such as stock theft and water infrastructure. She adds that since the installation of cameras on their farms, and help from farming organisations, livestock theft has declined.



DEPUTY MINISTERS GODLIMPI AND CAPA RECOGNISE POULTRY BUSINESSES



Phetogo Grootspuit Broiler Farm in Bronkhorstspuit received a recognition certificate from Department of Agriculture and Department Trade, Industry and Competition.



From left: Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Zoleka Capa, Mr David Mthombeni of Gegana Business Enterprise and Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Zuko Godlimpi.

Samuel Kgatla

The Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Ms Zoleka Capa, together with the Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Mr Zuko Godlimpi, acknowledged 33 Black-owned poultry businesses from all nine provinces. The ceremony took place at Phetogo Grootspuit Broiler Farm near Bronkhorstspuit during the Poultry Masterplan Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) meeting held on 30 April 2026.

The businesses honoured included broiler producers, contract growers, feed mills, hatcheries, abattoirs and processors. This recognition reflects progress made since the launch of the Poultry Master Plan in 2019, aimed at transforming and strengthening South Africa's poultry industry. The South African poultry sector is the country's largest agricultural industry, with a total revenue exceeding R91 billion. It accounts for the vast majority of local meat consumption, with per capita chicken consumption approximating 34,79 kg to 36 kg per year.

Mr Gilbert Mahloromela, a broiler farmer at Marama Fruit and Vegetables in Lephalale, was recognised by both departments for his achievements in poultry farming. Starting with just 25 broilers in 2005, he has grown his business to 40,000 birds and now employs seven permanent workers. He described the recognition as motivating and reaffirmed his commitment to working hard to contribute to food security.

Mr Tumi Mokwene of Phetogo Grootspuit Broiler Farm was also among those awarded with a certificate. He began farming broilers in 2006 and has since grown his operation into a commercial enterprise that employs 60 people.

Their acknowledgment highlights not only the hard work and innovation driving these enterprises, but also their vital role in ensuring food security, job creation and economic growth. These businesses, through consistent effort and adaptability, have demonstrated excellence in production standards, sustainability practices and market competitiveness. Their recognition serves as encouragement for continued progress, while reinforcing the importance of collaboration between Government and industry stakeholders to support and grow the poultry sector further.

The EOC meeting also formally considered and adopted the Poultry Master Plan Phase 2 Framework Agreement to signal a renewed and strengthened implementation partnership for the masterplan. Both departments have worked closely together since the implementation of the master plan, driving coordinated efforts to support the sector. Phase 2 aims to advance an export-driven growth strategy for South Africa's poultry industry, further enhancing its contribution to the economy. It builds on the progress achieved during Phase 1, which focused on addressing high feed costs, reducing export barriers, and promoting the localisation of poultry consumption to reduce imports, particularly from Brazil, the European Union and the United States of America.

Both deputy ministers commended the recipients and industry partners, pledging continued support for poultry farmers. They encouraged perseverance despite the sector's challenges and reaffirmed their commitment to protecting and strengthening the poultry industry.



PARLIAMENT JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES VISIT KLERKSDORP FOR SERVICE DELIVERY OVERSIGHT



An official preparing tags to be used on the day.



Preparations before vaccination took place.

Innocent Mhlanga

Parliament's oversight visits are a crucial component of its legislative agenda which focuses on ensuring that government services are delivered effectively and efficiently. These visits are intended to ensure that governmental service delivery, i.e., national, provincial and local, is carried out and funds are utilised as per the PFMA and MFMA," said Mr Jacobus Jooste, the Content Advisor for the Select Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Mineral Resources.

These visits may be triggered by challenges facing communities and help bridge the gap between policy and implementation. Parliament Portfolio Committees and National Council of Provinces (NCOP) Select Committees may also visit to fulfil their oversight legislative parliamentary mandates. In the case of the Parliament Select Committee oversight visit to Klerksdorp, North West, interest was taken to assess the effectiveness of the Department of Agriculture's FMD strategy support to provinces.

"It is not an oversight in terms of a fact-finding mission because there was not a complaint about anything; it is a fact-finding mission to determine whether the support that national government must give is in place—that is the main reason we are here."

The Select Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Mineral Resources and the Select Committee on Economic Development and Tourism undertook a joint oversight visit to the City of Matlosana Local Municipality in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality, North West, from 20 to 24 April 2006.

This joint oversight visit is in preparation for the National Council of Provinces' (NCOP's) "Taking Parliament to the People" programme which is taking place end of May 2026; therefore, the committee is tasked with performing key functions in delivery of services in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality, especially

the City of Matlosana Local Municipality.

"The reason we are in Matlosana is because it is the municipality that has been selected for the "Taking Parliament to the People" outreach; therefore, the committee is tasked with finding something within its mandate to do oversight over during the "Taking Parliament to the People" event, and one of the items that is being considered is the rollout of FMD movement control programme of national government to see if the City of Matlosana is supported sufficiently in achieving the national mandate," Mr Jooste added.

He further said there have been workshops at national level, but the committee has not had a chance to visit at provincial or local level, so this is the first visit to gauge whether the support that National Office said they are going to roll out to provinces and municipalities is taking place.



Cattle at Potchefstroom College of Agriculture.



Cont from pg 8.

In South Africa, the FMD response strategy relies on a partnership where provincial departments of agriculture (PDAs) and their veterinary services serve as the executors of the policies set by the National Department of Agriculture. PDAs are tasked with the responsibilities of communication and support, surveillance and traceability, implementation of vaccination programs and management of outbreaks and quarantine.

They also bridge the gap between national strategy and local farmers through public campaigns, intensifying education campaigns for communal and subsistence farmers who may lack resources for biosecurity.

A field demonstration on FMD vaccination rollout, earmarking and branding were performed for Parliament Committee members to understand the process. The programme also included a site visit to the Potchefstroom College of Agriculture where members of Parliament were shown agricultural activities such as pig farming. They were also shown the poor state of the infrastructure, for which the North West PDA made an urgent request for intervention.

The Head of Department of Agriculture in North West, Dr Hans Kekana, said the most important thing to work on as a province and a country is to start being proactive than reactive, because of the animal diseases we are chasing as DoA, and he says it is a problem because most of the time these diseases attack when the country and department is less ready,

The constant supply of Turkey's Dollvet and Argentina's Biogénesis Bagó FMD vaccines and the ARC's vaccines is set to increase supply to provinces and intensify the fight against FMD. At the time of publishing this article, eight million FMD vaccines had been received since January 2026 and delivery of an additional seven million vaccines from Turkey and Argentina was anticipated in May and June 2026.

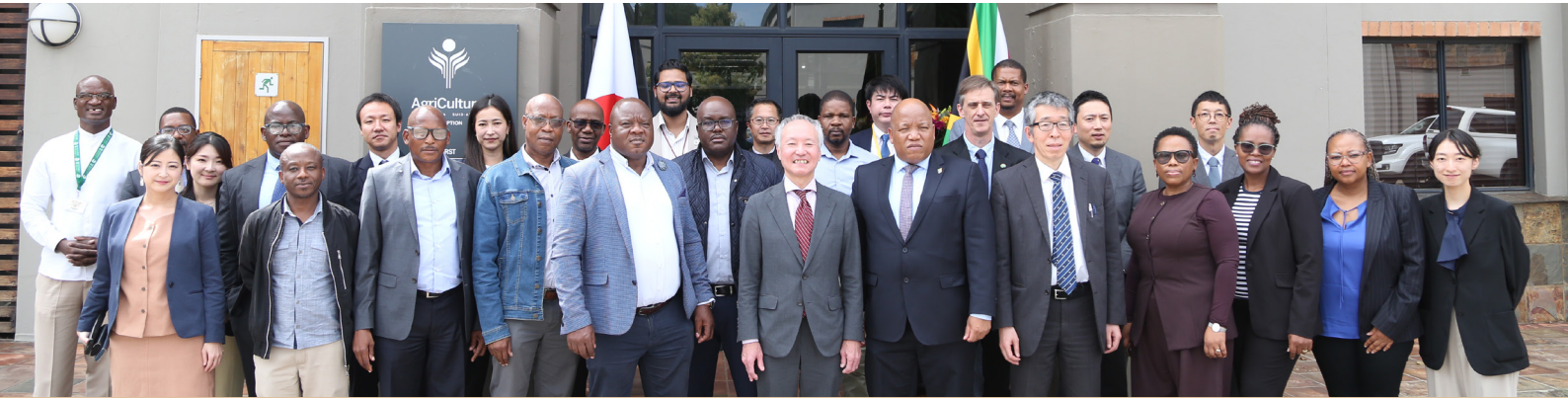


A meeting held between officials and committee members before vaccination commenced.





RSA AND JAPAN AGREE TO DEEPEN AGRICULTURAL TRADE THROUGH INAUGURAL JOINT AGRICULTURAL WORKING COMMITTEE MEETING



South Africa hosted the first Agricultural Working Committee Meeting with Japanese delegation.

Samuel Kgatla

South Africa and Japan marked a significant milestone in agricultural collaboration by hosting the inaugural Joint Agricultural Working Committee (JAWC) meeting from 20 to 22 April 2026 in Centurion.

The launch of JAWC represents a major step forward in strengthening bilateral cooperation in the agricultural sector. Prior to the first meeting, a reception was held at the Embassy of Japan in South Africa on 20 April 2026 in Groenkloof, Pretoria. This meeting brought together senior officials and industry leaders to strengthen collaboration on agricultural trade, with a strong emphasis on expanding citrus exports and improving market access.

The establishment of the JAWC follows directly from the agricultural cooperation agreement signed on 18 September 2025 between South Africa and Japan. The agreement laid out a structured framework to deepen cooperation across several key areas of the agricultural sector. At its core, the agreement aims to expand agricultural trade between the two countries, while also addressing shared challenges such as food security. It placed strong emphasis on advancing technology transfer and knowledge exchange, particularly in areas like modern farming techniques, climate-resilient practices and efficient resource management. A notable priority was the support of smallholder farmers, recognising their critical role in rural economies and food systems.

Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi, Director-General of the Department of Agriculture, welcomed the Japanese delegation and highlighted that the partnership between the two countries is anchored in the

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the Minister of Agriculture of South Africa, Mr John Steenhuisen, and the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, Mr Norikazu Suzuki. "Through this partnership we are going to extend our friendship with Japan. I hope our engagement is going to improve a lot of things when it comes to export and market access," said the director-general.

Mr Yoichi Watanabe, head of the Japanese delegation thanked South Africa for its hospitality and for hosting the first successful meeting. "I am hoping that we continue with the same cooperation and speed. We had very useful discussions, and it is good to see how the South Africans are doing things. This meeting is surrounded by people with positive energy, and thanks for the fruitful engagement," he said.

Ms Fhumulani Ratshitanga, Fruit SA Chief Executive Officer, indicated that South Africa is ready to expand its fruit exports to Japan. She mentioned that South Africa is already exporting a variety of fruits to Japan, with a strong focus on citrus products such as oranges, grapefruit, lemons and clementines. Ratshitanga added that she looks forward to seeing the country increase both the range and volume of fruit exports in the future.

Both South Africa and Japan agreed to strengthening agricultural trade, with a particular focus on expanding citrus exports to Japan. There is clear eagerness from both sides to further enhance cooperation and increase the export of a wider range of agricultural products, building on the existing partnership between the two countries.



PREVENTING PLANT DISEASES PROTECTS FARMERS AND FOOD SECURITY

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DDG Dipepeneng Serage delivering keynote address at the International Day of Plant Health in Mbombela, Mpumalanga.

culture

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Khensani Khoza from DoA demonstrating trap placement for fruit fly.

Rincert Moremi

“I learned that when it comes to plant diseases, prevention is better than cure. If you protect your crops early, you save yourself from bigger losses later,” warned Precious Sekgobela. Precious, a farmer from Lydenburg in Mpumalanga, was one of the farmers who took part in the International Day of Plant Health commemoration held in the City of Mbombela Local Municipality in Mpumalanga on 12 May 2026.

The Department of Agriculture (DoA), together with the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs (DARDLEA), commemorated the International Day of Plant Health (IDPH) under the theme, “Plant Biosecurity for Food Security and Nutrition”. The theme highlights the need to protect crops against invasive pests such as the Oriental fruit fly, Fall armyworm and Citrus greening.

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, emphasised that plant biosecurity is central to food security. “Plant biosecurity is active involvement. Fighting plant pests and diseases today secures food security for tomorrow for animals and humans. By strengthening plant biosecurity, we are locking the doors against devastating pests and securing the nutrition, livelihoods and future for all South Africans. Protecting plants today is the only way to feed tomorrow,” said the minister.

Plants provide 80% of the food we eat and are the main source of the oxygen we breathe. Yet, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), pests and diseases destroy up to 40% of food crops annually. South Africa continues to face threats from quarantine pests such as the Polyphagous shothole borer, Banana Bunchy Top Virus and Citrus black spot. The spread

of these pests poses a disastrous risk to food security and rural livelihoods.

Dipepeneng Serage, Deputy Director-General: Agricultural Production, Biosecurity and Natural Resources Management at the DoA, reminded farmers and delegates that plant health is not just an agricultural issue but a shared responsibility. “Protecting plants is not just the responsibility of farmers or Government or scientists, or an agriculture issue, but a shared responsibility—it is a national and global responsibility,” he said.

The DoA announced plans to strengthen plant biosecurity by working with universities, research institutions such as the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), provincial governments, municipalities and traditional leaders who are custodians of indigenous knowledge systems.

Delegates also visited the Mpumalanga International Food Market to observe how plant health directly impacts trade. Healthy crops are not only vital for local food security, but also for maintaining South Africa’s competitiveness in regional and international markets.

The main message that farmers like Precious and delegates who attended the IDPH took home was the importance of taking proactive measures in farming, such as practising Integrated Pest Management for early detection of pests and diseases. Once diseases spread, the damage is often irreversible and costly.



MINISTER STEENHUISEN ENGAGES IN AGRICULTURE'S BIGGEST CONVERSATIONS AT NAMPO 2026



Young visitors explore the future of farming at NAMPO Harvest Day 2026.



Representatives from Grain SA and Minister Steenhuisen, and young learners engage on the future of agriculture.

Matsepo Malatswane

The 2026 edition of NAMPO Harvest Day 2026 became more than just a showcase of machinery, livestock and innovation, as Minister John Steenhuisen undertook a packed three-day programme focused on the future of South African agriculture. The visit positioned government alongside farmers, agribusinesses and financial institutions in discussions centred on farmer development, innovation, financing, competitiveness and market growth.

The programme officially began with the opening ceremony at NAMPO Park, where the minister joined Grain SA leadership, stakeholders and members of the media. Discussions focused on the difficult environment facing grain producers, including rising input costs, fuel pressures and global market uncertainty. Despite these challenges, engagements throughout the week reflected optimism and a strong focus on practical interventions such as export opportunities, producer support, protein production and the long-term potential of biofuels to stimulate grain demand.

A major highlight of the visit was the emphasis placed on farmer development and inclusion. During a dedicated roundtable engagement involving Grain SA's farmer development structures, the African Farmers' Association of South Africa and empowerment partners, discussions explored how innovation and technology can become more accessible to developing farmers. The engagement reinforced the importance of ensuring that transformation, mechanisation, skills development and technology adoption move together in building a more inclusive agricultural sector.

The minister also participated in NAMPO Tech partnership engagements, where conversations focused on precision farming, robotics, digital agriculture and youth participation. These discussions highlighted the importance of preparing agriculture for a rapidly changing and technology-driven future, while ensuring that farmers remain globally competitive.

Finance and investment featured prominently throughout the programme. Engagements with major banks and agricultural finance stakeholders that participated in NAMPO 2026 included Land Bank, Standard Bank, Absa, Anchor Capital, Santam Agriculture, the Agricultural Development Agency (Agda), Grain SA, AFASA, Agbiz, Agrinet and SANSOR, with discussions focusing on agricultural financing, insurance, investment, climate resilience, sustainability and support for emerging and commercial farmers across South Africa. Focused on the financial pressures facing producers, including debt restructuring, financing models and support mechanisms during difficult seasons, these discussions reinforced the critical role partnerships play between government, organised agriculture and financial institutions in sustaining growth and encouraging investment within the sector.

Another strategic focus area during the visit was biofuels and regulation. Sessions explored the opportunities biofuels present for grain demand, rural economic growth and industrial development, while also discussing policy certainty and implementation challenges. Conversations around New Breeding Technologies and Act 36 further highlighted the importance of science-based regulation that supports innovation, competitiveness and access to modern agricultural technologies.

Beyond the formal meetings and discussions, the minister's walkabouts through the innovation zones and exhibition areas created opportunities for direct engagement with exhibitors, farmers and visitors. The event once again demonstrated NAMPO's unique role in bringing together producers, policymakers, researchers and agribusiness leaders under one platform.

As NAMPO 2026 came to a close, one message stood out clearly throughout the engagements: agriculture remains a vital driver of jobs, innovation, exports and rural economic growth. The week reinforced the importance of practical collaboration between government and industry in shaping a resilient and competitive agricultural sector for South Africa's future.



FARMERS SHOWCASE THE IMPORTANCE OF SAFEGUARDING TRADITIONAL SEEDS



Some of the important traditional seeds.



Farmers of Sterkspruit enjoyed farmer capacity-building workshop and traditional seed and fair event in Sterkspruit.



Ms Nkat Maluleke from DoA leading the diversity analysis practical exercise during the workshop at Sterkspruit.

Samuel Kgatla

Farmers and community members from Sterkspruit in Eastern Cape had an opportunity to showcase their traditional seeds and foods during a Farmer Capacity-building Workshop and Traditional Seed and Food Fair event held at the Sterkspruit Community Seed Bank (CSB) in Mbobo Village on 21 May 2026.

The event aimed to promote neglected and underutilised indigenous crop species, strengthen community seed systems, and preserve traditional agricultural knowledge for future generations. Through such workshops, the DoA continues to promote the production and preservation of indigenous crops as part of broader efforts to strengthen food security, enhance climate resilience, and support sustainable farming practices in rural communities.

Community members and farmers enjoyed a variety of mouth-watering traditional foods, including dried samp, lamb, maize meal porridge, beans, traditional beer, maize, pumpkin and other locally grown vegetables. DoA officials also had an opportunity to learn more about local indigenous foods, their cultural significance, nutritional value and their potential contribution to household food security, climate resilience and sustainable livelihoods. The department is making considerable progress in promoting 10 indigenous crops through farmer capacity-building workshops. These crops include sweet sorghum, grain sorghum, okra, finger millet, pearl millet, cassava, taro, mung bean, bambara groundnuts, and cowpea.

Ms Mpolokeng Mokoena from the Directorate: Genetic Resources said the initiative seeks to ensure that farmers preserve and continue using their traditional seeds. "We conducted research in 2023 and discovered that Sterkspruit has important indigenous seeds. Some of these valuable seeds were neglected, that is why we established a CSB in the area. We want to capacitate farmers so that they can take pride in their seeds and crops. Make use of the seed bank to ensure that we plant and revive all these seeds. It is important to understand how to use and preserve them. We want to see farmers becoming prosperous because without seeds, there will be no food," she said.

Ms Cecilia Ligunya, one of the farmers at the CSB applauded the department for its ongoing support of the CSB and its efforts to empower local farmers. She described the farming group as hardworking and encouraged others to join. She highlighted a substantial need for additional resources, especially a tractor to improve planting and expand agricultural activities. Ligunya also encouraged community participation, particularly from young people, and emphasised that farmers have gained valuable knowledge about seeds through the department's assistance.

The Senqu Local Municipality has pledged its support for local farmers who are willing to make use of the CSB.

