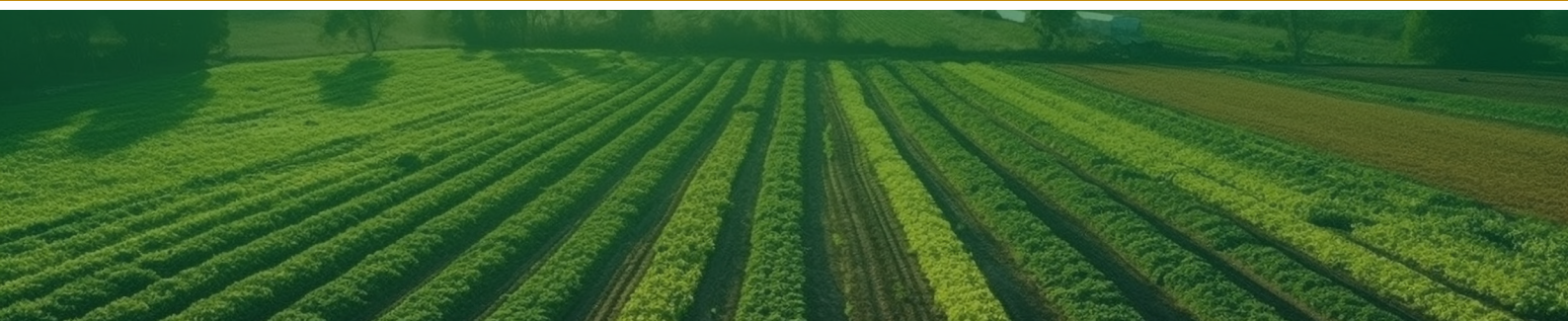




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FROM THE MINISTER'S DESK



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MINISTER AND DEPUTY MINISTER OUTLINE PRIORITIES TO STRENGTHEN AGRICULTURE AND INSPIRE CONFIDENCE



Minister John Steenhuisen during the NCOP Budget Vote.



Deputy Minister Nokuzola Capa delivering DOA's NCOP Budget Vote in Parliament.

Samuel Kgatla

The Department of Agriculture's (DoA) Budget Vote before the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) for the 2026/27 financial year is expected to strengthen agriculture and inspire confidence in the sector. Minister John Steenhuisen and Deputy Minister Nokuzola Capa led the department's Budget Vote presentation on 2 June 2026 in Parliament. During the presentation, both the minister and deputy minister outlined the department's key priorities, investments and commitments for the year ahead.

The budget presentation and engagement form part of Parliament's oversight function, providing a platform for the department to transparently present its financial allocations and strategic plans for the 2026/27 financial year.

The debate focused on job creation, strengthening biosecurity, supporting farmers, protecting livestock, safeguarding food security, combating animal diseases, expanding market access and building a more competitive agricultural sector. DoA was allocated R7,84 billion for the 2026/27 financial year to support food security, farmer development, biosecurity, agricultural production and market growth. Of this amount, the largest allocation, R3,28 billion, goes towards food security and farmer support programmes, reflecting continued focus on supporting production, extension services and provincial implementation.

Programme Two, which includes agricultural production, biosecurity and natural resources management, receives R2,59 billion, while Programme Four, which focuses on economic development, trade and marketing, receives R924 million. More than 30% of this budget will be implemented through provincial and local governments to ensure that resources reach farmers effectively and are distributed equitably.

Minister Steenhuisen mentioned that the budget is ultimately about building a more resilient, more competitive and more inclusive agricultural economy that works not only for one part of the country, but for all provinces and all producers across the value chain.

"South Africa's battle against Foot and mouth disease (FMD) is not simply a veterinary issue. It is an economic issue. It is a provincial issue. It is a food security issue. The department has a wider strategy to achieve and maintain "FMD free with vaccination" status, while safeguarding rural livelihoods, food security and agricultural exports. To support our accelerated vaccination campaign, more than 150 animal health technicians have been deployed across affected provinces to strengthen frontline operations and expand vaccination capacity," said the minister.

Deputy Minister Capa said that the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) continues to nurture the passion and energy of new entrants in the sector. "Aspirant farmers who acquire land through inheritance are assisted through CASP starter-packs on their long journey of farming. The CASP grant is provided to subsistence and smallholder producers who are in the development phase and cannot afford loans. The support provided includes on- and off-farm infrastructure, production inputs, mechanisation, training and mentorship and extension support. Central to the success of these farmers is access to markets and certification to supply safe, high-quality food," she said.



INDUSTRY LEADERS UNITE TO ADVANCE YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

Samuel Kgatla



Director-General Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi addressing the captains of industry during the roundtable discussions in Stellenbosch.



Students from Elsenburg Agricultural Institute were part of the roundtable discussions at ARC in Stellenbosch.



Some students from Elsenburg Agricultural Training Institute during the roundtable discussions in Stellenbosch.

Industry leaders from the Department of Agriculture's (DoA) entities, farmers' unions, commodity organisations and the private sector gathered at the Agricultural Research Council's Nietvoorbij Campus in Stellenbosch on 17 June 2026 for the Minister's Round-table Discussion.

Under the theme, "Empowering Youth for Inclusive Economic Growth through Agriculture and Innovation", the event focused on empowering young farmers and students by creating opportunities, addressing challenges, and promoting youth participation in agricultural development, innovation and economic growth.

The round-table discussions were established following a request from student representatives of the Association of Students of Agricultural Training Institutes (ASATI) to engage with industry leaders and gain insight into opportunities and challenges in agriculture. This initiative aimed to strengthen dialogue and collaboration between young people and key stakeholders in the sector.

Funding constraints, limited market access and the requirement for prior work experience by employers were among the key challenges raised by young farmers and students seeking to enter and establish themselves in the agricultural sector. Participants highlighted that these barriers often make it difficult for unemployed youth to access opportunities, gain practical experience, and build sustainable agricultural enterprises.

Mr Thabo Phasha, Secretary of the World Food Forum South Africa Youth Chapter, highlighted market access and limited funding as key challenges facing young people in agriculture. He emphasised the need for greater training, stronger youth representation and collective action to improve opportunities and participation in the sector. Phasha is a young farmer and agribusiness entrepreneur from Ga-Phasha in Limpopo who specialises in grain and maize farming and is committed to advancing agriculture, promoting agribusiness development, and creating opportunities for youth participation in the sector.

Ms Neo Tseuo, an Animal Production student at the Elsenburg Agricultural Training Institute called on employers to reconsider requiring prior work experience for entry-level positions in agriculture. She argued that this expectation disadvantages recent graduates and contributes to youth unemployment. Neo also highlighted limited access to funding as a major barrier for young people seeking to enter the agricultural sector.



Cont from pg 4.

Mr Shaun Cairns, Western Cape Secretary of the African Farmers' Association of South Africa (AFASA), agreed with the sentiments expressed by the young farmers and students, emphasising the importance of unity and collaboration among young people in the agricultural sector. He added that AFASA is committed to supporting and working closely with young people in the farming sector.

The DoA's Director-General, Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi, emphasised the need for tangible action and measurable progress in addressing the challenges facing young people in agriculture. "It cannot always be a talk show. We need to ensure that there is real progress, and we cannot continue discussing the same issues year after year. I acknowledge the concerns raised by young people, and we must address matters such as access to funding, the development of a youth digital platform and other key interventions. We must also leverage the Agricultural and Agro-processing Master Plan to advance youth development within the sector," he said.



Mr Thabo Phasha a young farmer from Ga-Phasha in Limpopo raising his concerns during the Minister's Roundtable Discussions in Stellenbosch



Captains of Industry during the roundtable discussions at ARC in Stellenbosch.



AGRI-TECH YOUTH EXPO EXPOSES YOUTH TO INNOVATION IN AGRICULTURE

Young farmers did not hold back in sharing their skills and the challenges they face in their farming journeys during the Agri-Tech Youth Expo held at the University of Free State in Bloemfontein from 23 to 24 June 2026. The expo was hosted by the Department of Agriculture in partnership with the Free State Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs and the University of the Free State.

The event brought together government officials, industry experts, young farmers, entrepreneurs, and students at the University of the Free State to explore the future of agriculture. Young farmers and entrepreneurs did not hold back in expressing the challenges they face, such as lack of funding and access to land. They also called on Government to include them in decision making, such as policy making.

During a panel discussion, Sibusiso Mogale, a farmer from Mpumalanga, pleaded with the government to find a way to assist youth who want to start farming. He said, "As a person born without arms, I would need a lot of assistance."

Mashoto Ramafalo, a farmer from Senwabarwana in Limpopo, was very blunt in informing attendees that farming was not easy; she outlined challenges such as access to funding. Thabiso Sibeko Sithole, who was also on the panel discussion, inspired students with his drones he uses to spray insecticides and fertiliser. He told the students that his business journey started while he was still a university student just like them. He started with 120 cows but now has 640 cows and has won the Young Farmer of the Year award.

The Acting Deputy Director-General: Food Security and Agrarian Reform, Ms Lebogang Botsheleng, addressed the concerns raised by informing the young farmers and students that the department has programmes such as the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme (CASP) aimed at assisting youth in agriculture. She added that CASP has various pillars that young farmers can take advantage of, especially the pillar that focusses on assisting with on-and off-farm infrastructure. She also encouraged the youth to organise themselves so that Government can reach them easily, emphasising that enablers for youth inclusion are engaging youth in policy development, expansion of automation and technology.

The expo highlighted innovative technology, such as drones, that are used in precision pesticide spraying. DoA displayed irrigation scheduling tools that assist farmers with when to irrigate and when to stop irrigating. Agro-processing enterprises also displayed locally produced goods, highlighting the value of adding economic opportunities through processing and packaging. The butternut coffee was one of the innovative agro-processed products that grabbed the interest of attendees.



Thabiso Sithole displaying the drones that are used to spray insecticides on the farm.

Rincert Moremi

Beyond the exhibitions, the expo featured presentations from the Agricultural Research Council and DoA officials. These sessions provided practical insights into funding, mentorship, and training opportunities ensuring that aspiring farmers are given both inspiration and actionable knowledge. The presence of the University of the Free State students added an academic dimension of bridging research with real-world application and reinforcing the importance of youth participation in shaping the sector's future. Palesa Mothupi, a second year Bachelor of Commerce student from the University of the Free State, presented an app that she designed to assist rural farmers with accessing markets, as well as agricultural experts.

By connecting students, young farmers, industry partners, and government leaders, the expo created a platform for knowledge-sharing, collaboration and inspiration. As the agricultural sector continues to evolve, initiatives like this expo ensure that the youth participate in the agricultural sector and are equipped to lead the way toward a more sustainable and technologically advanced future.



Nomsa Masemola from Water Use and Irrigation Development explaining how the irrigation scheduling tools operate.



Cont from pg 6.



Palesa Mothupi telling one of the farmers about the AgriHero App she developed.



Butternut coffee was one of innovative agroprocessed products at the agro-processed Expo.



SOUTH AFRICA-ITALY DELEGATES ENJOY WORLD-CLASS WINE TASTINGS AND SCENIC VINEYARD TOURS

Samuel Kgatla

Delegates attending the South Africa–Italy Business Forum could not stop talking about the excellent wines South Africa is producing. During their visits to L'Avenir Wine Estate, the Agriculture Research Council (ARC)'s Infruitec-Nietvoorbij Campus and Klein Goederust Wine Farm on 10 June 2026 in Stellenbosch and Franschhoek, Western Cape, they enjoyed tasting a variety of South African wines. They gained insight into South Africa's rich winemaking heritage.

These visits were intended to give delegates first-hand experience of South Africa's world-class wines and other locally produced products. Cape Town's wine farms are renowned, not only for their spectacular scenery, but also for their rich heritage and long-standing tradition of winemaking excellence. The experience highlighted the quality, diversity and global competitiveness of South African wines. It provided an opportunity to strengthen business and cultural ties between the two countries while showcasing the excellence of South African products and tourism offerings.

Delegates visited L'Avenir Wine Estate, a leading Stellenbosch boutique winery which specialises in South Africa's emblematic varietals: Pinotage and Chenin Blanc. Products such as honeybush, wine, preserves, dairy products, meat products and protea-based innovations were showcased at ARC's Nietvoorbij Campus.

The tourists were inspired by a deeply moving story of the wine farmer Mr Paul Siguqa, who demonstrated that it is possible to build and own a successful wine farm as a Black entrepreneur in South Africa. After acquiring the 10-hectare Klein Goederust Wine Farm in 2019, he embarked on an ambitious journey, starting from scratch and making significant investments to develop the business. "Klein Goederust" means small place of rest in Dutch. The Siguqa family's winemaking journey was inspired by the family matriarch, Nomaroma Siguqa, who had spent her life working as a labourer on Cape wine farms. Determined to honour her legacy, the family pursued their dream of becoming wine producers and farm owners.

Paul praised Government for its continued support and partnership throughout his journey as a wine farmer. He acknowledged the important role the government has played in helping him establish and grow Klein Goederust Wine Farm, describing the support as instrumental to the farm's success.

Mr Cristiano Sicurelli of Vinext Spa, an Italian machinery company, was among the delegates attending the South Africa-Italy Business Forum and expressed his appreciation for the

warm hospitality extended to the delegation during their visit. "South Africans are wonderful people, and I thoroughly enjoyed the visits to the wine farms and the Agricultural Research Council. The country produces some of the best wines in the world, and I will certainly be taking some home with me to Italy. South Africa and Italy should continue working together and strengthening relations for the mutual benefit of both countries. I look forward to returning to South Africa in the future," he said.

President and Chief Executive Officer of ARC, Dr Litha Magingxa, mentioned that the council was excited to host the delegation from Italy. He thanked them for choosing to visit the ARC and learn a lot about the campus' offerings. "We specialise in research and have good wines, honeybush tea and other products people who are visiting us can enjoy. We are proud of the ARC facilities and that is why we always have many tourists. We appreciate the visitors who come to our place," he said.



Delegates of the South Africa-Italy Business Forum enjoyed wine tasting at L'Avenir Wine Estate.



Some wines from L'Avenir Wine Estate were at display during the wine tasting in Stellenbosch.



SOUTH AFRICA AND ITALY SOLIDIFY LONG-STANDING RELATIONSHIP AT THE INAUGURAL SOUTH AFRICA-ITALY AGRIBUSINESS FORUM



Delegates attending the Business to Business engagement during the SA-Italy Agriculture Business Forum.



Minister Steenhuisen and Italian Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests, Mr Francesco Lollobrigida briefing the media at the forum.

Rincert Moremi

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, and the Italian Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests, Mr Francesco Lollobrigida, hosted the inaugural South Africa-Italy Agriculture Business Forum from 9 to 10 June at the Westin Hotel in Cape Town, Western Cape.

South Africa and Italy signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Agricultural Cooperation to deepen collaboration in agriculture, agro-processing, innovation and market access. This MoU establishes, among other measures, phytosanitary procedures that will allow the export of Italian table grapes to South Africa.

Addressing the media at the forum, Minister Steenhuisen, said that when the United States announced a 30% tariff increase, the department promised to deepen and widen existing relationships and open new markets. "This is part of deepening and widening relationships," revealed the minister.

South Africa has had a long-standing relationship with Italy since 1926. The signing of the MoU on Agricultural Cooperation will further strengthen the relationship between the two countries. South Africa sees Italy as a springboard into the European Union while Italy, on the other hand, sees South Africa as a springboard into African markets. Minister Lollobrigida said that Italy will assist South Africa to achieve the level of quality required by the European market.

Minister Steenhuisen said the department is looking forward to cooperating and getting more value-added products into the Italian market. "We have only scratched the surface on citrus on what the country can do with Italy. Once the country is FMD free, Europe is going to be an important market," he said.

Minister said that Italy is advanced in mechanisation and precision agriculture, and cooperation with South Africa will be of benefit to the whole of Africa.

Engagements at the forum culminated into both countries agreeing and committing to promote agricultural trade and facilitate increased exports and imports of agricultural products to encourage investment and attract Italian investment into South African agriculture, infrastructure, agro-processing, logistics, irrigation, mechanisation and agricultural technology.

Both South Africa and Italy affirmed intentions to advance continental trade opportunities and to position South Africa as Italy's strategic agricultural gateway into Africa through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The countries committed to continue building commercial partnerships and increasing the direct business-to-business (B2B) engagements between farmers, cooperatives, agribusinesses, exporters, processors, financial institutions and technology providers.

South Africa and Italy pledged to support efforts that focus on creating food security by advancing joint efforts to improve agricultural productivity, sustainability and resilience, as well as farmers' exchange programmes and farming skills development programmes between the two countries.

The parties consented to promote youth empowerment and attract youth into agricultural activities, and emphasised the importance of strengthening agricultural education and skills development for youth.

Both countries agreed to expand youth targeted policies, funding and exchange programmes and support youth cooperative models and showcase successful young agripreneurs.

South African farmers will be the main beneficiaries of the relationship between South Africa and Italy, as articulated by Minister Steenhuisen at the forum.





EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS ARE SAVING TOMORROW'S HARVESTS



From left are: Mr John Tladi, Deputy Director: Migratory Pests at the Directorate: Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, Ms T Mamela, Candidate Civil Engineering, Mpumalanga, and Ms S Dlamini, Disaster Risk Reduction; Coordinator: Ehlangeni District, Mpumalanga.

Mercia Smith

The Department of Agriculture (DoA) manages and controls major migratory and invasive pests under the Agricultural Pests Act (Act No. 36 of 1983). Landowners are legally required to report outbreaks. The primary migratory pests managed by the department include: locusts, Red-billed quelea and black fly.

During the National Agrometeorological Workshop in Hazyview, Mr Johan Tladi, Deputy Director: Migratory Pests from the DoA's Directorate: Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, presented a report covering the period from February to April this year detailing the department's control measures addressing migratory pests.

Quelea

Red-billed quelea are often referred to as "feathered locusts" and are notorious for destroying cereal crops like wheat and sorghum. A typical flock of two million birds can consume around 20 tons of grain daily. The department conducts aerial or ground spraying and explosion control methods at their roosting and breeding sites.

Limpopo, North West, Mpumalanga and Free State together reported 46 outbreaks from February to April this year. Pre-control inspections were conducted during which 35 control operations were executed. An estimated 11,5 million quelea were controlled

on 266 ha of the roosts. Aerial and explosion control methods were used.

Locusts

Locusts are gazetted notifiable pests, and the government is compelled to control them, while landowners must assist and report outbreaks. In South Africa, it is primarily the Brown locust that inflicts severe damage by stripping pastures, decimating cereal crops and damaging leafy vegetables. Swarms can consume entire fields within hours, causing millions of rands in agricultural losses.

On 5 March, locust outbreaks were reported in Northern Cape in the following areas: Bladgrond, Pofadder, Springbok, Alexander Bay, Port Nolloth as well as in Beaufort West in Western Cape. Five control operations were conducted in Northern Cape and three control operations were conducted in Beaufort West in Western Cape.

Black fly

Black fly outbreaks affected areas in Northern Cape (Orange River), Eastern Cape (Fish River, Gamtoos River, Sundays River and Koonap River) and the Breede River in Western Cape. One control operation was done in Sundays River in February, and in April, a control operation was done in the Breede River.



THE THICKET THREAT: BUSH ENCROACHMENT IS CHANGING SOUTH AFRICA'S LANDSCAPE



Prof. Gomotsegang Molelekwa from Tshwane University of Technology shared insights on how biomass form controlled bush encroachment.



From left are: Dr Hans Kekana, Head of Department, North West Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, (NWDARD); Ms Bothoile Pule, Chief Director: Agricultural Support Service, NWDARD and Mr Lydia Bosoga, Director: Land Use and Soil Management at the National Department of Agriculture, at the seminar held in Parys.

What were once gently rolling savannah grasslands in North West have now been invaded by woody shrubs including black thorn, bankrupt bush, sickle bush and sweet thorn, among others. Bush encroachment has long been regarded as one of South Africa's serious environmental problems and was thoroughly discussed at a seminar on bush encroachment held in Parys on 3 and 4 June 2026.

According to Ms Bothoile Pule, Chief Director: Agricultural Support Services, North West Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, who presented the purpose of the day, bush encroachment affects the agricultural biodiversity of 10 to 20 million ha of South Africa.

Bush encroachment should not be mistaken for the presence of alien invaders, Prof. Klaus Kellner from North West University said. When the ecosystem is disrupted, trees and woody shrubs, typically found scattered, begin to compete aggressively with grass for grazing. This competition can lead to their rapid increase, resulting in the formation of dense thickets. Encroachment can become so severe that cattle farms become unprofitable due to the loss of their grazing fields.

The growth of palatable grasses in pastures is suppressed, reducing the carrying capacity for livestock, forcing farmers to reduce their livestock numbers. When farmers ignore the carrying capacity of a veld – the number of animals the land can naturally feed without damaging it – the land becomes overgrazed. The grass is eaten down to the roots and does not have time to recover. This overuse triggers a domino effect which slowly destroys the soil.

The shortage of palatable grasses for livestock due to bush encroachment forces them to seek other food, which is not good for their development. In areas where bush encroachment has occurred, most farmers face underdeveloped stock which, in turn, hits them hard when it comes to pricing at the time of sale. Mr Ernest Mokua from the North West Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Agricultural Support Services, explained that

Mercia Smith

most smallholder farmers cannot buy feeds for their livestock, and in cases where bush encroachment occurs in their grazing camps, they find themselves powerless to fight it.

"The process of bush encroachment is difficult to measure from a snapshot in time, and at the moment there is no good science-based data on bush encroachment," Dr Theunis Morgenthal from the Directorate: Land Use and Soil Management at the National Department of Agriculture said. Available South African National Land Cover (SANLC) data does not give a good indication of the areas affected, and mapping bush encroachment with remote sensing remains elusive and experimental. The biggest shortcoming is field measurements.

Legislation should state that bush and shrub encroachment is a national land degradation problem. There should also be a distinction between bush and shrub encroachment, Dr Morgenthal said. Clear responsibilities for Government, landowners and land users, such as reporting, management and monitoring, should be set. Together with these responsibilities, funding and enforcement mechanisms should be put in place. Incentives can be provided as well as penalties for non-compliance. Various levels of support according to income and land tenure types must be established.

According to Dr Morgenthal, technical standards must include:

- List of species as indicators of bush and shrub encroachment;
- Defined control measures and prescription of the most effective method for each species;
- Provided details on reporting and monitoring of the map of affected areas, updated every five years; and
- Awareness and training workshops.

Bush and shrub encroachment typically does not stem from a single factor, Dr Morgenthal said, rather, it is the result of the interplay between various ecological, climatic and socioeconomic influences acting across diverse spatial and temporal dimensions.



OPPORTUNITY TO DISPOSE OF ANY OLD AND OBSOLETE PESTICIDES—FREE OF CHARGE

Mercia Smith

CropLife South Africa (SA) PRO is offering all farmers in North West, Mpumalanga and Limpopo an opportunity to dispose of any old (obsolete) pesticides on their farms free of charge.

More than 373 tons obsolete pesticides were successfully collected from farms, government institutions and pest control operators during 2025 and destroyed by thermo-destruction at the expense of CropLife SA PRO.

Farmers who have obsolete pesticides must contact the CropLife SA PRO Manager, Dr Gerhard Verdoorn, at gerhard@croplife.co.za or the PRO Consultant, Mark Campbell, at northernobspesticides@croplife.co.za as soon as possible for guidance on compiling inventories and safeguarding obsolete pesticides.

Please note the following important points:

1. There are NO legal repercussions for getting rid of obsolete pesticide through CropLife SA PRO.
2. There is NO limit to the quantity of obsolete pesticides that a farmer may log in for destruction.
3. There are NO fees charged for the thermo-destruction of obsolete pesticides. CropLife SA PRO pays for the shipment of the materials from assigned temporary collection points to Olifantsfontein in Gauteng for the thermo-destruction of every kilogram of obsolete pesticides.
4. Please note that fertilisers (liquids or granular), animal feeds, animal health products and lubricants are NOT accepted by CropLife SA PRO for destruction.
5. The obsolete pesticides must be placed on wooden pallets and securely wrapped with cling wrap
6. Farmers will be guided by CropLife SA PRO to deliver their safeguarded obsolete pesticides to the designated temporary collection points.
7. CropLife SA PRO does NOT collect obsolete pesticides directly from farms.

It is imperative that farmers capitalise on this free offer from CropLife SA PRO or face huge personal expenses for the removal and destruction of their obsolete pesticides.



Obsolete pesticides stored on a farm.

This offer remains open until the end of July 2026 after which a similar collection and destruction event for obsolete pesticides in these provinces will only be organised in 2028.

