



DEPUTY MINISTER
AGRICULTURE, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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DEPUTY MINISTER'S BUDGET VOTE SPEECH 2026

SPEECH DELIVERED ON OCCASION OF BUDGET VOTE 2026, 15TH MAY 2026, 7TH ADMINISTRATION.

Honourable Speaker,

All Ministers and Deputy Ministers

Chairpersons of Portfolio Committees of the Government of National Unity

Premiers

Local governments executives.

INTRODUCTION

In his State of the Nation Address (SONA), President Cyril Ramaphosa acknowledged the pivotal role agriculture sector plays in the growth of South Africa's economy.

This year, government will introduce regulatory changes that will make it much easier for businesses to participate in the Youth Employment Service programme and create jobs for young people.

Through the Blended Finance Scheme, working with the Land Bank and commercial banks, government has provided R7.8 billion in innovative funding to black producers. The agricultural sector is expanding rapidly.

South Africa is the second largest exporter of citrus fruit in the world, opening new markets for exports from citrus and avocados to maize, livestock, grapes and wine".

Madam Speaker, I'll provide substantive details later in the speech.

Before outlining the 2026 performance plans, allow me to provide brief feedback of the 2025 pledges.

NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

To attract participation of vulnerable groups in agricultural production and food security, enabling support environment and mechanization should be made available. These

groups are often isolated, insecure and defenceless. The enabling environment should have, amongst others, equitable access to resources, access to inputs and markets, training and capacity building as well participation in Agro-Processing operations.

The Department of Agriculture's vision of building a dynamic, inclusive, and sustainable agricultural sector that ensures food security for South Africa can only be fully realized through the active participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities, who remain the backbone of agrifood systems.

Key interventions include the implementation of inclusive policies, targeted land allocation programmes, and access to climate-smart technologies. These measures are essential not only for the eradication of rural poverty, but also for the advancement of national and global food security objectives. In this regard, the Department's introduction of the National Policy for Comprehensive Producer Development Support, together with the Norms and Standards for the Inclusion of Designated Groups (NSDG), which accentuates 50%, 40% and 10% targets for women, youth and persons with disabilities respectively. This is a demonstration of the department's firm commitment to mainstreaming women, youth, and persons with disabilities within the agricultural sector.

Despite the growing demand for support amidst shrinking and, in some instances, repurposed financial resources, significant strides have been made in empowering women, youth and persons with disabilities through key departmental initiatives such as the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP).

EMBRACING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE (IK)

Madam Speaker, successive generations used the practice of indigenous knowledge to greater benefits of better agricultural harvests whilst protecting natural resources. For instance, farmers would dig furrows and place crop residues in them and the residues would break down to form compost and eliminate the need to buy fertilizers. Ancient farmers would also leave field residues such as stalks, leaves and small plants as soil cover for protection of soil and retention of moisture. This traditional practice also protected water sources because vegetation was not cleared.

The maintenance of biodiversity promoted a community of species coexisting in an ecosystem and this would augur well for agriculture to revert to this practice.

Integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems will save farmers money used for purchasing of fertilizers, fodder, machinery for irrigation, etc because of sustainable

management of natural resources. IK provides practical solutions to environmental challenges, conserve biodiversity and lead to economic growth.

To advance and intensify the journey to return to indigenous knowledge systems which promotes agroecological regenerative agriculture, LandCare programme is allocated R98 million to address five focus areas which are: Regenerative Conservation Agriculture, VeldCare, Soil Care, Junior Care and Water Care.

FARMER TRAINING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Farmers require training to equip them with modern farming techniques and knowledge to enhance productivity. They also require capacity building to adopt sustainable practices to reduce environmental impacts, manage agricultural risks, acquire skills to manage farms operations and become resilient to climate change. The goal is to address food security, reduce poverty and ensure economic growth.

In the 2025/26 financial year alone, we placed 56 unemployed graduates at PPECB stations across the country, providing them with hands-on experience to enhance their employability.

We are also investing in sector-specific training. Through funding provided to the Red Meat Abattoir Association, we continue to support training in meat safety and slaughter techniques.

We continue to implement the CASP Graduate Placement Programme.

Since its introduction, over 3 200 graduates have participated in this programme.

In the 2026/27 financial year, the Department intends to train 14 439 farmers, out of which 115 farmer projects will be mentored. In addition, 3 651 youth will benefit from these targets, thus indicating the Department's interest in empowering young people in agriculture. A total of R92.2 million has been budgeted for farmer training and mentorship in the 2026/27 financial year.

In response to high youth unemployment reported by Stats SA, the Department is prioritizing targeted efforts to boost youth participation in agriculture. The Department has hosted, and will continue to host, youth dialogues aimed at promoting opportunities within the agricultural sector and showcasing the support programmes available through the Department. This is essential to replace an ageing workforce, driving technology innovation, and improve the sector's resilience to climate change.

The department, in conjunction with the region and Food Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), successfully launched the World Food Forum South African Youth Chapter.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Agriculture Colleges play a pivotal role in sustaining the agricultural sector by providing education, training and skills to produce future farmers and scientists.

We are encouraged that our efforts in this regard have been recognized internationally, including the awarding of the Best Organizational Award by the Chinese Embassy for our contribution to international training and cooperation.

We will therefore continue to strengthen partnerships and critical institutions like the colleges of agriculture.

Madam Speaker,

The provision of External Bursary Scheme, assist college students responds directly to the need to address scarce and critical skills in agriculture, land reform, and rural development.

With a budget of R22.9 million for the 2025 academic year, the scheme continued to support young people from previously disadvantaged and rural communities to pursue studies in key agricultural disciplines.

To date, more than 2 500 beneficiaries have been supported, with over 1 400 successfully completing their qualifications.

During the 2025/26 financial year, 151 participants benefited from international training opportunities across 12 partner countries.

PRODUCER SUPPORT

Agriculture is a cornerstone of South African economy because it supports food security, contributes 5% employment of the total country workforce and engages 17% of the households, especially in Limpopo and Eastern Cape. It further contributes to exports and rural development despite contributing a modest share of 3% to GDP.

It produces key crops including maize which is the staple food, wheat, vegetables, citrus fruits and sugarcane. It also produces livestock farming of poultry and beef which support both domestic consumption and international trade.

It is the main employment driver in rural areas since it is central to land reform and rural development.

Through our various funding initiatives, we support smallholder farmers, women, youth and people with disabilities, providing infrastructure, training and access to markets.

However, despite its success, agriculture faces challenges which are beyond its control such as drought, water scarcity, rising input costs, land reform uncertainties and climate

change which affect yields and profitability. Although we are addressing electricity availability through Agro-Energy Fund and the steady uptake growth, electricity availability is still a challenge to smallholder farmers.

In our efforts to drive an inclusive agricultural sector we have set ourselves transformation targets to be achieved by 2030 within the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan (AAMP) as follows:

- Increase the share of black producers in production of grains from 4% - 20%,
- livestock from 32% - 40%,
- fruits from 2% to 10%,
- vegetables from 15% - 29%,
- food from 2%-4% and
- beverages from 2% - 4%.

BLENDED FINANCE SCHEME (BFS) CONTRIBUTION TO FOOD SECURITY

Madam Speaker, the biggest failure in agriculture by subsistence and smallholder farmers can be attributed to money. Possession of money enables farmers to buy essential inputs like fertilizers, seeds and machinery which are crucial for productivity.

Farmers need financial liquidity to cover operating costs, wages and servicing accumulated debts. It is vitally important for farmers to have constant pipeline of cash for procuring necessary materials.

Without basic finance, the dream of and passion to become farmers by aspirant poor communities would die.

Money is crucial for success in agriculture and the department has established targeted development and affordable financial support packages in the form of grants and loans. Farmers apply for funding and are enabled to buy production inputs, mechanization, access markets, training and infrastructure development. These programmes are as follows:

IDC

We have reached the R1 billion target in grant funding through the IDC by 31 March 2026.

The IDC approved a total of R1,01 billion in grant funding and R3,15 billion in loan funding to support 42 black producers. This support ensures that 7 869 jobs are sustained. This is indeed a remarkable, innovative funding instrument and results producing partnership. Blended finance scheme aims to support farm acquisitions, production facility, working capital, Infrastructure development (Capex) and Insurance subsidy. Pre and Post funding

support is also catered for to enable the successful development of sustainable and profitable black commercial farmers.

Since its inception in 2021 and as at end March 2026, a total of R9,8 billion has been approved for investment in the agricultural sector of which R3,5 billion is the grant and R6,3 billion is the loan; for the development of 627 black commercial producers.

LAND BANK

Another crucial intervention of financial support for farmers is provided through our partnership with Land Bank blended finance scheme. By 31 March 2026, it has approved a total of 610 applications since its inception in October 2022. The affordable financial support packages has ensured 124 repeat clients and 44 of them are on their 3rd seasonal approval to the tune of R5,077 billion of which R2,2 billion is the grant. I am excited that this support will create 6 480 jobs and contribute towards alleviation of poverty.

LAND BANK: AGRO-ENERGY FUND THROUGH

Between inception in August 2023 and 31 March 2026, the Land Bank through Agro-Energy Fund approved 70 transactions to the tune of R160,2 million. Out off this amount, R58,4 million was the grant. Through this investment, the supported producers have created 5 128 jobs.

The categories of producers supported through the Agro-Energy Fund are (6) smallholders, (36) medium scale commercial, (23) large scale commercial and (5) mega scale commercial producers. In terms of approval per province, Eastern Cape (11), Free State (16), Gauteng (2), KwaZulu Natal (2), Limpopo (1), Mpumalanga (5), Northern Cape (1), North-West (12) and Western Cape (20).

COMPREHENSIVE AGRICULTURE SUPPORT PROGRAME (CASP)

Madam Speaker, the dream and passion for farming drive aspirant farmers to secure pieces of land through traditional leadership allocation, by approaching municipalities or a school for unused land, or through inheritance, among others. Others acquire land through Land Restitution, Land Reform programmes and private acquisitions and have intentions to add value through agricultural productions.

CASP grant is provided to this category of subsistence and smallholder producers who are in the development phase and cannot afford loans.

The support provided includes provision of on-and-off farm infrastructure, provision of production inputs and mechanization, training and mentorship, extension support. Central

to the success of these farmers is access to markets and ensuring these producers are certified to be supplying safe and good quality food to the market.

In the 2026/27 financial year through CASP, R2, 3 billion (two point three billion rands) will be made available to support around 33 000 (**33 Thousand**) black producers (6 000(**6 thousand**) smallholder, 27 000 (**27Thousand**) subsistence and 28 commercial) and target to create about 4 294(**4 Thousand 2 Hundred & 94**) permanent jobs. Furthermore 58 000(**58 Thousand**) vulnerable households across all nine provinces will be assisted to produce their own food (food gardens) to address hunger and food security. About 40 000(**40 Thousand**) Hectares of land will be put under production of grains, vegetables and fruits.

In the 2026/2027 financial year, the Department of Agriculture (DoA) will continue to leverage CASP funds to revitalize irrigation schemes in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo Province, Northern Cape and North-West provinces.

There are also projects where the installation of irrigation will be implemented in Gauteng and Mpumalanga, and the Western Cape provinces.

The Department has partnered with the Agriculture Research Council to promote water-efficient technologies using chameleon sensors & meters and wetting front detectors in Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape provinces.

As part of Climate Smart Agriculture, the Department has initiated a project where community members are supported with tower gardens (TG) and rainwater harvesting (RWH) tools in various provinces. In 2026/7 the Department will initiate planning for RWH and TG in the Western Cape.

FMD OUTBREAK CONTROL ENHANCED BIOSECURITY AND EFFECTIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Madam Speaker, our country is under severe attack from Foot and mouth disease (FMD) outbreak which has to date spread to all 9 provinces in varying degrees.

To achieve success, we are enlisting support of traditional leaders and municipalities. In an endeavor to enhance biosecurity, we will together embark on revamping of dipping tanks culture, identification and branding of animals for traceability and anti-stock theft

Thank you, Madam Speaker