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South African agriculture rebounds strongly with double digit growth in 2025

AgriSA notes the latest agricultural figures released by Statistics South Africa. This marked a significant rebound after two consecutive years of contraction in 2023 and 2024.

“The positive performance was largely driven by strong output in field crops and horticulture, particularly grains, oilseeds, and fruit industries. Recovery in maize and soybean production following the 2024 drought, together with strong citrus and deciduous fruit seasons, contributed meaningfully to the sector’s improved performance,” says Johann Kotzé, AgriSA Chief Executive Officer.

South Africa’s agricultural exports also reached a new record of approximately US\$15,1 billion in 2025, highlighting the sector’s continued competitiveness in global markets and its growing importance as a driver of export-led growth.

At the same time, the livestock industry continued to face challenges. Outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in cattle and African swine fever (ASF) in pigs weighed on the animal products subsector and constrained domestic and export trade in parts of the year.

“While the growth figure is encouraging, it should be interpreted in context. Agriculture contracted significantly in the previous two years, and part of the strong growth in 2025 reflects a recovery from this lower base,” says Kotzé.

Looking ahead, early indications for the current agricultural production season are encouraging. Favourable La Niña rainfall conditions and a larger planted area for summer crops point to the potential for another good harvest. However, several risks remain on the horizon. The continued presence of animal diseases such as FMD and ASF poses ongoing challenges for the livestock sector. In addition, rising geopolitical tensions, particularly in the Middle East, could affect input costs including fertiliser and fuel, as well as global trade flows and shipping costs. This will impact margins across the agricultural value chain, particularly during the upcoming winter grain planting season and the harvest of summer grains.

Despite these uncertainties, the 2025 performance once again demonstrates the strategic importance of agriculture to South Africa’s economy. The sector plays a critical role in food security, employment, rural development, and export earnings.

AgriSA emphasises that sustaining this momentum will require continued focus on strengthening biosecurity systems, improving logistics infrastructure, expanding market access, and ensuring a stable policy environment that supports long-term investment in the sector.

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