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FROM THE MINISTER'S DESK

increase, and truly needs to be applauded. The maize harvest for the 2024/25 season also surpassed all expectation with the 16,44 million tons harvested that is the second largest. With good weather expected going into 2026, and greater demand for our products in both new and existing markets, we have a lot to look forward to.

Now, join me as I take you through some of the key efforts of the past year that are not just changing how agriculture is managed, but how it is perceived—as an essential, innovative and secure cornerstone of our nation's future.

Regulation should never stifle innovation. Our goal in 2025 was to modernise the rules that govern agriculture so that farmers and agribusinesses can adopt new technologies and respond more quickly to global shifts. One of the most meaningful steps in this direction was the revocation of Leaf Services as an assignee under the Agricultural Product Standards Act. This decision prevented unnecessary cost increases in the grain and bread value chains and was welcomed by industry and consumers alike. We also approved the inclusion of indigenous crops and medicinal plants under the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act, which formally recognises a R12 billion sector and opens new opportunities for small scale farmers and traditional communities. This decision gives indigenous crops the policy status they deserve and aligns with our values of sustainability, heritage, biodiversity and economic inclusion.

To bring regulatory systems in line with modern practice, we moved the entire pesticide registration process into a digital platform that will be fully implemented by April 2026. Once complete, it will eliminate paper backlogs and speed up approvals for new technologies that our farmers urgently need. We also published new draft export regulations to strengthen standards and improve our competitiveness in global markets.

We also intensified efforts to tackle stock theft and rural



As 2025 draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on a year defined by significant strides in modernising South African agriculture and laying strong foundations for future growth. My tenure has been guided by a simple, yet powerful philosophy: that the prosperity of our agricultural sector depends as much on partnerships and innovative policy as it does on the hard work of our farmers and farmworkers.

The latest Statistics SA data is testament that our farmers and farmworkers are resilient and true “vasbyters” as the world has come to know them.

Data from Statistics SA showed that in the third quarter of 2025, South Africa's agriculture grew 1,1% in gross value, following a 2,5% growth in the second quarter. This is the fourth consecutive

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crime, working closely with SAPS and traditional leadership to improve rural safety. Through a partnership with Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS), we advanced work on a national livestock traceability platform that will strengthen disease control and help tackle stock theft, which has become one of the most severe threats to our country's food security, economic stability, and the sustainability of farming communities. It is among the most frequently reported property crimes, with losses exceeding R1,3 billion in 2023. The impact is devastating, particularly for smallholder and commercial farmers, many of whom are already under pressure from rising input costs, unpredictable climate conditions, and markets. I will continue coordinating with fellow ministers, such as the Minister of Home Affairs, as the porous 486 km border with Lesotho remains a primary route for well-orchestrated stock theft operations. Through this work, we are building the foundations for secure rural communities where farmers can focus on production rather than protection.

Agriculture's future depends not only on what happens within the sector but also on the policy decisions made across Government. Throughout 2025, I engaged with key ministries on ports, rail, rural infrastructure, water licensing, municipal services, trade agreements and customs issues; this included writing to the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), Parks Tau, to propose an automated wheat tariff mechanism, as the current manual system causes extensive delays between tariff triggers and their publication. These delays distort the wheat market, create uncertainty for producers and traders, and allow subsidised imports to flood our market. I have also been championing the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Task Team between the Department of Agriculture, DTIC, and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO). A stronger alignment between these three ministries will allow us to unlock new economic opportunities, accelerate export growth, and position South African agriculture as a key global player. These intra-governmental areas often determine whether a farmer can plant, harvest, transport, or export profitably.

In 2026 our focus will remain one where we create an environment where every farmer – from small scale farmers that grow indigenous crops to the large-scale farmers that produces grain for export – can operate securely and contribute meaningfully to our economy and food security.

I will continue to keep you updated on the key developments in 2026. Until then, I wish you a prosperous and productive season.



AFASA President, Jabulani Mthembu, Minister John Steenhuisen, and Director-General of the Department of Agriculture Mooketsa Ramasodi at the AFASA Conference



Minister John Steenhuisen opened a solar power plant at Mooigezicht Estates in De Doorns, Western Cape.



Honey products produced by beekeepers in Western Cape.



STEENHUISEN PLEDGES TO GROW BEE INDUSTRY – NO BEES, NO FOOD; NO POLLINATION, NO PROSPERITY



The minister also witnessed and experienced how beekeepers work through a live beehive demonstration.

Samuel Kgatla

The Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen, has promised to protect and nurture beekeepers and grow South Africa's honey industry into a model of sustainability and pride. He announced this during the stakeholder engagement with the bee industry at Oude Raapkraal, West Lake in Cape Town, Western Cape, on 10 November 2025. The minister's intention is to promote and support the sector and to unlock opportunities to enhance coordination and alignment between Government and the industry. The purpose was to educate the public on the vital role of bees in pollination, food security and nutrition. South Africa's formal beekeeping industry is relatively small, with fewer than 2 000 registered beekeepers. Beekeeping (apiculture) in South Africa relies on two indigenous bee subspecies, namely, the Cape Honeybee (*Apis mellifera capensis*) and the African Honeybee (*Apis mellifera scutellata*).

The Department of Agriculture (DoA) has put the beekeeping industry high on the agenda of national food security. The engagement focused on strengthening partnerships, creating

new opportunities, and supporting small-scale beekeepers to build a thriving and sustainable sector. It reaffirmed DoA's commitment to empower beekeepers and expand opportunities in the honey value chain. The industry contributes to food security and rural job creation. Some of the challenges faced by the beekeepers include land, funding, training, access to markets, lack of knowledge about pesticides and extreme weather conditions such as droughts, floods and veld fires. The bee industry is pleading for more land, primarily due to a severe shortage of bee forage (food sources) caused by changes in land use, urban expansion and intensive monoculture (single crop) farming.

Minister Steenhuisen highlighted the importance of beekeeping in diversifying agricultural production, promoting food security, and generating income for rural and peri-urban communities. He emphasised that supporting small-scale beekeepers is key to creating a resilient and inclusive agricultural economy. "We gathered here to celebrate the honeybee because of its enormous impact on our agriculture, our economy and our future.



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For our smallholder farmers, pollination shortfalls translate into lower incomes and greater vulnerability. The concept is simple: no bees, no food; no pollination, no prosperity. Let us continue supporting the bee industry to ensure food security,” he said.

The minister also witnessed and experienced how beekeepers work through a live beehive demonstration. The South African Bee Industry Organisation (SABIO) chairperson, Ms Tumi Mobu, emphasised the need for training, investment and stronger public-private partnerships. Furthermore, she said the beekeeping industry is one of the agricultural sectors where one can make a profit without owning a lot of machinery. “People can start with a few beehives and make money in the sector. The industry needs a hardworking person who can work smarter. We are relying on women and youth to grow the sector. Let us make the industry succeed,” she said.

SABIO is responsible for the coordination and management of beekeeping at a local, regional and national level.

Mr Achmat Kazie, one of the beekeepers from Somerset West who attended the engagement session, was excited to engage with the minister. He started farming with five beehives in his backyard in 2021 and currently has 35 beehives. “The minister must help us to grow the sector, and the bee industry needs passion and love for the bees. I have won many awards because of bees and have now opened a store in Cape Town. I sell my bee products there and things keep on improving for me and my family,” he said. What started out as a hobby is now a fully-fledged business for Kazie.



Mr Achmat Kazie is one of the beekeepers from Somerset West.



Minister John Steenhuisen looking at honey from one of the beekeepers in Cape Town.



LIVESTOCK TRACEABILITY DATA TO PROMOTE A MORE SUSTAINABLE FARMING SYSTEM

“Many previous measures overlooked the complexities faced by rural farming communities. This new initiative adopts a comprehensive approach, enabling feedlots, commercial farmers and small-scale farmers to engage with confidence,”

Mercia Smith

The Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS) officially rolled out Phase 2 of the RMIS Traceability Platform on 4 November 2025 in Pretoria. This platform will bring South Africa’s red meat industry closer to full livestock traceability, which will improve disease response and support market access.

Speaking at the launch of the platform, Mr John Steenhuisen, Minister of Agriculture, announced his support for the RMIS Traceability Platform. He highlighted the platform’s crucial role in shaping the future of South Africa’s red meat sector, ensuring it includes small-scale farmers. “Many previous measures overlooked the complexities faced by rural farming communities. This new initiative adopts a comprehensive approach, enabling feedlots, commercial farmers and small-scale farmers to engage with confidence,” he said.

It will empower South Africa to enter international markets confidently. Steenhuisen reassured RMIS that the government is a strong ally, committed to collaborating with farmers and the industry to create more growth opportunities. He acknowledged that past strategies have failed and emphasised the need for a new approach to combat Foot and mouth disease (FMD) successfully. The track and trace system will enable the government to manage disease outbreaks far more effectively than in the past.

To encourage inclusivity, RMIS also introduced the RMIS Movement App, a free, user-friendly tool developed for producers who are not yet using digital livestock management systems. The app will be available for Android users via the Google Play Store by the end of the year. Dr Phillip Oosthuizen, Chief Operating Officer at RMIS, explained that the app focuses solely on movement recording, not production data.

Built into the platform are features developed during the recent Foot and mouth disease (FMD) outbreaks. It includes:

- A public FMD Case Map showing confirmed FMD cases (rmis.co.za/disease-incidents).
- Automatic WhatsApp alerts for registered users within a 10 km radius of a reported outbreak.

By uniting producers, auction houses, feedlots and abattoirs, veterinarians and value-chain partners, RMIS is delivering more than technology; they are delivering a lasting promise of transparency, trust and growth.

A list of integrated livestock management systems is available on the RMIS website at <https://rmis.co.za/services/traceability/>.



Mr John Steenhuisen, Minister of Agriculture at the RMIS showcase of Phase 2 of its Traceability Platform.



FUTURE-PROOFING THE HERD



Climate change affects livestock production.

Mercia Smith

“Climate change affects livestock production by impacting growth rates, reproductive performance and feed supply,” said Dr Michiel Scholtz from the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) Animal Production Institute. He gave a presentation on ruminant breeding strategies to adapt to climate change at the Provincial Dialogue on Climate-Smart Agriculture.

Dr Scholtz emphasised the effective use of indigenous breeds, crossbreeding and adapted breeds that are resilient to climate variations. Indigenous breeds are adapted to local conditions and can survive in harsh environments. Some indigenous breeds are known for producing juicy and tender meat, with research showing their quality is often comparable or superior to exotic or European and British breeds.

Indigenous livestock breeds have evolved through natural selection over millennia, enabling them to thrive in challenging climates and with minimal resources. They often have natural resistances to local parasites and diseases, such as the Nguni cattle's resistance to ticks and tick-borne diseases. These breeds are typically hardy and can thrive on low-quality forage, making them suitable for extensive farming systems where the land is not suitable for more demanding breeds.

There are various physiological and morphological changes that can help cattle regulate their body temperature more effectively, especially in hot environments:

- **Limiting body size:** A smaller body size can lead to a higher surface area-to-volume ratio, allowing for more effective heat dissipation, which is beneficial in hot climates.
- **Change of hair colour:** Lighter colours reflect more sunlight, reducing heat absorption, helping the animal stay cooler under direct sunlight.
- **Skin pigmentation:** Darker skin pigmentation may seem counterintuitive, but darker pigments can sometimes protect against solar radiation and help in protecting the underlying tissues while still allowing efficient heat dissipation.
- **Enlargement of ears and navel sheath:** Larger ears and navel sheath can increase heat loss through convection and radiation.
- **Longer limbs:** Longer limbs can contribute to a greater surface area and therefore more efficient heat loss.

“All these adaptations are part of a broader strategy for surviving and thriving in hot environments, particularly in regions where heat stress is a significant concern,” Dr Scholtz said. The challenge is to convince breeders to select smaller animals with longer legs, as most breeders select heavier and stockier animals.



SOUTH AFRICA LAUNCHES WORLD FOOD FORUM NATIONAL YOUTH CHAPTER



Delegates who attended the launch of World Food Forum National Youth Chapter for South Africa.

Samuel Kgatla

Young people now have a platform to initiate and sustain solutions in their communities, influence policymaking, and transform local agrifood systems in the country.

This was evident at the launch of the World Food Forum (WFF) National Youth Chapter for South Africa from 4 to 5 November 2025 at Garden Court, OR Tambo in Kempton Park. The event highlighted South Africa's commitment to mobilising young people as leaders in shaping inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems. The launch, organised by the Department of Agriculture (DoA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), was held under the theme: "Amplifying the voices of youth for meaningful participation and prosperity in the agrifood systems".

The WFF National Youth Chapter is a national youth platform aligned to the principles and mission of the WFF convened by a local network of partners or organisations. A WFF National Youth Chapter undertakes activities and projects in line with the WFF's mission, tracking and mobilising youth-led local action to help achieve more sustainable agrifood systems in their respective communities, cities and countries. These platforms are guided by the WFF National Chapters Blueprint with the support of the FAO Country Office and relevant government departments. They empower youth to create context-specific solutions, participate in governance structures, and advocate for policies that address their unique needs, ensuring more inclusive and sustainable food systems.

Following the global vision of the WFF, South Africa is one of the 27 African countries to launch a WFF National Youth Chapter, which is a youth-led movement established by the FAO to engage young people in transforming agrifood systems through advocacy, education and innovation. Currently, there are 62 established WFF National Youth Chapters internationally. Africa has 27, Asia 14, Europe 11 and North and South America with

10 combined. The launch resulted in nine young people being elected to serve on the South African National Youth Chapter committee. Their ideas are going to influence policy, strengthen food security, and transform South Africa's agrifood systems.

In her keynote address, Ms Lebo Botsheleng, Acting Deputy Director-General for Food Security and Agrarian Reform from DoA, commended South Africa's youth for grabbing the initiative with both hands. "We are very grateful for launching the WFF National Youth Chapter and it is a journey that started as early as 2023 when the department conceptualised a youth empowerment strategy. We worked with the FAO to produce the terms of reference for the establishment of the South African National Youth Chapter. This also interfaces well with South Africa's G20 Presidency for agricultural meetings. We have consulted with all the agricultural unions before the launch," she said.

Botsheleng welcomed the new leadership and promised that both the DoA and FAO will organise the orientation for the elected leadership.

Mr Javier García Bravo, Head of Youth Assembly for the WFF said young leaders have come together in South Africa to endorse terms of reference and the action plan for the National Youth Chapter and to elect the leadership.

Mr Thabo Makoa, chairperson of the WFF National Youth Chapter said he was delighted to be elected as the leader of the chapter. "Our aspirations are to see a meaningful impact in the agricultural sector of South Africa with global practices, standards and quality assurance. As the new committee, we want to elevate issues of food insecurity and defeat poverty and come with sustainable development programmes for us to realise the future of agriculture," he said. Makoa is a passionate egg producer from Coligny in North West.



GLOBAL EXPERTS MEET TO REDUCE FOOD LOSS AND WASTE



Some of the participants who attended the Workshop on Food Loss and Waste in Pretoria.



Global experts met at University of Pretoria for the Regional Workshop on Food Loss and Waste.

Samuel Kgatla

Global experts convened at Future Africa, University of Pretoria from 27 to 29 October 2025 to strengthen collaboration and develop strategies to prevent food loss and waste. The 9th Regional Workshop on Food Loss and Waste was supported by the Department of Agriculture (DoA), AgriDENZ, Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). AgriDENZ is the Bilateral Alliance for the Climate between the German Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity (BMLEH) and the New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries.

This workshop, coordinated by the Thünen Institute, serves as a collaborative platform for researchers, policymakers and development partners to prioritise solutions for food waste and loss—this emerged from a recommendation of the G20 Meeting of Agricultural Chief Scientists (MACS-G20). It also contributes to the achievement of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal 12.3, which aims to halve food waste at retail, food service and household levels, as well as reduce food loss across the supply chain.

Ms Kwena Komape, Deputy Director-General: Economic Development, Trade and Marketing welcomed and praised the delegates for responding to a call to find ways on how to reduce food loss and waste in Sub-Saharan Africa. Komape highlighted that wasted food is a representation of wasted land, water and other resources. “The meeting is all about creating awareness about food loss and waste. Experts have gathered to come up with strategies on how to reduce food loss and waste,” she said.

The findings of the CSIR study show that, per annum, an estimated 10,3 million tons of edible food earmarked for human consumption in South Africa does not reach the human stomach. This is equivalent to 34% of local food production, but because South Africa is a net exporter of food, the losses and waste is equivalent to 45% of the available food supply in the country. These results point to elevated levels of inefficiency in the South African food value chain—at a time when there is increasing food insecurity in South Africa.

The CSIR has released the Food Waste Prevention and Management Guideline for South Africa to raise awareness on food wastage throughout the supply chain, but specifically at consumer level in order to address food wastage before it reaches the same levels as in the developed world.



Delegates attending the Workshop on Food Loss and Waste.



RECORD TEMPERATURES ARE BECOMING THE NEW NORMAL



Photo by: Freepik

The future forecast for climate change in South Africa is that temperatures are to increase drastically under low mitigation scenarios.

Mercia Smith

“Over the past two years, Foot and mouth disease (FMD) has disrupted South Africa’s markets and has shaken the very foundation of the red meat market,” Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi, Director-General of the Department of Agriculture, said. He was speaking at the Congress of the National Red Meat Producers’ Organisation held in Pretoria.

This is why the Department of Agriculture has adopted a whole-chain biosecurity approach and launched the National Biosecurity Hub located at the University of Pretoria in partnership with the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation and the Industry.

Mr Ramasodi said, “Biosecurity is not an isolated issue. It must be embedded across the entire value chain—from farms, to pre-slaughter monitoring, to post-mortem data collection and analysis so that the government, as the regulator, is informed by evidence when promulgating policies aimed at propelling the growth.” “Everything we do, from farming systems, to meat processing protocols in abattoirs, to our traceability systems and trade must be underpinned by the “One Health” concept as an

inter-dependable compact between the farmer, the producer, the consumer, the regulator, the citizen and the nation,” added Mr Ramasodi.

The department is also improving a close working relationship with the Provincial Veterinary Services to ensure that industry standards are not merely set but enforced. The hub will also intensify regional bio-security integration and capacity building since animal diseases do not respect border demarcations. Assisting provinces to build their own bio-security systems is an investment in protecting the red meat industry.

One disease outbreak can trigger a devastating market suspension. Over the past two years, FMD has caused South Africa to lose a revenue generation capability estimated at over R3 billion in direct production and downstream industries. “But behind this statement and statistics are real people, such as farmers who are forced to cull herds and families struggling to survive to put food on their tables,” Mr Ramasodi concluded.



DROUGHT, FLOODS AND FARMING: HOW AGRICULTURE CAN SURVIVE THE CLIMATE CRISIS



Farmers from Morokweng in Vryburg attended the Climate Smart Agriculture Dialogue.



Mr Modisa Sefofu, Mr Motiang Zebulon and Mr Lazarus Senne. They are livestock farmers from Moretele in North West.



More than 200 people attended the two-day Provincial Dialogue on Climate Smart Agriculture.

Mercia Smith

The Provincial Dialogue on Climate Smart Agriculture was held on 30 and 31 October at Kwa Maritane Bush Lodge in North West. In his keynote address, Mr Madoda Sambatha, Head of the North West Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, said that no corner of the world is immune to the devastating consequences of climate change.

Global temperatures have reached their highest levels on record, and notably, the ten warmest years documented since 1880 have all occurred since 2014. According to the World Meteorological Organization, in 2024 alone, Earth experienced unprecedented heat, exceeding the 1,5 °C climate threshold for the first time.

Observable impacts are already occurring globally such as rising temperatures, melting ice, rising sea-levels, heat waves, wildfires and storms, causing mass destruction. Mr Sambatha stated that, while disasters related to climate and weather extremes have always been a part of Earth's natural systems, they are increasing in frequency and intensity as global temperatures rise. Heatwaves, droughts, typhoons and hurricanes are causing severe damage around the world, and 90% of disasters are now classed as weather- and climate-related.

Dr Ikalafeng Kgakatsi, Director: Climate Change and Disaster Management at the Department of Agriculture, gave a policy perspective on climate change. He said that after the 2011 National Climate Change Response White Paper, South Africa has developed significant lower-level policies and legislation to

drive climate action across all spheres of government. These include legally binding frameworks, provincial strategies and municipal-level planning initiatives.

The Climate Change Act, 2024 (Act No. 22 of 2024) is a landmark law which strengthens South Africa's climate governance by creating a legal framework for mitigation and adaptation. It mandates the government to set sectoral emission targets and allocates carbon budgets to large emitters, with penalties in the form of higher carbon taxes for exceeding budgets. This Act requires the minister to develop and publish National Adaptation Objectives and an updated National Adaptation Strategy to guide and coordinate adaptation planning.

The National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS) (2020) provides a common vision for building resilience and adaptive capacity across all levels of government and sectors.

The Carbon Tax Act, 2019 (Act No 15 of 2019) implements a "polluter-pays" principle by taxing greenhouse gas emissions to discourage carbon-intensive activities and drive investments toward cleaner technologies.

The Climate Change Act and the NCCAS (2020) have mandated and enabled provincial and local governments to integrate climate action into their own planning and policies



CATCH THE DROPS, SAVE THE FUTURE



A tower garden can be placed at any location and can be watered with greywater.



Infield rainwater harvesting is catching overland flow from short catchment lengths within the field.

Mercia Smith

Underground storage tanks

Surface water runoff can be channelled into underground storage tanks and used for irrigation. These can include earthen reservoirs lined with plastic or clay for a low-cost solution.

Infield rainwater harvesting

"This practice involves furrowing a 2 metre wide strip between alternate crop rows," Ms Moodley explained. It creates a temporary storage of surface runoff, and after the basins have been constructed, no-till farming is practiced. Water collected in the basins infiltrates deep into the soil beyond the surface evaporation zone. This will allow farmers to grow crops in semi-arid areas with low and erratic rainfall.

Greywater harvesting

Greywater can be defined as household wastewater from bathing, washbasins, washing machines and kitchen sinks. Ms Moodley emphasised that it does not include wastewater from sewerage. Using greywater in the garden is an ideal way to keep plants alive without relying on precious drinking water.

Tower garden

A tower garden is an effective, low-cost method for treating and reusing greywater for gardening and food production. The soil mix within the tower naturally filters the water, while the plants utilise the nutrients in the greywater. The tower garden technique is practiced in South Africa and other African countries, such as Mozambique, Kenya and Zimbabwe.

Many subsistence farmers depend on freshwater sources for irrigation. Climate change is contributing to water scarcity in several regions, making it more difficult to grow crops. "To offset the pressure on water resources, we need alternative water sources for smallholder production to enhance household food security," Ms Savanna Moodley from the Directorate: Water Use and Irrigation Development said. She gave a presentation at a two-day Provincial Dialogue on Climate Smart Agriculture which was held at Kwa Maritane Bush Lodge in North West.

Innovative climate-smart agriculture water technologies, such as rooftop rainwater harvesting, infield rainwater harvesting and tower gardens, have the potential to improve rural water supply.

Rooftop rainwater harvesting

With rooftop rainwater harvesting, the roof surface acts as a catchment area, and water is channelled to the storage tanks through gutters for later use. Roughly speaking, 1 millimetre of rain over 1 square metre of roof equals 1 litre of water. A family drip system can be connected to the storage tank and used to irrigate crops. The family drip system is a gravity-based drip irrigation system.



CITRUS BUZZ IN TZANEEN: CITRUS STAKEHOLDERS GEAR UP FOR A FRUITFUL EXPORT SEASON



Citrus industry stakeholders gather in Tzaneen for the 2025-2026 Annual Citrus Information Session.



From orchard to export: South African citrus stakeholders collaborate to ensure fruit meets international standards.

Matsepo Malatswane

There is a zesty energy in the air in Tzaneen as citrus growers, packhouse owners, exporters, and freight forwarding agents gather for one of the Department of Agriculture's annual citrus information sessions set to take place across South Africa. With Limpopo's rolling orchards as the backdrop, the Tzaneen event marks the official countdown to the 2025/2026 citrus export season.

Citrus stakeholders across the country are gearing up for these information sessions, which provide a vital platform for those exporting citrus to destinations, including China, the European Union (EU), Philippines, Vietnam, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Middle East, USA, and other African countries. Attendees receive comprehensive updates on phytosanitary requirements, inspection procedures, market-specific protocols, and quality assurance standards. These sessions also serve as a forum to discuss challenges from the previous season, such as late orchard or PUC registrations, non-verifiable data, and other operational issues that could affect export readiness.

Representatives from the Directorates of Plant Health, Inspection Services, and Food Safety and Quality Assurance, alongside the Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB), shared the latest on everything from market access and phytosanitary updates to emerging trends in citrus exports.

The sessions are scheduled to take place in key citrus-producing regions, starting with Tzaneen, Limpopo, followed by other locations country-wide, ensuring that all stakeholders have access to crucial information. Attendees are encouraged to actively participate in discussions, share experiences, and clarify queries to guarantee smooth compliance across all export markets.

This year's sessions are focused on strengthening South Africa's export footprint across key destinations such as China,

the EU, the Philippines, Vietnam, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and beyond. South African citrus is truly travelling the world one juicy shipment at a time.

There are also plenty of discussions around lessons learned from the 2025 season and opportunities ahead for 2026. Between the presentations, networking, and shared passion for citrus, it is clear that South Africa's growers are ready to make this season even sweeter.

Not all citrus destinations are created equal. Some international markets come with special requirements such as extra-care protocols designed to protect crops and ensure pest-free exports. These "special markets" include countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam and the USA, which require strict pest risk mitigation measures and follow detailed procedures outlined in bilaterally agreed work plans, directives, or import permits.

In simple terms, these are our VIP markets: every crate of fruit must meet top-tier health, safety and logistics standards before it can take flight. From orchard to export points, the process is carefully managed to guarantee compliance and maintain South Africa's golden reputation for safe, high-quality citrus worldwide.

Through active participation, stakeholders gain pivotal knowledge to plan human resources, streamline inspection processes, and navigate market-specific requirements. With lessons learned from the 2025 season and the guidance shared during these sessions, the 2025/2026 export season is set to be both efficient and fruitful. By keeping data accurate, following deadlines, and complying with international protocols, South African citrus is ready to shine even brighter on the global stage.

Here is to another successful year of sunny orchards, quality fruit, and proud moments as our citrus continues to leave its mark worldwide.



DEPUTY MINISTER EXPLORES RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INTERVENTIONS IN AGRICULTURE

Innocent Mhlanga

The empowerment of women is making strides and gaining momentum in the agricultural sector in South Africa. Out of nine provinces constituting the Republic of South Africa, there are seven women members of executive councils (MECs) for agriculture and a female national deputy minister. Together they wield enormous influence, which is expected to trickle down into empowerment and upliftment of marginalised women, especially in the rural areas. The above women collective, which include heads of departments in some provinces, still have hurdles and systematic barriers to grapple with to empower the rural women and youth.

Rural women in South Africa struggle with issues, including economic marginalisation, gender-based violence and limited access to land resources, which are compounded by patriarchal norms and poor implementation of laws.

These challenges are interconnected, as a lack of land ownership restricts access to finance and economic opportunities, while traditions and lack of infrastructure like childcare facilities perpetuate their economic disadvantages and vulnerability.

It is against this background that the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Ms Rosemary Nokuzola Capa, supported this national agenda, by hosting the Women's Outreach Programme. The outreach programme was hosted in the Ingquza Hill Local Municipality, in the OR Tambo District Municipality, Eastern Cape.

The main objective of the outreach was to highlight the role of women in agriculture and rural economies by promoting government support programmes that target women in the agricultural sector.

In her address, Deputy Minister Capa indicated that it was time to put women, young women and people with disabilities first. "We need to provide them with all the necessary support to thrive in their endeavors. I am pleased with what I have witnessed outside this hall today—the exhibitions are so beautiful, therefore, I also invited my friends from other countries to be part of this event so that they can invest their resources in this province and help us grow the economy, not only for this province, but the entire country," she added.

Women are reported to be the backbone of the development of rural and national economies and are the pillars of Africa's food security and South Africa's economic growth. Although their contributions in terms of magnitude and nature remain difficult to assess owing to variations in different areas, they make significant contributions to food security and economic development in the country.

"These types of events are designed to honour the invaluable work of women farmers, showcase their achievements,

provide networking opportunities and advocate for policies that support their achievements," Mrs Matsunke Malefane from the Directorate: Sector Transformation said.

Stakeholders such as the Land Bank, Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and the National Youth Development Agency, were also in attendance to share information with the women farmers and empower them with knowledge that may propel them to further achievements and contribute to the economy of this country. This knowledge can also assist them to sustain their farms and support their families, especially since the district is one of the poorest in the province, with the highest level of unemployment.



Deputy Minister Capa addressing women at the outreach event in Eastern Cape.



Women farmers showcasing produce from their farms and gardens

