



THE SEED

Produced by the Department of Agriculture

JULY 2025 | ISSUE. 3

MINISTER COMMITTED TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE SECTOR

TOP NEWS

- p6** DEPUTY MINISTER CAPA OUTLINES DEPARTMENTAL INTERVENTIONS ON ENSURING FOOD SECURITY
- p9** EXTENSION AND ADVISORY AWARDS CELEBRATION
- p12** SHOTS FIRED AGAINST FMD: MINISTER LAUNCHES NATIONAL VACCINATION CAMPAIGN AT KARAN BEEF
- p13** SOUTH AFRICA TO EMBARK ON THE FIRST EVER POULTRY VACCINATION
- p17** SCIENTISTS MEET FOR PHYTOSANITARY PROGRAMME FOR AFRICA
- p18** PHYTOSANITARY SPECIALISTS APPLY ADVANCED PEST SURVEILLANCE KNOWLEDGE ON FIELD VISITS



 DOA@gov_ZA
  National Department of Agriculture
  @doagov_za
  National Department of Agriculture
  www.nda.gov.za



agriculture
 Department:
 Agriculture
 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





FROM THE MINISTER'S DESK

When I assumed office, I laid out seven clear priorities that will guide us to bring our vision to fruition: growing partnerships for growth; building a modern, progressive legislative and regulatory environment; improving market access and boosting exports for South African agriculture; providing effective support for farmers to ensure inclusive, viable, sustainable and profitable farming operations; ensuring collaborative approaches and responsibility for biosecurity; advocating for a growing sector and improving food security. I am proud of the significant strides we have made, even as I remain acutely aware of the challenges that still lie ahead.

We initiated a comprehensive restructuring process, finalised our new macro-structure, and began modernising procurement, auditing and performance oversight systems. We have prioritised these initiatives to enable us to deliver a better service to our stakeholders. We are starting to see results in our efforts of tackling the persistent foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks that threaten economic pursuit, from small- to large-scale farmers, and with the poultry industry we commenced with the vaccination of our poultry against highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). South Africa is not the first country to vaccinate against HPAI. Compliance with biosecurity rules and culling is not effective in controlling the disease anymore; not in the EU, not in the USA and not in South Africa in 2025. Therefore, the decision by the department to vaccinate against HPAI. Vaccination against HPAI plays a crucial role in ensuring a consistent and stable supply of poultry, which in turn contributes significantly to our nation's food security and affordability.



It is hard to believe it has been a year since I stepped into the demanding yet rewarding role as Minister of Agriculture.

I have met many of our incredibly helpful and supportive agriculture stakeholders, from the dedicated farmers who are the backbone of our food system to the highly skilled researchers that are developing much-needed sustainable practices, as well as officials in the Department of Agriculture that work tirelessly on policy and implementation of our mandates. I am confident that they too share the department's vision of becoming the epicentre of job creation in the country and to create a conducive environment for producers.

PEO (THE SEED) is the newsletter of the Department of Agriculture • Private Bag X250, PRETORIA 0001.

It is published by the Directorate: Media and External Communication • Private Bag X144, PRETORIA 0001.

Opinions expressed in PEO (THE SEED) are not necessarily those of the editorial team. No part of this newsletter may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system without prior permission from the Editor-in-Chief.

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor-in-Chief

Moses Rannditsheni : 063 623 3012 • MosesR@nda.gov.za

Chief Copy Editor

Lerato Mofokeng : 012 312 8303 • LeratoMOF@nda.gov.za

Copy Editors

Eben Rademeyer : 012 312 8310 • EbenR@nda.gov.za

Ramokone Teffo : 012 312 8308 • RamokoneT@nda.gov.za

Senior Designer

Sibongile Ngcezu-Lingwazadzela: 082 640 2051 • SibongileN@nda.gov.za

Sub-Editor and Coordinator

Rony Moremi : 066 084 6192 • RincertM@nda.gov.za

Reporters

Rony Moremi : 066 084 6192 • RincertM@nda.gov.za

Joylene Van Wyk : 083 292 7399 • joylenev@nda.gov.za

Innocent Mhlanga : 082 819 1808 • InnocentM@dalrrd.gov.za

Matsepo Malatswane : 066 084 6355 • MatsepoM@nda.gov.za

Samuel Kgatla : 066 084 6653 • SamuelK@nda.gov.za

Mercia Smith : 060 973 3816 • MerciaS@dalrrd.gov.za

Cont from pg 2.

Other notable inroads we have made in the first year include: relaunching the National Biosecurity Hub in partnership with the University of Pretoria; establishing the National Biosecurity Compact and a Biosecurity Council which brings together scientists, industry experts and officials to coordinate outbreak responses; facilitating new access for avocados to China, maize to Japan and India, beef to Iran and table grapes to the Philippines and Vietnam; speedily resolving Botswana's temporary ban on South African maize and wheat, reopening the border within two weeks; securing protocols for wool, dairy and meat exports; providing over 6 000 farmers with direct support through a R1,7 billion allocation, creating 3 000 jobs; supporting 67 492 vulnerable households through Ilima/Letsema, generating nearly 9 500 work opportunities; launching a smallholder farmer programme in Ndumo Village, Jozini, where 100 beneficiaries produce herbs and spices for Unilever; fast-tracking global GAP accreditation for emerging producers and expanding access to finance via a restructured Blended Finance Scheme.

In the legislative environment, we revoked the designation of Leaf Services as a grain inspection assignee, protecting consumers from unnecessary costs that would have hit bread prices hardest. This action was taken in the public interest and demonstrates our commitment to regulatory fairness.

In June, we celebrated Youth Month, and after engaging with students from our 11 agricultural colleges at Elsenburg Agricultural College in Stellenbosch, I can confidently say our agricultural future is in good hands. We need to support our youth and give them the necessary tools to ensure we remain food secure as a country and a job creator. It is heartwarming to note that over 3 000 agricultural graduates have entered our internship programmes.

With the dedication of our farmers, the commitment of my team, and the support of our partners, we have built a strong foundation and created momentum with which we will continue.



The Department of Agriculture hosted the stakeholder network session after the Budget Note at Newlands Stadium in Cape Town.

MINISTER COMMITTED TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE SECTOR

“The smallholder farmer locked out of opportunity, veterinary professionals overburdened and a nation that too often reacts to crisis rather than prepares for it”



In the front: Mr John Steenhuisen, Minister of Agriculture and Ms Nokuzola Capa, Deputy Minister for Agriculture.

In the back, from left: Mr Moses Rannitsheni, Director: Media and External Communication, Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi, Director General, Department of Agriculture, Ms Kwena Komape, Deputy Director-General: Economic Development, Trade and Marketing, Mr Dipepeneng Serage, Deputy Director General: Agricultural Production, Biosecurity and Natural Resources Management and Dr Simphwe Ngqangweni, CEO of National Agricultural Marketing Council.

A department dedicated to promoting food security must model the principles of security and efficiency within its operations. Achieving this requires a comprehensive strategy focused on transparency, accountability and effective resource management, Mr John Steenhuisen, Minister of Agriculture said in his budget vote speech. He delivered the Budget Vote for Agriculture 2025/26 on 9 July at Parliament.

The restructuring of the department signifies a pivotal change in South Africa’s agricultural landscape. The department will focus exclusively on agriculture, with the intention of addressing the unique challenges faced by farmers, particularly those from historically marginalised communities, Mr Steenhuisen said.

Behind persistent risks, such as climate shocks, high input costs, biosecurity failures, weak infrastructure, and uneven access to markets and finance, is the human reality. “The smallholder farmer locked out of opportunity, veterinary professionals overburdened, and a nation that too often reacts to crisis rather than prepares for it,” he said.

This budget is designed to change that trajectory, and is grounded in seven strategic priorities that will serve as a roadmap for transformation.

1. Partnerships for growth.
2. A modern and progressive legislative environment.
3. Improving market access.
4. Providing effective farmer support.
5. Strengthening biosecurity and disaster preparedness.
6. Advocacy for a growing sector.
7. Improving food and nutrition security

For the 2025/26 financial year, the department has been allocated a budget aligned to four core programmes:

Programme 1: Administration

Programme 2: Agricultural Production, Biosecurity and Natural

Mercia Smith

Resources Management

Programme 3: Food Security and Support

Programme 4: Economic Development, Trade and Marketing

Programme 1: Administration

“Our first priority has been to build a capable, ethical, and responsive department. We initiated a comprehensive restructuring process, finalised our new macro-structure, and began modernising procurement, auditing, and performance oversight systems,” Mr Steenhuisen said.

Programme 2: Agricultural Production, Biosecurity and Natural Resources Managem

The alarming resurgence of the 2023 bird flu outbreak, alongside the persistent crisis posed by foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), underscores the pressing necessity for immediate and coordinated action to safeguard the industry. In response to these challenges, the department is taking significant steps by establishing a Biosecurity Council aimed at facilitating cohesive national efforts. This initiative is further bolstered by the launch of a National Biosecurity Compact, which will

Cont from pg 4.

delineate precise protocols and optimal vaccine stock levels necessary for effective management of biological risks. Additionally, the minister announced enhanced collaborations with the University of Pretoria's National Biosecurity Hub and a renewed commitment to investing in surveillance capabilities and educational programmes for graduate training, thereby fortifying the foundation of biosecurity measures throughout the region.

Programme 3: Food Security and Support

The department successfully launched the National Food and Nutrition Security Survey, providing essential baseline data to inform and shape targeted interventions across the country.

The department has actively promoted the use of indigenous and underutilised crops, such as bambara groundnuts and amaranth, to enhance dietary diversity and support sustainable agriculture.

The department entered into a strategic partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to strengthen programme delivery and resource mobilisation, ensuring greater impact and reach.

These initiatives mark important steps forward in our mission to improve food and nutrition security for all. We look forward to building on this momentum and achieving even greater progress together, Mr Steenhuisen said.

All 11 agricultural colleges are being integrated into the higher education system to ensure that they become centres of excellence.

Programme 4: Economic Development, Trade and Marketing

"We are proud of our export record - R258 billion in agricultural exports in 2024 alone," the minister said. To protect and expand market access, the department is finalising a revamped Market Access Strategy, negotiating with Asia and the Middle East, and expanding the Blended Finance Scheme.

In recognition of contributions made by industry stakeholders, the minister commended Grain SA, the South African Poultry Association (SAPA) and the Citrus Growers' Association of South Africa. "These institutions bring structure, research, and discipline to their sectors," he said. This collaborative approach marks a pivotal shift away from traditional top-down governmental oversight towards fostering enabling partnerships. As the minister said, "Sometimes, the most effective thing Government can do is to get out of the way," thereby empowering these established entities to spearhead efficiency and innovation. This strategic realignment allows governmental resources to be concentrated on creating an inclusive environment conducive to the growth of both commercial and emerging Black farmers, ultimately fostering a more equitable and productive agricultural landscape.

Policy Interventions for 2025/26

This year, the department will:

- Finalise amendments to the Fertilisers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act (Act No. 36 of 1947);
- Operationalise the Producer Support Portal;
- Hosted the Agricultural Extension Week, reigniting technical support at the farm gate.

By leaving no one behind, we help ensure a more equitable and prosperous future for all South Africans, laying the groundwork for a robust agricultural sector that can successfully navigate the challenges of tomorrow.

"This budget is more than a set of figures. It is a statement of intent, a commitment to build a new kind of agriculture," Mr Steenhuisen concluded.



DEPUTY MINISTER CAPA OUTLINES DEPARTMENTAL INTERVENTIONS ON ENSURING FOOD SECURITY

Rony Moremi



Deputy Minister Capa emphasised the importance of food security for all citizens during the NCOP Budget Vote.

Tabling the Department of Agriculture's budget at the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), Deputy Minister Capa emphasised the importance of food security for all citizens. "Access to food is a protected right, both in our country and globally. Under the international law, the right to food is enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)," she said.

The deputy minister gave reference to the National Food Security and Nutrition Survey which shows that households in Northern Cape, North West and Free State suffers from food insecurity. She said that the department was developing an overarching National Food and Nutrition Plan to address food security challenges by reversing historical legacies of the food system.

She said that for interventions in provinces, the department will allocate more than R1,5 billion towards the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) for the 2025/26 financial year. From the allocated budget, over R1,1 billion will be used to support subsistence and smallholder farmers, infrastructure, training, mentorship and market access support, including support for Good Agricultural Practices for producers of perishable goods in partnership with the Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB). Altogether 10 350 farmers are targeted for support through CASP with the aim of creating 4 294 jobs from supported farms and projects. A total R103,828 million will be used to revitalise infrastructure in agricultural colleges.

To support vulnerable households, the Ilima/Letsema Programme is allocated R677,396 million to increase food production in communal rural areas and support subsistence smallholder producers with production inputs and mechanisation. In total, 63 310 vulnerable households are targeted for support, the programme will also provide inputs to 37 307 farmers with the aim of creating 9 800 jobs.

The deputy minister reiterated the importance of partnerships by citing young farmers who are successful in the farming enterprises through support from the department and other partners such as Potato SA. "A young female vegetable farmer, Mogoshadi Ramafalo in Bochum outside Polokwane, is today able to export potatoes to Mozambique through the support of the department and Potato SA," said the deputy minister.

She gave an example of a young farmer, Sibusiso Mogale from Mpumalanga who lives with a disability and uses smart agricultural boxes to grow vegetables, which he supplies to the formal and informal market in Mbombela.

Through support from the department, a young agro-processor, Nokwanda Mchunu from KwaMaphumulo in KwaZulu-Natal produces sausages and patties. "The saying: "You feed a woman, you feed a nation" is more suiting when viewed against the role women play in food production, nurturing households and contributing to overall food security," added the deputy minister. She said that the department aims to increase women's role in agriculture through supporting women-led projects with funding and technical support through extension and advisory services.

STAKEHOLDERS PLEDGE SUPPORT TO THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR



Some of the key stakeholders representatives in the agricultural sector attending the networking session of the department.

“I humbly want to thank all our sponsors for always coming through for us and willing to partner with the department. We really appreciate your partnership, and the good thing is that my office has an open-door policy with all of you. I look forward to deepening the ties with you in the sector. Thanks for what you do on a daily basis. I really enjoy working in the sector.”

Key stakeholders in the agricultural sector pledged to support and work with the Department of Agriculture (DoA). They engaged with the leadership of the department led by Minister John Steenhuisen to pave the way on how to assist, improve and move the agricultural sector forward during a Stakeholder Networking Session held at Newlands Stadium in Cape Town on 8 July 2025. The engagement happened immediately after the tabling of both the department’s Budget Vote and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP).

Leaders of the stakeholders were in Cape Town to support Minister Steenhuisen and Deputy Minister Zoleka Capa to deliver the speeches in parliament. The role players represented during the networking session included the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), South African Breweries (SAB), South African Poultry Association (SAPA), Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB), Macadamia SA, OCEANA, Kellanova (formerly known as Kellogg’s), PepsiCo and Klein Goederust winery. Stakeholders are crucial for driving progress in any sector, and

Samuel Kgatla

their collaboration with the department can significantly move the sector forward. Their input ensures that the department’s efforts align with the needs and aspirations of the entire sector and therefore play an important role in the department’s long-term success.

Chairperson of the PPECB, Ms Bongiwe Njobe, said that they were humbled by the accolades they receive as a board and they are always willing to work and support the agricultural sector. “We need everyone’s support and for each to play their part, and I still believe in the vision of a prosperous and united agriculture. We want to empower farmers and make sure they are export ready,” she said. Njobe also served as the Director-General of the national Department of Agriculture from April 1997 to February 2004.

Chief Executive Officer of Astral Foods, Mr Gary Desmond Arnold, who represented SAPA, echoed the same sentiment of offering support to the department. He added that poultry is the largest contributor to the gross domestic product (GDP). “Poultry is the most consumed meat in the country. We have very good poultry farmers in the country. We must compete with the global industry and hold hands with the department to make sure all goes well. Please support the country by buying local chicken,” he said.

Minister Steenhuisen thanked all the industry role players and mentioned that he is looking forward to working with them. “I humbly want to thank all our sponsors for always coming through for us and willing to partner with the department. We really appreciate your partnership, and the good thing is that my office has an open-door policy with all of you. I look forward to deepening the ties with you in the sector. Thanks for what you do on a daily basis. I really enjoy working in the sector,” he said.

A HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AN EXTENSION OFFICER AND A FARMER IS CRUCIAL FOR A SUCCESSFUL FARMING ENTERPRISE



An official from the Department of Agriculture buying fresh Monzai eggs.



The sorting machine provided by Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Rony Moremi

“ Extension officers discovered us; we did not go to them. We started working with Ditelo Thobejane from the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD), who introduced us to Tilis Mphahlele, and now I am working with Obakeng Mekgwe,” said Busiswa Maya, praising excellent work done by extension officers. Busiswa is a member of a family-run project, Monzai Eggs, which is one of the eight projects that were visited during the Agricultural Extension Week Conference held at Emperors Palace from 30 June to 4 July 2025.

Monzai Eggs bears testimony of what can be achieved when extension officers and farmers work in harmony. “They are always hands on and are doing an excellent job because they have the knowledge, they are the ones who can open channels. If you need inputs, you must talk to them, I am working very closely with them,” said Busiswa. She also mentioned that she is working closely with Obakeng Mekgwe, an extension officer from the GDARD and that she is not afraid to call him and that he is also not afraid to talk to them. She added that a close relationship between a farmer and the extension officer is very important.

The project is a family-run project based in Emfuleni Local Municipality and was acquired through the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) in 2007. It has 6,000 layer chickens which produce 6 000 eggs per day. The former Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development built a 19 000-layer chicken structure and GDARD constructed an 800 layer-chicken structure, 3 000-layer cages, two egg-grading machines, 20 unit shelves and made production inputs. Busiswa says that they have a vast market because they are situated next to the Bophelong Township and the busy R42 road.

Her advice to those who want to start farming is that they must start small, have a few layer chickens, at least 50, and grow gradually and when the chickens finish laying, they can be sold for their meat.

Busiswa acknowledged the good work done by extension officers in ensuring that agricultural projects become successful.

EXTENSION AND ADVISORY AWARDS CELEBRATION

Innocent Mhlanga



Keitumetsi Mphofu, extension officer from Limpopo Department of Agriculture, was the overall winner.

There were three contested categories, and these were:

- Best Extension Practitioner: Professional (International);
- Best Extension Practitioner: Certificate (Continental); and
- Best Extension Practitioner: Candidate (SADC).

The best performing Extension and Advisory Services practitioners were awarded in line with the approved National Framework for the award system in recognition of excellent performance in Extension and Advisory Services.

There was a winner and two runners-up per the three categories, who were awarded as follows:

- Best Extension Practitioner: Professional: Mapule Mabilo;
- Best Extension Practitioner: Certificated: Rirhanzu Rikhotso; and
- Best Extension Practitioner: Candidate: Keitumetsi Mphofu.

Keitumetsi Mphofu was also the overall winner, and the Life-time Achievement Award targeting retired extension practitioners, identified by Gauteng as the host province, went to Mr Letebele Sebitloane.

“To be bestowed with this title by the Honourable Minister Steenhuisen still feels surreal, but I am very humbled and excited about the prospect of my future in extension services, where I now have to challenge myself further and be innovative in how I deliver my services to honour this title. I am today an overall winner because of a combination of elements that are dedicated to changing the negative narrative about extension and the farming capabilities of previously disadvantaged groups, and investment in capacity development for farmers, youth, women, student development and people living with disabilities,” said Keitumetsi Mphofu.

She went on to encourage her fellow officers by advising them not to conform to routine when performing their duties, saying they should be willing to challenge what is not working, and not limit their capabilities in trying to help their respective farmers.

“My fellow extension officers should use effective tools (survey I23) to capture and report their work, establish a strong stakeholder collaboration where they can harness extra resources for their farmers and they should also go the extra mile despite the challenges they face on duty,” she concluded.

“To all the nominees, you represent the very best of what it means to serve. Whether you leave with an award or not, you have already won our gratitude and respect. You have carved your path to greatness in this field, your work does not go unnoticed. To the winners, your excellence in service to your country inspires us all. Let your recognition tonight be a spark for continued leadership and mentorship. Bring others along. Share your innovations. Champion transformation in your districts and provinces,” said John Steenhuisen, the Minister of Agriculture.

These words of encouragement were delivered during the prestigious gala dinner event that took place at Emperors Palace, Kempton Park, on 30 June 2025. The aim of the ceremony was to award the best Extension and Advisory Services officials and celebrate services of commitment and excellence in the agricultural sector.

An independent committee was therefore established which reported to the director-general of the department, Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi, and it was given the task of adjudicating the whole process and select winners who would receive awards, certificates and a learning excursion on the African continent and abroad.

Cont from pg 9.

This year, 2025, marks a century of Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) in South Africa. It is a pivotal landmark in the evolution of agricultural knowledge-sharing, rural empowerment and development. This year's event was an inaugural Agricultural Extension Week, incorporating the fourth National Extension and Advisory Services Awards (NEASA) in collaboration with the South African Forum for Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (SAFAEAS), South African Society for Agricultural Extension (SASAE) and the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD).



Keitumetse Mphofu was announced overall winner at the awards.

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION WEEK CONFERENCE SHINES A LIGHT ON EXCELLENT SERVICE BY EXTENSION OFFICERS



Sabelo presenting his paper on "The role of contract farming to promote Access to Formal Credit in Small-scale Piggery Farming of KwaZulu-Natal, Amajuba District"



Sabelo presenting his paper during the Extension and Advisory Week Conference.

Rony Moremi

The Agricultural Extension Week Conference, held at Emperors Palace from 30 June to 4 July 2025, served as an important platform to advance the field of agricultural extension by fostering collaboration, innovation and knowledge sharing among professionals, researchers and practitioners.

Sabelo Sydney Gumede from KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is one of the extension officers who attended the conference and shared with Peo-The Seed a day in his life as an extension officer. He is based in Newcastle under the Amajuba District Municipality.

His week starts with doing administrative work on Monday, such as calling farmers to arrange visits. For the rest of the week, he visits his farmers in Amajuba District Municipality. As a young extension officer, he must accommodate the needs of all his farmers, young and old. Sometimes, it is difficult to change the mindsets or traditional indigenous knowledge older farmers apply on their farms. "These methods, according to the farmers, have always worked for them but as an extension officer I must respect that and politely advise where I can. Farmers always like to see the end product. To help them adopt the advice I provide, I take them to other farmers who are doing well with the methods and advice I offered. I also arrange farmers days to share information and allow farmers to also share experiences amongst themselves."

The proudest achievement for Sabelo was when a young poultry farmer he was assisting, who was not doing well, upgraded from 100 layer chickens to having 1 100 layers. She is now able to produce 950 eggs per day. His intervention came in the form of advising the young female farmer to follow proper feeding management through demonstrating how to weigh the feed, and how to properly allocate the feed to the layers. "You can tell a farmer how to feed, but without demonstrating it to them, they may still get it wrong."

Sabelo studied Animal Science at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and is currently pursuing a PhD degree in Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Free State. He says he is branching into crop production to be able to assist both livestock and crop farmers. He presented his paper on "The role of contract farming to promote Access to Formal Credit in Small-scale Piggery Farming of KwaZulu-Natal, Amajuba District" at the conference.

"Farmers depend on tangible support; if one comes with knowledge only, they are not always receptive, however, when one comes with some form of support, they appreciate it." To help farmers transition from expecting support, he suggests following the extension approaches such as the demand-driven approach of supporting farmers according to what they need or require instead of support that may not help them. Another approach is the participatory approach, in which researchers, extension officers and the farmers work in collaboration to assist farmers.

A colleague and friend of Sabelo, Sanele Shandu, also an extension officer from KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, who is based in Mandeni Local Municipality, says extension service is important because it provides much-needed support to farmers. His proud moment was when the macadamia project he helped with developing a business plan and soil profiling was funded by the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme (CASP) for R2,4 million. The project was able to plant macadamia nuts on 10 ha. "The Agricultural Extension Week Conference is important because it reminds extension officers that extension service is not only about being in the fields, but it is also a science." Both Sanele and Sabelo have been on a contract as extension officers for five years.

SHOTS FIRED AGAINST FMD: MINISTER LAUNCHES NATIONAL VACCINATION CAMPAIGN AT KARAN BEEF



Cattle being vaccinated against foot and mouth disease at Karan Beef Feedlot.



Minister John Steenhuisen and the MEC for Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Vuyiswa Ramokgopa, addressing the media during the visit to vaccinate cattle at Karan Beef feedlot.

Matsepo Malatswane

The Department of Agriculture launched a national campaign to combat the recent outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) which officially began on Monday, 23 June 2025 with Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen visiting Karan Beef's Heidelberg feedlot in Gauteng. The site is ground zero for the outbreak which has since spread to Karan Beef's Nigel facility and its KwaZulu-Natal operation in Albert Falls, prompting urgent intervention.

Over 160 000 cattle across the company's operations have been affected, placing significant pressure on national food security and beef sector exports. Minister Steenhuisen underscored the gravity of the situation, stating: "Karan Beef accounts for nearly 30% of the country's red meat production. This is not just a company issue, it is a national concern. We are acting swiftly to stop the disease in its tracks."

The Department of Agriculture has allocated R43 million to fund an aggressive vaccination programme, with 900 000 doses already delivered from the Botswana Vaccine Institute. The vaccination campaign kicked off over the weekend of 22 June and is being rolled out at high density feedlots identified as hotspots, beginning in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. More vaccines have been ordered to expand the programme into Limpopo, North West and Free State. Dr Mpho Maja, Director: Animal Health at the department, expressed confidence in the science-backed approach: "We are using vaccines as a firebreak. By targeting the infection frontlines, we aim to contain the disease before it becomes unmanageable. Our teams are working in partnership with industry to achieve full coverage."

In tandem with the vaccination drive, the department has implemented strict quarantine and movement control protocols in accordance with the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No. 35 of 1984). All animal and product movement from affected facilities is currently prohibited. Minister Steenhuisen stressed the importance of full compliance, warning that violations will be met with legal consequences. "We cannot afford shortcuts when it comes to national biosecurity," he said. "Our veterinary teams are supported by law enforcement, and we will not hesitate to take action against any party compromising containment efforts." Karan Beef has also suspended all external movements voluntarily and committed to full cooperation with veterinary services, including enhanced internal biosecurity.

The economic implications are already being felt across the value chain, with early signs of red meat price increases and suspended exports to key partners such as China, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Producers are reporting mounting costs as cattle remain in feedlots beyond scheduled cycles, straining feed supply and operations. Dr Maja confirmed that the department is engaging with agricultural finance stakeholders to explore temporary support mechanisms for affected farmers. Discussions are also underway to resume trade through certification systems once control zones have been established. "This outbreak is a test of our systems, but also an opportunity to strengthen them," Minister Steenhuisen concluded. "We are committed to restoring stability, protecting livelihoods, and positioning South Africa as a leader in proactive animal health management."

SOUTH AFRICA TO EMBARK ON THE FIRST EVER POULTRY VACCINATION



The vaccine which will be used targets the H5 strain of the virus and is already approved for use in other countries.



Livestock farmers are also encouraged to implement biosecurity measures on their farms.

Rony Moremi

The Department of Agriculture has issued a vaccination permit to Astral Foods Ltd to authorise the company to vaccinate against the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) at one of its broiler farms.

Astral Foods will vaccinate 200 000 broiler breeders at an estimated cost of R35 million. The vaccine which will be used targets the H5 strain of the virus; it is already approved for use in other countries implementing vaccination strategies against HPAI.

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, hailed the issuance of a vaccination permit as a proactive step by the department to minimise the risk of HPAI. Furthermore, he said that it was a testament to the strong partnership between Government and the industry in safeguarding national food security and livelihoods of thousands of South Africans. The department will embark on the first vaccination campaign for poultry.

The department states that, once a farm has been approved for vaccination, the industry (private) veterinarian is required to issue a prescription indicating the number of birds to be vaccinated.

This prescription must be endorsed by the department. Once endorsed, the veterinarian may procure the vaccine from the approved supplier and oversee its administration.

The vaccination must be conducted by a private veterinarian authorised for that specific farm. Government does not cover the cost of the vaccines, and the vaccinations must be carried out by a private veterinarian under the supervision of a State Veterinarian.

So far, only one vaccination permit has been issued while the department awaits more compliant applications.

HPAI is a notifiable disease and farmers who suspect the disease in their flocks are required by law to notify the local State Veterinarian as soon as possible. They must also prevent possible spread of the disease to other farms by not moving any chickens or their products off the premises.

Livestock farmers are also encouraged to implement biosecurity measures such as limiting the possible points where the virus could leave the premises through movement of people and vehicles.

GOVERNMENT AND PARTNERS SHAPE THE FUTURE OF EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES



Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen in the middle posing with leaders of government who attended the Agricultural Extension Week at Emperors Palace.

There are currently 1,927 extension personnel and about 85% of them have degree qualifications in agriculture. This information was revealed by the Department of Agriculture (DoA) during the inaugural South African Agricultural Extension Week from 30 June until 4 July 2025 at Emperors Palace, Kempton Park. This represents a significant achievement because only about 20% had diplomas in agriculture or less in 2009. DoA is working with tertiary institutions and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) to help improve the education, research and innovation of extension and advisory services. The partnership between Government, institutions and the private sector is important to make sure that the extension and advisory service's curriculum is always reviewed, updated and remain relevant.

The South African Extension Week coincided with other crucial events: the 58th Conference of the South African Society for Agricultural Extension (SASAE) and the fourth National Extension and Advisory Services Awards (NEASA). This year's conference was held under the theme: "Leveraging innovation and technology to enhance Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) for sustainable agriculture, improved livelihoods and food security".

The EAS was also celebrating 100 years of serving the agricultural sector. The intention of the tri-conference was to advance the field of agricultural extension by fostering collaboration, innovation and knowledge sharing among professionals, researchers and practitioners. It also marked a renewed commitment to ensuring that agricultural extension remains at the heart of inclusive rural development, food security and knowledge transfer in the country. The scientists used the conference to address contemporary challenges in agriculture and to explore sustainable solutions that enhance the effectiveness of extension services in South Africa. The majority of agricultural extension officers represented their provincial governments.

The Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen, mentioned that the theme for the conference could not be more fitting. "Technology and innovation are not abstract concepts, they are practical tools that empower our producers, improve efficiencies, reduce risk and build resilience. As we chart the future of extension in South Africa, we must ensure that these tools are in the hands

Samuel Kgatla

of every practitioner and every farmer, from Limpopo to Eastern Cape, from emerging youth farmers to seasoned commercial growers. Extension practitioners serve as the bridge between science and the soil. You, our practitioners, are problem-solvers and solution bringers," he said.

Dr Lilian Lihasi, Executive Director of the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), added that they were aware of the role of agriculture and extension in Africa. She confirmed that they are also developing and engaging coalition in extension services. "We know that food insecurity is a challenge. Digital extension and advisory services is critical to us, and we need to make sure that our extension officers are competent enough to service the farmers out there. Government support is needed to unlock challenges in the Extension and Advisory Services," she said.

Ms Mapula Mabilo, one of the agricultural extension officers who attended the conference, and won the award for Best Extension Practitioner: Professional, said that she has learnt a lot at the conference and is going to share the knowledge with the farmers she is working with in the deep rural Mopani District of Limpopo. "Extension systems are central to addressing climate resilience, food security and rural economic growth. Innovation and technology are not optional, but essential. The conference stressed actionable integration of digital tools into daily extension work," she said.



From left: Minister John Steenhuisen, Executive Director of AFAAS, Dr Lilian Lihasi, and SAFAEAS chairperson, Winston Makabanyane.

FARM EXCURSION TO TILAPIA FARMING PROJECT DURING AGRICULTURAL CONFERENCE WEEK



An employee from TIA farm proudly shows tilapia fish produced on the farm.



Extension officer Anna Komape, farmer Refilwe Sibuyi, Lethogonolo Sibuyi and Extension officer Tebogo Diseko during a visit at the TIA farm.

Innocent Mhlanga

As part of the information-sharing session, extension officers who attended the first Agricultural Extension Week and 58th Conference of the South African Society for Agricultural Extension (SASAE), undertook an excursion to visit several agricultural projects in and around the host province, Gauteng.

Among the farms that were visited is the Tia Farming Project, situated in the City of Johannesburg. Tia Farming is a close corporation entity that was founded in 2006 by a vibrant young woman, Refilwe Sibuyi, and since 2018, the project has been focusing on producing tilapia.

It is 2,67 ha in extent, with 1,5 ha allocated for aquaculture activities. It has two tunnels consisting of 15 ponds each to grow tilapia. The project employs three permanent staff, including the project leaders and three members of the Sibuyi family.

The farm and all the necessary infrastructure for tilapia production were acquired in 2017 through a bank loan. The business started operating in 2018 with only 20 fingerlings (tilapia) and to date, it has increased its output to 12,5 tons of tilapia per year. It has also identified an opportunity to diversify its operations by venturing into the primary production of cucumbers.

Mr Lehlohonolo Sibuyi, the manager of the farm, says so far they are happy with the government interventions as they have assisted them greatly. "We received 600 bags of feed and a solar system to alleviate and assist with the current load shedding situa-

tion. We received a 36 kw system which was installed and we are able to run off the grid. It consists of three 12 kw invertors and 75.1 lithium batteries and 30 panels."

He further said that they are currently producing 20 tons per annum; however, they are busy with plans to develop and expand the operations to 50 tons per annum and want to expand their market as they are now supplying Food Lovers' Markets and restaurants locally.

Mr Sibuyi continues to say even though things have been working out well on the project over the past year, the selling price of tilapia has decreased while the prices for inputs such as fingerlings and feed, which were already expensive, have increased. The increase in these prices has had a negative impact on the business' income.

When it comes to off-take agreements, he said that there are no agreements in place with retailers or restaurants in the region. He added that an off-take agreement or fixed contract would allow the business to sell at a predetermined price, while also ensuring consistent demand for its products. Over the past year, the business had to reduce its production output by 50% as it did not have any fixed contracts in place; because of this, the business suffered a significant financial loss.



DELEGATES VISIT FIRST EGG MASTER PLAN PROJECT IN WEST RAND

Samuel Kgatla

Farmers and experts in the extension and advisory services visited Shumbaset Egg Packhouse, the first Egg Master Plan project in Krugersdorp West in Gauteng on 2 July 2025. This project deals with sorting, grading, packaging and distribution of fresh chicken eggs. The delegates were attending the inaugural South African Agricultural Extension Week and the 58th Conference of the South African Society for Agricultural Extension (SASAE) at Emperors Palace. The Egg Master Plan in South Africa involves government and industry collaboration to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of egg production, processing and distribution.

The Shumbaset facility features one of the country's first imported egg grading machines. The machine can grade about 72 000 eggs an hour or 600 000 eggs a day on a full working shift. Currently, they are grading between 150 000 and 200 000 eggs per day. The aggregation centre was officially opened by the Gauteng MEC of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD), Ms Vuyiswa Ramokgopa, in September 2024. It supplies retail stores like Makro, Game, Pick 'n Pay, Boxer, Usave, Econo Foods, Hyper-check Supermarket and Jwayelani Supermarket. Their goal is to help farmers and other small-scale egg producers. In 2024, South Africa's egg market was valued at approximately US\$0,31 billion, with a projected annual growth rate of 8,21% between 2024 and 2029, according to Food Business Africa Magazine.

The state-of-the-art facility currently employs 20 permanent workers, consisting of 10 women and 10 men. This employment level is a direct outcome of the investment made into the Shumbaset Egg Packhouse. They have also invested in two students sourced through the GDARD. These students are undergoing an initial two-year training period at the packhouse, after which they will be placed at outgrower farms. They grade eggs for farmers to ensure quality, size and hygiene standards are met for consumers and to facilitate market access. Grading allows for efficient sorting, pricing based on quality and compliance with regulations. GDARD assisted them with the grading machine and a truck.

Mr Willie Bosoga, marketing director of Shumbaset, welcomed the delegates and said they appreciate the collaboration with GDARD. "We are where we are because of government support and funding. Farmers came together and asked the department to support them with the centralised aggregation centre and they helped us a lot. We assist farmers who need technical assistance. The price of eggs is always fluctuating, and we also try to help farmers to sell their eggs to the retail stores," he said.



Workers sorting and grading eggs at Shumbaset Egg Packhouse.



Fresh eggs packaged at Shumbaset Egg Packhouse.



A worker at Shumbaset Packhouse preparing trays for eggs.

SCIENTISTS MEET FOR PHYTOSANITARY PROGRAMME FOR AFRICA

“ We have learnt a lot about everything from APP, field visits to farms and the Agriculture Research Council (ARC). We also learnt about mat blocks, Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV) and how to place traps for pests. The only challenge we had was the use of the tablets in the field, ”

Samuel Kgatla

Scientists and experts from African countries converged at the Premier Hotel The Winkler in White River for the Africa Phytosanitary Programme (APP) Train-the-Trainer Workshop from 23 to 27 June 2025. The APP is the first-ever continent-wide phytosanitary programme, envisioned to support all 54 African countries to prevent and manage plant pests. The intention is to safeguard plant health, agriculture and natural resources against the introduction and spread of plant pests by helping National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) to improve their technical and phytosanitary capacity.

The APP provides African countries with advanced tools to prevent, detect and manage significant plant pests and diseases. It is a five-year initiative of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and implemented in coordination with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the African Union (AU). African delegates shared their experiences on the implementation of the APP in their countries. Issues of APP structures, surveillance and training were raised by African experts on how to manage harmful pests.

This was phase two of the APP; phase one was held in Cairo, Egypt from 25 to 29 September 2023 and was a pilot programme involving 11 countries (Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The pilot phase served as a demonstration for future participating countries in subsequent phases. Phase two consists of eight African countries (Algeria, Cabo Verde, Chad, Congo, Liberia, Malawi, South Africa and Tunisia). Furthermore, it builds on achievements made in the pilot phase and aims to train plant health officers, who upon their return to their countries will train their peers in the NPPOs and other government stakeholders on the use of the APP suite of digital tools. Africa loses billions of dollars in crop damages each year from pests, which impacts food security and economic growth.

Some of the priority pests and crops targeted by the APP include the oriental fruit fly, Fall armyworm, cashew wood bore, cashew wood saw and mealybugs. Mangos, rice, cashew nuts, maize, papaya and tomatoes are some of the targeted crops. Phytosanitary officers also gained cutting-edge digital tools to detect and stop plant pests and diseases early. Tablets were distributed as part of the second phase of the APP to enhance pest surveillance and agricultural resilience. These tablets are equipped with geospatial applications for pest surveillance, detection, analysis and reporting, enabling evidence-based decision making for pest prevention. The tablets, along with specialised software, will help NPPOs to conduct active surveillance, detect pests and report findings.

Delivering remarks on behalf of Agriculture Minister John Steenhuisen, Jan-Hendrik Venter, Director: Plant Health at the Department of Agriculture, emphasised Africa's potential to become a global leader in high-quality plant products trade. "Africa stands at a turning point. With immense biodiversity, rising agricultural productivity, and growing opportunities under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), we are well-positioned to become a global leader in the trade of high-quality plant products," he said. In closing the workshop, he thanked all the participants and organisers of the APP working together with the NPPO and FAO.

Mr Sam Garmanyou from Liberia said they have learnt a lot from the APP and South Africa as the host of the programme. "We have learnt a lot about everything from APP, field visits to farms and the Agriculture Research Council (ARC). We also learnt about mat blocks, Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV) and how to place traps for pests. The only challenge we had was the use of the tablets in the field," he said.



Delegates who attended the Africa Phytosanitary Programme at White River in Mpumalanga.

PHYTOSANITARY SPECIALISTS APPLY ADVANCED PEST SURVEILLANCE KNOWLEDGE ON FIELD VISITS



Delegates at Gambi Banana Farm learning about identifying symptoms of Banana Bunchy Top Virus and other diseases that affect banana plants.



Dr Maanda Rambauli with protective clothing sanitising his shoes before entering the Gambi banana farm in Mbombela.

Armed with knowledge and state-of-the-art tablets for geospatial pest surveillance, over 50 phytosanitary specialists went on field visits to conduct field survey protocols and undertake practical sessions using the pest survey tools on pest surveillance. The phytosanitary specialists attended the Train-the-Trainer Workshop and the launch of the second phase of the Africa Phytosanitary Programme (APP) from 23 to 27 June in Mbombela, Mpumalanga.

Specialists from South Africa, Algeria, Cabo Verde, Chad, Congo, Liberia, Malawi and Tunisia visited the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) Institute for Tropical and Subtropical fruits

Rony Moremi

in Mbombela, Mpumalanga, where they learned about different types of exotic fruit flies (*Bactrocera dorsalis*), how to set traps, sample collection and record data using the biosecurity app. They also visited the Banana GIBA Farm in Mbombela for a demonstration on how to look for symptoms of Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV) and Fusarium TR4, a disease which is not present in South Africa which also affects banana plants. Sampling of aphids and scouting and management of BBTV was conducted.

“Well-trained, well-equipped plant health officials across the continent are our best line of defence in maintaining pest-free or low-prevalence status, an essential condition for accessing these lucrative markets,” read Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen’s opening address delivered by Jan-Hendrik Venter (Director: Plant Health at the Department of Agriculture) on his behalf. The minister was acknowledging the importance of Train-the-Trainer Workshops in strengthening plant health systems and plant biosecurity.

The practical session on setting traps for fruit flies on mango trees at the ARC and data collection using the tablets, as well as the visit to Gimba Banana Farm to learn about the symptoms of Fusarium TR4, were some of the highlights of the field visits. “We had an exciting field visit to introduce delegates attending the APP training course to different pests of phytosanitary concern. The training was a very successful and engaging session. It is extremely valuable for delegates to receive hands-on training in the field to be able to accurately identify Fusarium wilt symptoms,

Cont from pg18.

which can easily be confused with other biotic and abiotic constraints,” commented Dr Diane Mostert from Stellenbosch University Department of Plant Pathology.

She added that the Africa Phytosanitary Programme was a good step towards digitalising surveillance for biosecurity threats on the African continent. “Ultimately, it holds great potential to improve the speed and efficiency of national surveillance programmes to better respond to devastating transboundary pests that threaten African countries,” added Dr Mostert.

Commenting on the field visit and the importance of training not only phytosanitary specialists but also farmers, Jeremiah Matthew Swanteh, Assistant Director: National Plant and Animal Quarantine Services at the Ministry of Agriculture in Liberia said his country has an ongoing surveillance system which allows farmers to communicate directly to quarantine inspectors. “Farmers have been trained over time that whenever they see strange outbreaks or a pest on their farms, they should be able to report to quarantine inspectors,” explained Jeremiah.

Data from the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI) shows that plant pests destroy about 40% of crop yields worldwide, resulting in approximately US\$220 billion in economic losses. The Train-the-Trainer Workshop is a step in the right direction to ensure phytosanitary specialists that were trained can pass their knowledge to other phytosanitary specialists in their respective countries. This will help to strengthen plant health systems and biosecurity as well as building national phytosanitary capacity across Africa.

This second phase of the Africa Phytosanitary Programme Train-the-Trainer Workshop was launched by the Department of Agriculture in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).



Dr Diane Mostert demonstrating how to take samples from a banana tree to identify *Fusarium TR4* symptoms.



Memory Sigasa from ARC Subtropical and Tropical Institute demonstrating how to identify different fruit flies under the microscope.