

SA agriculture's broad performance was positive in 2025

- The figures released today by Statistics South Africa reflect the broad positive performance of South Africa's agriculture in 2025. The sector's gross value added grew 17.4% year-on-year in 2025, following a -8.4% year-on-year contraction in 2024. The ample harvest in field crops and horticulture, on the back of favourable rainfall, boosted the sector's fortunes. The base effects also supported the sector's performance.
- Admittedly, the sector could have performed more robustly, but the foot-and-mouth disease in cattle and African swine fever in the pig industry have weighed on the sector. These two industries are part of the major agricultural subsector. Notably, it is for the excellent production conditions in field crops (grains, oilseeds, and sugarcane) and horticulture (fruits, wine, and vegetables) that boosted South Africa's agricultural exports to a record US\$15.1 billion, up 10% from 2024.
- Currently, we continue to pursue a promising path for field crops and the horticultural industry. Since the start of the current 2025-26 production season, we have continued to receive the excellent La Niña rains, which have supported crop conditions, vegetable and fruit production, and the grazing veld across the country.
- For field crops, we now have the first production estimate for the 2025-26 summer grains and oilseeds season: 19.82 million tonnes. While this is 3% less than the 2024-25 season, it remains an encouraging estimate. We must not forget that the 2024-25 summer grains and oilseeds were the second-largest on record; therefore, being marginally lower than they were is not cause for concern. The favourable rainfall has also supported production conditions for various fruits, vegetables, and grazing veld. While we typically highlight grain production, the benefits of excellent rainfall extend beyond it.
- All things considered, the major challenge in agriculture right now is foot-and-mouth disease in cattle and African swine fever in the pig industry, both of which continue to pose risks to the sector's growth prospects for 2026. The accelerated pace of vaccination against foot-and-mouth disease is key, as the cattle industry remains under immense financial pressure. We see similar challenges in the pig industry.
- Of course, we are also learning the implications of the Middle East conflict, which could present challenges for our fruit, wine, grains, and beef exports. We are an export-oriented sector, and the rising shipping costs and logistical disruptions are a concern.
- As we have discussed previously, there are also implications for input costs, particularly fertiliser and fuel prices, if the conflict continues for some time. But these will impact the next season and next year's performance the most.