



MINISTER
AGRICULTURE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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MEDIA STATEMENT

20 MAY 2026

MINISTER STEENHUISEN WELCOMES LOWER FOOD PRICE INFLATION BUT WARNS OF INPUT COST PRESSURES ON FARMERS

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, has welcomed the drop in food inflation to a 14-month low but warns that record-high fuel prices are threatening the agricultural sector.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) data released by Statistics South Africa today show a decline in annual food and non-alcoholic beverages (NAB) inflation to 2,9% in April 2026, down from 3,6% in March. This is the lowest food inflation rate in 14 months and the third consecutive month of decline, providing relief to South African households.

However, the minister notes that while consumers see relief at the grocery till, the farming community is absorbing a significant financial shock. “Lower food prices today cannot hide the heavy operational burdens our producers face due to escalating energy costs. We need to find ways to ease input costs for farmers,” Minister Steenhuisen said.

The decline in food inflation occurs alongside a major inflation surge in the energy sector. In April, the national fuel index rose by 18,2% from March, representing the steepest single-month increase recorded since the current CPI series began in 2008.

Petrol prices rose by 15,2%, increasing inland 93-octane petrol from R20,19 to R23,25 per litre. Diesel prices increased by 35,4%, rising from R21,28 to R28,80 per litre.

Fuel, primarily diesel, is a crucial input for South African farmers, typically accounting for 11% to 18% of total production and logistics costs. With farmers being price-takers, they struggle to pass these high energy costs onto consumers, putting pressure on profit margins across grain, fruit and livestock sectors.

It needs to be noted that the global oil markets might remain volatile for some time, caused by ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. If these tensions trigger further fuel price increases later in the year, production and logistical costs will rise. This creates



an uncertain outlook where domestic progress on food inflation could be reversed by global shocks.

Despite energy pressures, specific agricultural interventions and market cycles reduced key food prices in April.

Meat inflation slowed from 11,6% in March to 9,4% in April, driven by the ongoing slaughter of cattle connected to national Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) management strategies. Beef mince inflation slowed from 22,2% to 15,3%, and stewing beef decreased from 22,6% to 8,7%.

The grains and cereal category recorded its third consecutive month of deflation. Maize meal, white rice, basmati rice, porridge and bread flour are cheaper than they were a year ago.

Milk, dairy and eggs recorded an annual shift to 0,1% from March's -0,5%, marking their first annual increase since May 2025. Powdered milk (-3,4%) and eggs (-5,8%) remain in deflation.

“The Department of Agriculture remains committed to working with agricultural bodies, logistics networks and state resources to identify mechanisms to ease input costs for farmers. Protecting producers from global energy shocks is necessary for long-term national food security,” Minister Steenhuisen stressed.

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Issued by: The Ministry of Agriculture