MINISTER
AGRICULTURE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE **3 June 2025**

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE WELCOMES EXPORT GROWTH DURING QUARTER 1 OF 2025

The Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen, welcomes the good performance of South Africa's agricultural exports in the first quarter of 2025.
The sector achieved US$3,36 billion in agricultural exports, representing a significant 10% increase year-on-year. This growth was mainly fuelled by higher export volumes, which included grapes, maize, apples, and wine, alongside improved international commodity prices.

Minister Steenhuisen highlighted that this good performance in South Africa's agricultural exports is a testament to the unwavering dedication and courageousness of the country's farmers and the entire value chain. "We can all agree that agriculture plays a vital role in our nation's economic ambitions and contributes significantly to our trade balance," he stated.

In May, the agricultural sector also received good news. Statistics SA Quarterly Labour Force Survey indicated that primary agriculture employment showed a mild recovery of 1% from the previous quarter, reaching 930 000 jobs in Quarter 1 of 2025. This increase was primarily observed in the field crops, game, and hunting subsectors. While acknowledging that annual employment remained down by 1% year-on-year, indicating ongoing recovery from past financial difficulties, Minister Steenhuisen expressed confidence in the sector's trajectory.
"This mild recovery in employment is a welcomed sign, and the Department of Agriculture is committed to implementing interventions to support the subsectors and regions still feeling the effects of previous challenges," he continued.

A Call to Action: Youth in Agriculture

With June being Youth Month, there is a need to emphasise the crucial need for increased youth participation in the agricultural sector to ensure its long-term sustainability and growth.
“The future of our country and that of our agricultural sector hinges on the active involvement of our young people. We need to ignite a passion for farming, agribusiness, and the entire agricultural value chain among our youth,” emphasised Minister Steenhuisen.

To attract and retain young talent requires significant investment and concerted efforts through the entire value chain. This includes:

- providing accessible and tailored financial assistance, to young agripreneurs;
- integrating modern agricultural education into the school curriculum from an early age, coupled with comprehensive vocational training programmes and mentorship or incubation opportunities;
- facilitating equitable access to productive land and ensuring market linkages for young farmers, allowing them to participate meaningfully in value chains and achieve profitable returns;
- promoting the adoption of innovation and technology to make farming more efficient and attractive;
- promoting positive narratives about agriculture as a dynamic, innovative, and rewarding career path, showcasing the diverse opportunities beyond traditional farming, such as market agent opportunities, agricultural technology, logistics, research, and food processing.

"The energy, innovation, and adaptability of our young citizens are precisely what our agricultural sector needs to reach its full potential and ensure lasting food security,” the minister said.
Minister Steenhuisen calls upon all stakeholders, including all spheres of government, private sector, educational institutions and communities to lend their support in creating an enabling environment for the country's youth to flourish in agriculture.
“We are looking forward to having progressive engagements and interventions as a way to commemorate Youth Month so that our young farmers can contribute in growing our economy,” Minister Steenhuisen concluded.

It should be noted that the Department of Agriculture offers bursaries to deserving students in agriculture related fields. Applications for the 2026 academic year are now open.

Application form link: 🔗 https://www.nda.gov.za/images/Vacancies/bursaries/full-time-undergraduate_application-form-2026.pdf

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