



MINISTER
AGRICULTURE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Opening keynote address by the Minister of Agriculture, Willie Aucamp, at the launch of the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP) 2026 Baseline Report at the Atterbury Theatre, Pretoria, on 12 August 2026

Programme Director,
Ambassadors and Embassy Representatives
Distinguished representatives of the BFAP,
Captains of the agricultural industry,
Esteemed colleagues from government and its agencies,
Members of the media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. Goeiemôre. Sanibonani. Dumelang.

I am privileged to stand before you today, just a few weeks into my tenure as Minister of Agriculture, to deliver the keynote address at the launch of the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy's (BFAP) 2026 Baseline Report.

When I met Ferdi and he briefed me about this event, I was excited because this report sets a policy tone for the government. Standing here today, my first and most important duty is to say thank you. Thank you to the BFAP team and all the contributors to the report for your dedication and hard work. Thank you to all the stakeholders for walking beside and with our sector through thick and thin.

Agriculture is not a sector that can thrive in isolation. It relies on deep, genuine partnerships. Government cannot do everything alone. We know that. Achieving food security, growing our economy, and creating jobs require all of us, government, industry, researchers, and private stakeholders, to pull in the same direction.

Input suppliers, funders, exporters, farmers and investors who I have met in the past three weeks have informed me that over more than two decades, the BFAP Baseline Report has become a trusted investment compass for the sector. It has provided the insights that assisted

the sector to navigate long-term policies and structural developments. I want to personally thank Ferdi and his team for the great work.

Today, as we gather here in Pretoria, we do so at a crucial juncture. As the baseline report starkly illustrates, South African agriculture stands at a crossroads, navigating mounting global uncertainty, domestic structural challenges, and intensifying climate pressures. The coming decade will undoubtedly test our resilience, however, it will also present opportunities for growth if we adopt a united and strategic approach.

This year's theme, "Exploring Agriculture's Future to 2050: Reconciling an Export-Led Strategy with Greater Food Security," hits right at the heart of where we are. As South Africa approaches the end of the National Development Plan horizon for 2030, we must take stock of what we have achieved and look toward 2050. We must also highlight our progress under the Agriculture and Agro-Processing Master Plan. My message to you today is clear and unequivocal: this government is not going to work against our farmers, but with them. I have said from my first day in office, and I repeat it now, I believe in partnerships where we can trust one another and talk to one another—and not about one another.

I have gone through the report, and I am happy that it acknowledges my above statement as neither the State nor the private sector possesses the ability to overcome the formidable challenges in our sector on its own. We must forge a new social compact, one in which the government facilitates and enables, and our farmers are empowered to do what they do best, produce food and drive economic growth.

The report warns that volatile global trade, recurring disease outbreaks, and local infrastructure weaknesses now threaten to erode the gains we have made in the past decade. As you are all aware, the Foot and mouth disease (FMD) outbreak has shaken us to our core. We have seen the devastating impact on our livestock industry and the consequential surge in meat imports, which rose by 44,6% as we struggled to control disease. This is simply unacceptable. Many of you have noticed that since I came into this portfolio, the immediate focus has been to re-energise our fight against FMD.

I am currently tweaking the regulations to enhance our fight against the disease and that has led to the historic settlement between the State and stakeholders. As you know by now already, a farmer can register to be an authorised person to buy FMD vaccine from the local veterinarian and vaccinate his/her cattle.

We are rolling out vaccines, with 17 million doses having already been imported from Argentina and Turkey, and our domestic vaccine production is being scaled up. In the coming days, another four million vaccines will enter the country.

An operational committee, which I have described as a "bomb squad", has been established to break down bottlenecks and accelerate the distribution of vaccines and vaccination on the ground.

I am excited by the data provided in the report that indicates that the sector is demonstrating remarkable resilience, with exports surging during the first quarter of 2026 to a record of R67

billion. This performance is a testament to the hard work of our producers who have worked tirelessly to navigate global economic volatility.

However, we cannot be complacent. The report highlights the fragility of the global outlook, citing recent market turmoil. We face the threat of “Reciprocal Tariffs” from the United States of America (USA) that could undermine the competitiveness of our exports. In response, we must pivot toward stable regional and international markets. While the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region remains the cornerstone of our exports, the European Union (EU) has emerged as a vital growth driver. Biosecurity, logistics and the threat posed by El Niño remains the risks that we need to continue addressing.

We all know, one can always expect highs and lows in agriculture. It is the nature of the sector. I was happy to hear from Ferdi that the medium-term outlook for the sector is encouraging as we will realise real growth in agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) if we improve animal health management; see global input markets normalise as the Middle East conflict settles; and make further progress by ensuring efficiencies in our port operations. We will continue to look for new markets for our producers and expand our current market share.

I am committed to ensuring that the sector becomes more inclusive. While it is true that high-value horticulture, driven by fruit and nuts, anchors our growth, we must also support the small-scale farmers who are the foundation of our food security. Through our Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) and other initiatives, we are working to integrate further smallholder farmers into the value chain and provide them with access to finance, resources, and technology.

Furthermore, the government has committed R3,2 billion to food security and farmer support programmes. We are investing in our future by deploying assistant agricultural practitioners to strengthen frontline advisory services.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we digest the findings of the BFAP Baseline 2026 Report, let us commit to a shared path forward. The road ahead is challenging, however, I am optimistic. We have a resilient sector, a clear vision, and a new spirit of cooperation.

The government’s task is to ensure that we do not make life more difficult for our producers. My task, as your minister, is to ensure that we have all our hands on the deck, remove all the obstacles in your path, ensure food security, strengthen our biosecurity systems, transform the sector, open new markets and create an enabling environment for growth.

This is not a time for pessimism. It is a time for decisive action. A time for partnership.

Thank you. Dankie. Ngiyabonga. Kea leboha.

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