

**Address by the Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen at the FNB
Roundtable Discussion, Cape Town 11 September 2025**

**G20 2025: Outcomes to date, and what they mean for South Africa's
agriculture and trade**

Colleagues from Government, finance and industry; partners from the banking sector: thank you for the invitation and for the platform to reflect on the G20 year and what it means for South African agriculture.

This has been a consequential presidency for our country. As we advance our agenda, it is important to place it in its strategic context: we have advanced this agenda as part of the G20 troika: Brazil (past), South Africa (current), and the United States (next), which anchors continuity across presidencies.

What is already on the table

Early in our presidency, we set four anchors for the **Agriculture Working Group**: Inclusive market participation, empowering women and youth, technology and innovation transfer, and climate resilience. Those priorities have guided the sherpa and ministerial processes, the science agenda and the food-security track.

On the science front, the May meeting of **G20 MACS** (Meeting of Agricultural Chief Scientists) in South Africa aligned research cooperation to these priorities. The communiqué advances actionable work on climate-smart innovation, data sharing, and soil-health and water-efficiency programmes, designed to translate science into on-farm resilience. For our producers, that means a clearer pipeline from lab to land: better cultivars, decision-support tools and practical climate-adaptation know-how.

On the **food-security track**, South Africa has positioned hunger and affordability at the centre of the agenda. The **Food Security Task Force** is finalising deliverables and a draft ministerial communiqué built around transparency, early-warning systems and targeted support for vulnerable households, reflecting an African perspective on resilience.

Our approach also builds on the global foundation laid last year. The **2024 G20 Agriculture Ministers Declaration** and the **Rio Leaders' Declaration** underscored that agriculture must simultaneously tackle hunger, climate change and environmental stewardship, while safeguarding open, predictable markets. These principles continue to guide the negotiations this year, because stable, rules-based agricultural trade is itself a food-security instrument.

Why this matters here at home

So what do these outcomes mean for South Africa's farmers, exporters and consumers?

Firstly, market access and trade facilitation. The G20's emphasis on science-based measures, transparency and cooperation on standards is good news for exporters, from fruit and wine to grains and animal products. It supports the work we are doing to reduce technical barriers, modernise certifications and keep supply chains open, especially in a world where logistics and geopolitics can quickly spill into food markets.

Secondly, climate resilience with real tools. The MACS outcomes accelerate practical innovation: water-smart irrigation, drought-tolerant genetics and digitised advisory systems. For a farmer in North West or Karoo, that maps to decisions about cultivar choice, planting windows and risk management, less theory, more usable information.

Thirdly, food affordability and safety nets. The Food Security Task Force prioritises early-warning and targeted support. For South Africa, that dovetails with our efforts to use better data to anticipate shocks, coordinate public-private grain and livestock responses, and protect poor households when prices spike.

Fourthly, inclusion as a growth strategy. Our presidency has kept women, youth and smallholders at the centre, not as a moral add-on, but as a competitiveness issue. Inclusive participation expands the producer base, strengthens rural economies and builds resilience into value chains. That is how we turn policy into throughput, more

hectares under production, more throughput in plants, and more South African products on global shelves.

What government and industry will do next

From now until the Leaders' Summit, my department will focus on translating these outcomes into concrete national actions, working with our partners across Government and industry:

- **Trade readiness.** We will continue aligning our sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) systems and digital certification with international best practice to lock in the market-access gains implied by this G20 agenda. That means faster, clearer pathways for exporters, without compromising biosecurity.
- **Science to farm.** We will tie our research institutions and extension services into the **G20 MACS** workstreams, so that climate-smart research flows faster to producers, particularly small-scale and emerging farmers who need practical tools first.
- **Early-warning and response.** We will strengthen data partnerships that underpin the **Food Security Task Force** emphasis on transparency, so we can detect local stress early, coordinate responses with industry, and protect household food security when volatility strikes.
- **Investment crowd-in.** We will keep using the G20 platform to connect global finance with local opportunities, irrigation modernisation, cold-chain upgrades, storage and logistics that lower costs from farm to port. That is where finance, trade and agriculture meet.

The bottom line for banks and agribusiness

If you are financing farms, building packhouses, shipping fruit, crushing oilseeds or bottling wine, three signals from this G20 year should shape your plans:

1. **Policy tailwinds for open, predictable agri-trade:** South Africa's strategy of "planning for markets" is evident in its drive to diversify exports, such as securing new protocols to send avocados to China, which broadens opportunities for farmers and reduces dependence on the European Union. In

contrast, “planning for walls” through protectionist measures, such as blanket import bans, may provide short-term relief but invites retaliation, raises food prices, and limits export potential. The clear lesson is that South Africa’s agricultural growth and resilience will come from expanding market access, not erecting trade barriers.

2. **A faster lane for climate-smart innovation:** Supporting technologies that cut water use, stabilise yields and improve quality; these will move from pilot to practice quickly.
3. **A premium on inclusion and resilience:** Projects that bring smallholders, women and youth into value chains will find stronger support and better risk profiles.

Looking ahead to Johannesburg

As we move toward the Leaders’ Summit in November, our goal is to land an ambitious, practical package that helps the world feed itself more affordably and sustainably, and helps South Africa grow by trading more, wasting less, and adapting faster. Johannesburg will not be about lofty words. It will be about practical pathways that our farmers, firms and financiers can act on the morning after.

In addition, it must also leave a legacy. For South Africa, that means using this G20 presidency to reinforce a fairer multilateral trading system at the WTO, one that restores predictability, preserves flexibilities for developing countries, and reins in subsidies and measures that distort agricultural trade. Levelling the playing field is not charity; it is about ensuring that our farmers compete on fair terms, that markets remain open, and that agriculture continues to serve as a driver of food security and rural livelihoods across the developing world.

South African agriculture is resilient and outward-looking. Give our producers fair rules, reliable infrastructure, workable finance and clear market signals, and they will do the rest. That is the spirit we are taking into the final stretch of the G20 year.