

BUDGET VOTE SPEECH FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Honourable John Steenhuisen, MP

Minister of Agriculture

8 July 2025

National Council of Provinces, Parliament of the Republic of South Africa

2025/26 Financial Year

**Honourable Chairperson,
Members of the National Council of Provinces,
Honourable delegates from our provinces,
Colleagues and fellow South Africans,**

It is an honour to rise in this House to table the Budget Vote for the Department of Agriculture for the 2025/26 financial year.

While we presented this Vote in the National Assembly earlier today, it is in this council that we speak most directly to the real and urgent needs of our provinces, municipalities and rural communities.

This budget is not only about national priorities, but also about how we support a farmer in Free State navigating drought, a veterinary clinic in Limpopo responding to an outbreak, or a food garden in Eastern Cape feeding a school. It is about delivery at the coalface.

Today, I reaffirm our commitment to an agricultural sector that is inclusive, competitive, climate-resilient and, above all, locally responsive.

1. A SECTOR ROOTED IN PLACE, PEOPLE AND PROVINCES

Chairperson, South Africa's agricultural potential resides in our provinces.

It resides in the citrus orchards of Limpopo and Eastern Cape, in the maize fields of Free State and North West, in the livestock corridors of Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, in the wine and fruit valleys of Western Cape, and in the peri-urban farming belts of Gauteng and Mpumalanga.

However, we also know that agricultural development is not evenly distributed. Infrastructure is decaying in rural municipalities. Extension support is thin. Input costs are high. And many small-scale farmers—particularly women, youth and people with disabilities—still lack secure tenure, access to markets and real support.

This budget is designed to close these gaps.

2. BUDGET STRUCTURE: FOUR PROGRAMMES, ONE MISSION

The department's 2025/26 budget is structured across four core programmes as follows:

- **Administration:** Building a capable, ethical and performance-driven department;
- **Agricultural Production, Biosecurity and Natural Resources Management:** Strengthening plant and animal health, and improving climate resilience;
- **Food Security and Support:** Promoting household food production, nutrition and targeted support; and
- **Economic Development, Trade and Marketing:** Expanding access to local and global markets and supporting inclusive growth.

What matters most is not how we spend, but what we deliver. And that depends on coordination across different spheres of government.

3. INTERGOVERNMENTAL PRIORITIES FOR 2025/26

Let me highlight four crucial priorities that will require full provincial and local partnership:

a. Strengthening biosecurity at district level

Biosecurity is now a national priority—but it must be implemented provincially.

The outbreaks of avian influenza and Foot and mouth disease (FMD) taught us hard lessons. This year, we are:

- deploying 50 animal health technicians to high-risk provinces;
- supporting vaccine roll-out in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Limpopo;
- strengthening provincial labs and border inspection posts;
- enhancing disease surveillance through the National Biosecurity Hub in collaboration with the University of Pretoria.

b. Food security and household resilience

This is not only about production, it is about dignity.

We are working with provinces to scale up school gardens, community food hubs and home food units. Our **2024–2029 National Food and Nutrition Security Plan** is being rolled out jointly with the departments of health, basic education and social development.

We are promoting the cultivation of indigenous crops like amaranth and African leafy vegetables, because food sovereignty is also cultural sovereignty.

c. Reviving farmer support and extension services

We are aligning all 11 agricultural colleges with the national higher education system to turn them into centres of excellence.

Our internship programme has already placed over 3,000 agricultural graduates, including in provincial departments. We also just launched an **Extension Week**, focused on rebuilding technical support at farmgate level.

d. Market access and local infrastructure

Market access is not just a trade issue, it is a rural development issue.

We are finalising a revamped **Market Access Strategy** and expanding blended finance access for smallholders, with dedicated youth and climate-smart financing windows.

Nevertheless, roads, cold storage and local packhouses fall not only within our mandate. We need provinces and municipalities to prioritise agri-logistics in their infrastructure plans. The economic future of rural towns depends on it.

4. GOVERNANCE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

No matter how well we plan, delivery happens where governance is strong.

We are introducing a new **Ministerial Oversight Framework** that will:

- strengthen alignment with the **Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan (AAMP)**;
- institute biannual performance and audit reviews across all entities;

- enforce consequence management and ethical compliance.

Institutions like the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP), National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) and Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB) must deliver on their mandates. This is not optional.

5. CONCLUSION: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Chairperson, agriculture is not managed in Pretoria—it is grown in every province, town and district of our country.

This budget is not perfect, however, it is purposeful. It lays the foundation for real delivery, local partnerships and provincial impact.

As I said in the National Assembly—the future of agriculture will be shaped not only by those who inherit the land, but by those who build new systems: scientists, veterinarians, technicians, smallholders and entrepreneurs.

Let us walk this journey together across provinces, across parties and across generations.

I hereby table the 2025/26 Budget Vote for the Department of Agriculture before this House.

I thank you.