

# Limpopo farmers struggle with failing road infrastructure despite promised repairs

By Sinenhlanhla Mncwango | 12 February 2025 | 5:00 am

*Despite years of engagement with authorities, many roads in Limpopo still remain in disrepair. This was according to Deidre Carter, CEO of Agri Limpopo.*



Poor roads in Limpopo is making it harder for farmers to do business.

Photo: Supplied

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Carter told *Farmer's Weekly* that farmers have struggled for years with deteriorating roads, including the R572, Eiland Road, N11, and D1611, amongst others, and that Agri Limpopo had engaged authorities at every level in efforts to resolve these issues.

In 2020, Agri Limpopo approached the MEC and Premier to request the transfer of 27 economically significant roads from the Road Agency Limpopo (RAL) to SANRAL for better maintenance and management.

"In January 2024, then-Premier [Chupu Stanley Mathabatha] signed off on the transfer [to SANRAL], culminating in the official gazetting of these roads in November 2024. This marked a significant milestone after a lengthy process. Within a week of being gazetted, work began on [...] the R572.

"The R572, a crucial tar road connecting Lephalale and Musina, had deteriorated to the point of being nearly impassable. Farmers were forced to maintain the road themselves as suppliers refused to deliver to the area, and access to markets became increasingly difficult. Unfortunately, their efforts only led to an increased issuance of abnormal truck permits by



provincial traffic authorities, exacerbating the situation. The more farmers repaired the roads, the less responsibility the department took for their upkeep,” explained Carter.

Despite some progress being made on the maintenance of the R572, many other roads in Limpopo also require urgent attention.

The R530, for example, is in dire condition, according to Carter. As the road is being ‘patched’ instead of resurfaced, it is uneven and extremely dangerous, she added.

“We cannot continue patching; most of these roads require complete resurfacing to ensure safety and long-term usability,” Carter said.

“The N1 from Polokwane to Musina is another dangerous road, inadequate for the current volume of goods transported through Beitbridge. Serious work is needed on this stretch of road, including widening it,” she said.

She said infrastructure played a crucial role in economic development, community safety, and overall well being and added that without proper road networks, many connecting towns would struggle to grow beyond being small, rural towns.

“Authorities must take decisive action to ensure sustainable and high-quality road repairs that support both economic activity and community livelihoods,” she said.

Meanwhile, Willem van der Walt, a livestock and crop farmer in Limpopo who primarily uses the R576, agreed with Carter on the state of the province’s roads.

“The Settlers Bridge area has deep potholes and missing tar, making transportation extremely difficult. This farming community dates back to 1983, yet we still struggle with inadequate roads.

“The rain we received in December and January made the road much worse. Farmers had to grade the road themselves, using gravel to fill potholes. This situation makes operations difficult for businesses. We are waiting for a confirmed date for complete road reconstruction. This has been a long-term issue, and we need authorities to take action,” he said.

Cobus Coetzee, another farmer in Limpopo who primarily uses the R521, R561, and R572 between Tongburg, Bulhuis, Mapungubwe, and Musina, said ongoing delays were a major challenge.

“An official government gazette published on 22 November 2024 stated that responsibility for these roads was transferred from the RAL to SANRAL. However, three months later, repairs have still not started.”

According to Coetzee, farmers are forced to grade the roads themselves using soil, and added that farmers in Limpopo’s biggest potato-production area experienced frequent vehicle and produce damage due to poor road conditions.



“Stacking heavy pallets of produce on top of each other, only to have them shift and bump on uneven roads, reduces quality and shelf life,” he said.

SANRAL had not responded to the request for comment by the time of publishing.

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