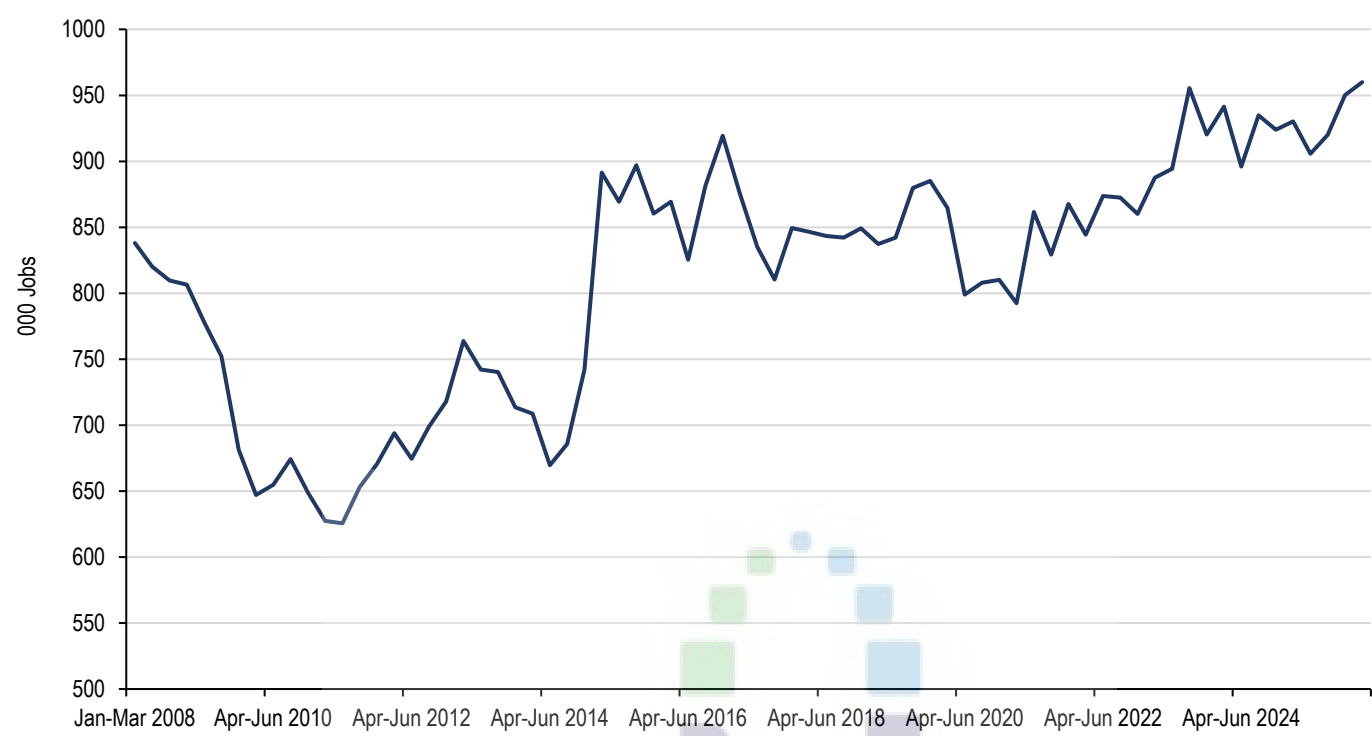


SA agriculture starts the year with strong jobs gains, but there are risks ahead

- **The South African agricultural sector continues to create more jobs. In the first quarter of 2026, farm jobs increased by 3% from the same period a year earlier to 960k jobs (up by 1% from the last quarter of 2025).** This uptick in agricultural employment is unsurprising as the sector has generally enjoyed favourable production conditions in 2025 through to the start of this year. The industries that have faced challenges are beef, dairy, and pork producers due to foot-and-mouth disease, and the pork industry due to African swine fever.
- Other subsectors have generally experienced favourable production conditions, partly due to La Niña-induced rains and the expansion of agricultural activity. The provinces that have shown annual job growth are the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Free State, North West, and Limpopo. The job gains in these provinces helped to overshadow the decline registered in other provinces of the country.
- Aside from the cattle and pork industries, which face various challenges, activity in field crops, horticulture, and wine has generally been upbeat, and expected harvests are plentiful. For example, the data released by the Crop Estimates Committee at the end of April 2026 showed that South Africa's 2025-26 summer grain and oilseed harvest was 20.8 million tonnes, up 1% year-on-year. This yearly improvement in the overall harvest is underpinned by upward revisions to major grains and oilseeds, particularly maize, soybeans, and sunflower seed.
- We also saw strong performance in the various fruit products. For example, the stone fruit and pome industries' export volumes have increased by 12% year on year, on the back of a large harvest. Also, the figures recently released by the South African Table Grape Industry show that the final figures for the 2025-26 table grape season inspected for export were 81.25 million cartons (4.5 kg cartons), a 3% year-on-year increase. The production conditions for vegetables remain broadly favourable and have supported increased field activity. The poultry industry also had a better start to the year, supported by lower feed prices (maize and soybeans).
- Overall, the start of 2026 shows strong job figures in the sector, and much of the year could maintain these generally better job figures, which are well above the sector's average of 799k. But going into 2027, there are risks ahead. The higher input costs, fuel and fertiliser, because of the Middle East war, along with expected El Niño drought, are some of the risks that could weigh on the sector and on employment conditions from now on.
- We also see pressures in the sector from rising electricity prices, which add financial strain to farmers in irrigation regions, which produce all of South Africa's fruits and vegetables and roughly 20% of the field crops.

Exhibit I: South Africa's agricultural jobs



Source: Statistics South Africa and Agbiz Research

