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South African agriculture reaches record trade surplus

AgriSA today releases its **Agriculture Annual Trade Report 2025**, highlighting a record year for South African agricultural exports and confirming the sector's growing role as a major source of foreign exchange.

Total agricultural exports reached **R266.3 billion in 2025**, up **8.8% from R246.4 billion in 2024**, while imports increased modestly to **R141.6 billion**. This resulted in a **record agricultural trade surplus of R124.7 billion**, a **16.4% year-on-year increase**. On average, South African agriculture generated approximately **R341 million in net foreign exchange every day** in 2025.

The report shows that agricultural exports have expanded by **53% over the past five years**, rising from **R174.3 billion in 2021**. In real terms, export growth is estimated at **30–35%**, reflecting sustained gains in production, competitiveness, and market access.

“South African agriculture continues to prove its ability to compete globally and generate foreign exchange for the economy. However, maintaining this trajectory will require decisive action to safeguard market access, strengthen biosecurity, and improve trade infrastructure,” said Johann Kotze, AgriSA Chief Executive Officer.

Horticulture remained the primary driver of export growth. Citrus exports increased by **35.6% to R44.9 billion**, with strong performances also recorded in grapes, apples, pears, nuts, and wine. Overall, horticulture generated **R143.4 billion in exports**, reflecting the maturation of major private-sector investment in orchards over the past decade.

Africa continues to be South Africa's most important market, accounting for **R94.4 billion** in exports, or **35% of total agricultural exports**. Over the past five years, exports to Africa have grown by **76%**.

The livestock sector showed **early signs of recovery**, particularly in fisheries exports, while **lamb exports expanded sharply** over the past five years. However, AgriSA cautions that **Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD)** outbreaks remain a significant threat to livestock exports and market access.

Despite the strong performance, the report highlights several structural risks that could constrain future growth, including **biosecurity threats, logistics and port inefficiencies, phytosanitary restrictions in key export markets, and rising competition in Asian markets**.

AgriSA remains committed to working alongside its members to further South African agriculture export growth.

[Download the Agriculture Annual Trade Report 2025 here.](#)

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