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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

THE AGRIPRENEUR QUARTERLY:

A PUBLICATION BY THE SMALLHOLDER MARKET ACCESS RESEARCH UNIT OF THE NAMC

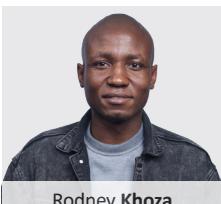
PREFACE

Welcome to the 43rd edition of the Agripreneur, a publication produced by the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) to create a platform where agripreneurs and farmers, primarily smallholders, can share their knowledge, skills, challenges, experiences and insights. This publication is intended to assist smallholders to learn from other agripreneurs, develop strategies, adopt models and become part of the value chain by marketing commodities and products that meet market standards and are safe for consumption. The Agripreneur also promotes and profiles aspects of South African agriculture as a brand. Each edition features compelling stories that aim to persuade readers to #LoveRSAAgric.

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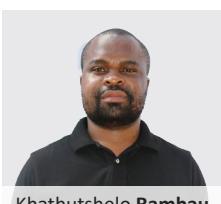
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EDITOR'S NOTE



Matume Maila

Greetings to the farming community.

In this Issue 43 of Agripreneur, we reflect on an agricultural sector that continues to adapt, innovate, and push forward despite persistent challenges. Across value chains, farmers, agribusinesses, and policymakers are navigating a landscape shaped by biosecurity threats, market pressures, infrastructure constraints, and exciting new opportunities.

Our Agri-highlights open the issue with a snapshot of key developments shaping the sector right now. Among them is a closer look at waging war against Foot and mouth disease, cracking down on fake

honey, NAMC's SMAT Mohair feedback sessions and powering agriculture sustainability by the Minister of agriculture.

An authentic agri-tourism experience, reminding us that agriculture is not only about production, but also about storytelling, diversification, and connecting consumers to the land in meaningful ways.

This issue also features stories on Astral plans for more bird flu vaccinations and FairPlay's proposed economic action plan for the poultry industry.

At the heart of this issue is the insightful farming journey of Mr. Njabulo Mabaso, which is a powerful reminder that resilience, learning, and adaptability are as critical as land and capital in building a successful agricultural enterprise.

We unpack how the Budget for infrastructure and logistics reforms offer hope for farmers, particularly those constrained by high input costs and inefficient supply chains. At the same time, ongoing tensions are evident in the sugar industry spat over import tariffs, highlighting a delicate balance between local protection and regional trade dynamics.

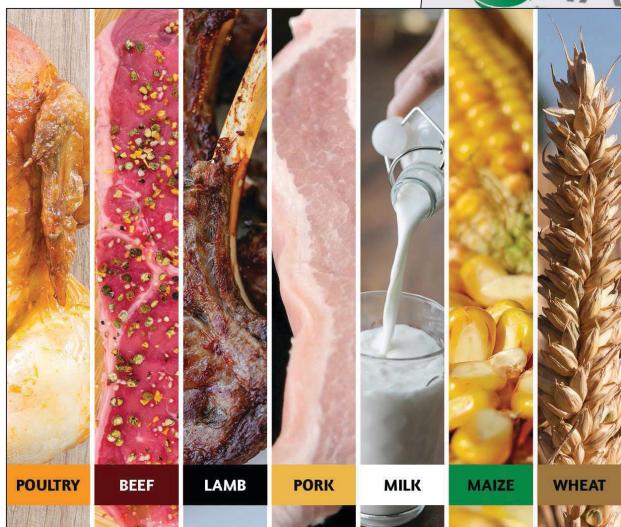
The stories in this issue capture an industry in motion—one that is confronting hard realities while actively shaping its future. As always, we aim to inform, provoke thoughts, and inspire action among agripreneurs who continue to drive agriculture forward

Enjoy the read!

Matume Maila

AGRO-FOOD CHAINS UNIT

Tracks and report food price trends in South Africa to advise the Minister on any possible action that could be taken when national and household food security is threatened



FARM-TO-RETAIL-PRICE-SPREAD

August – October 2025
December 2025 Issue



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AGRI-HIGHLIGHTS:

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2025

OUTBREAK

WAGING WAR AGAINST FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE IS A TOP PRIORITY FOR MINISTER STEENHUISEN AND THE DEPARTMENT

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, expressed confidence in the national strategy to combat Foot and mouth disease (FMD), highlighting that the department and the Ministerial Advisory Task Team are hard at work implementing a decisive, fact-driven blueprint for recovery.

“South Africa now has a realistic and technically sound roadmap to realize its goal of FMD-free status with vaccination, a crucial step for restoring confidence in export markets and stabilizing this R80 billion livestock industry,” Minister Steenhuisen said.

“This will however, take time. We need cooperation of the industry to ensure that we manage to control the disease within a short space of time.” He emphasizes that this science-

backed plan is essential to protect national food security. The Department of Agriculture has embarked on a new policy direction, FMD Free with Vaccination, which stems from the Bosberaad that was convened in July 2025 in collaboration with the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), where over 400 stakeholders from government, academia, industry and research institutions came together to pave the way forward. The Bosberaad recommended a phased, multidisciplinary approach that combines stronger existing controls with the Progressive Control Pathway (PCP) framework.

Crucial to this approach is securing a reliable supply of FMD vaccine, accelerating livestock identification, managing movement controls, expanding diagnostic capacity and intensifying awareness campaigns. Medium to long-term priorities include infrastructure investment, regional cooperation and sustained funding for veterinary services and research.

Following the FMD Bosberaad, Minister Steenhuisen established the Ministerial Advisory Task Team.

Team on Animal Disease Prevention and Control. “The team is finalizing a strategy to reduce FMD incidents by about 70% in high-risk areas for the next 24 months; achieving 90% vaccination coverage in target animal populations in communal areas, commercial farms and feedlot areas and 100% vaccination in dairy cows. Certified compartments and progressive vaccination zones to facilitate safe trade will also be established,” Minister Steenhuisen indicated.

Close to 950 000 animals have already been vaccinated over the last few months with government-procured vaccine stock.

Source: nda.gov.za
* Photo: pixabay.com



CONSUMER PROTECTION



PROTECTING BEES, BEEKEEPERS AND BUYERS!

The Department of Agriculture (DoA) is cracking down on fake honey to protect consumers, support genuine beekeepers, and safeguard the integrity of South Africa's honey industry.

Counterfeit honey is more than just an unethical product on a store shelf; it endangers public health, undermines the credibility of genuine beekeepers, and jeopardises South Africa's beekeeping industry. The DoA is aggressively enforcing laws to ensure that honey sold in South Africa is authentic, safe, and accurately labelled. Operating under the Agricultural Products Standards Act, 1990 (Act No. 119 of 1990) and under the mandate of the Directorate: Inspection Services, the department conducted a joint compliance and enforcement operation aimed at curbing the selling and distribution of counterfeit honey and syrup misrepresented as honey.

This operation will continue to take place nationally in accordance with the department's mandate. Part of this initiative included conducting inspections in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality in the Eastern Cape by agriculture inspectors, in conjunction with the South African Police Service (SAPS). These inspections revealed wide-spread non-compliance resulting in hundreds of units of counterfeit honey being confiscated and removed from store shelves.

Retailers found to be in violation of the law were issued with compliance notices and directed to immediately correct their violations. These actions have protected consumers from continued deceit and clearly communicated that deceptive practices in the honey market will be prosecuted.

The Agricultural Products Standards Act, 1990 (Act No. 119 of 1990) governs the quality, composition, labelling and advertising of agricultural products sold in South Africa. The primary purpose of this Act is to protect consumers from mislabelled products, safeguard food safety, and promote equitable competition within agricultural supply chains. There is no product that exists as a honey-based syrup under the Act.

Therefore, a product is either honey or syrup. To legally sell a product as honey, it must meet the standards for pure honey as established by the Act. Enforcing this law is necessary to prevent confusion among consumers, protect them and prevent illegal or misrepresented products from competing with compliant producers. Enforcement of the law by the DoA is a crucial function for protecting market integrity and fostering consumer confidence.

Source: nda.gov.za
< Photo: nda.gov.za

MARKET ACCESS

MOHAIR PRODUCERS AND MOHAIR SOUTH AFRICA APPRECIATED THE SMALLHOLDER MARKET ACCESS TRACKER (SMAT) MOHAIR BASELINE REPORT.

The Smallholders Market Access unit of the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC), under the Market and Economic Research Centre (MERC) division, held feedback sessions with mohair producers and Mohair South Africa on the SMAT Mohair Baseline Report in November and December 2025.

The well-attended feedback sessions gave insightful results and extensive recommendations from the SMAT Mohair Baseline Survey conducted in 2024. SMAT is a tool that measures and tracks market access for smallholder farmers in several agricultural industries. These baseline provide critical data on farmers' progress, problems, and market integration, which informs policy to improve support and growth in South African agriculture.

The SMAT Mohair feedback sessions elicited varied reactions from the industry and mohair producers, with most farmers and producers embracing the survey's results and recommendations.

During the session, Economist from NAMC, Mr Rambau and Mr Maila cautioned mohair producers about the implications of providing misleading data during surveys and encouraged them to assist the NAMC by providing accurate and reliable information that will inform meaningful policy recommendations to shape and transform the mohair industry.

The two-day sessions revealed that most producers sell their mohair through brokers, which is the most convenient option. Furthermore, the sessions were dominated by male producers. It was highlighted that increased inclusion of black participants (including women, youth and people with disabilities) in various value chains remains crucial as envisaged in the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan.

Source: foodformzansi.co.za



ENERGY

POWERING AGRICULTURE SUSTAINABLY

Minister John Steenhuisen opened a new solar power plant at Mooigezicht Estates in De Doorns, Western Cape, on Tuesday, 25 November 2025.

This investment in solar power underscores a deep commitment to sustainable energy, reduced operational costs and essential resilience in the face of ongoing energy and water challenges within the agricultural sector.

Mooigezicht Estates, one of South Africa's leading growers and exporters of top-quality seedless table grapes, is situated in the historic Hex River Valley, the country's oldest and most successful table grape production region. The valley is internationally renowned for its fertile soils and secure water supply from the surrounding mountains, making it ideal for high-value fruit production.

Mooigezicht has a rich history dating back to 1928 and this latest solar investment continues its legacy of innovation and ethical production practices.

Mooigezicht previously operated with 20 Eskom points, each adding to the enormous, fixed costs of their combined electricity bill. With the new system, that number has been reduced to just one – a 315 kVA point – resulting in significant financial savings from reduced fixed costs alone.

Mooigezicht's theoretical peak load was calculated at 950kW, with an expected real peak of 670kW, meaning a large portion of that demand must now be met independently by alternative sources. To achieve this, the installed system includes 1 152 solar panels, delivering a total capacity of 691.2kWp, and 100 lithium-ion batteries providing 1 433.6kWh of storage.

Source: nda.gov.za
 > Photo: nda.gov.za

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AN AUTHENTIC **AGRI-TOURISM** EXPERIENCE

By: Christelle Van Zyl

Authenticity is “authentic, genuine, being actually and exactly what is claimed. It implies being fully trustworthy as according with fact.” Authenticity inspires “loyalty and engagement where integrity, ethics and morals are not questioned.”

When people visit a farm, they are usually not looking for entertainment in the usual sense. They are looking for something quieter and more meaningful: a connection to land, food and the people who work with it every day. In short, they are looking for an experience that feels authentic.

Research shows that most tourists understand they are visitors. They do not expect full access to everything on a working farm. What they want is a truthful glimpse into farm life – something that feels honest rather than performed.

What tourists are really looking for:

Visitors want to understand how a farm works: how food is grown or produced, how seasons affect farming decisions, and what daily life on the farm looks like. They value hearing real stories, not just success stories, but also the challenges that come with farming such as weather, water, pests, and markets.

They also want interaction. This does not mean entertainment or constant activity. It can be as simple as asking questions, meeting the people behind the product, touching soil, tasting produce, or watching a task being done properly. These small moments help visitors feel present and connected.

At its core, authenticity is about trust. Most importantly, tourists want to believe what they are seeing. When experiences feel too polished or disconnected from real farm life, people quickly sense it. This is when an experience starts to feel staged rather than authentic.

How farmers can build an authentic farm experience:
Authenticity does not require big investments or major changes to your farming practices. In fact, the most authentic experiences are usually the simplest.

1) A good place to start is to choose one honest piece of farm life and focus on that. This decision could be a short, guided walk, a seasonal activity, a tasting linked directly to what you produce, or a conversation about how the farm operates through the year. Trying to do too much often leads to confusion.

2) Storytelling matters. Share what you are proud of, alongside what is difficult, as this builds credibility. Visitors respect honesty far more than perfection.

3) It is also important to create clear boundaries. Think deliberately about which areas are open to visitors and which



When people visit a farm, they are usually not looking for entertainment in the usual sense. They are looking for something quieter and more meaningful: a connection to land, food and the people who work with it every day.

remain private or unsafe. A small, well-designed viewing or demonstration area can offer insight into farm life without disrupting daily operations.

4) Finally, allowing visitors to participate by doing something small with their hands, e.g., picking, planting, tasting, feeding, or packing. This helps turn an ordinary visit into a memorable one. These simple actions create a connection without adding unnecessary pressure.

Authenticity cannot be copied from another farm. It grows from your land, your people, and your way of farming. If you stay honest and work with what already exists on your farm, the experience will feel real, because it is.

For any questions or comments, please contact:



ASTRAL PLANS MORE BIRD FLU VACCINATIONS

By: Francois Baird

Astral Foods, South Africa's largest poultry producer, plans to extend its bird flu vaccination programme to another two farms.

Astral CEO Gary Arnold made the announcement after the release of the company's financial results this month.

Astral is so far the only poultry producer to vaccinate its chickens against bird flu, which devastated South Africa's poultry industry in 2023. It began with a pilot project in July at a breeder farm in Gauteng, and two of its Mpumalanga farms have now also been approved for vaccination.

African Farming reported that Astral plans to start vaccinating birds on these farms next year so that they can develop immunity by the end of summer, ahead of winter.

Although bird flu used to appear mainly in winter, Arnold noted a concerning trend: Outbreaks are now occurring in other seasons as well, as seen recently in the United States and especially in the European Union.

Astral is vaccinating its breeder flock with an imported vaccine targeting the H5N1 strain – the same strain responsible for outbreaks in Mpumalanga, Gauteng, North West and the Western Cape over the past six months. Arnold added that H5N1 was also recently confirmed in chickens at a small-scale producer in Hammarsdale, KwaZulu-Natal, which supplies the live market.

Once the parent stock on the two Mpumalanga farms has been vaccinated, 30% of Astral's breeder flock will be protected – "good news for us," Arnold said.



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FARMING IS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS OF GROWTH AND KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION. **THE FARMING JOURNEY OF MR NJABULO MABASO**

By: Khathutshelo Rambau

Mr Njabulo Mabaso is the founder of Yamhlaba Pty Ltd, an agricultural enterprise that produces vegetables, including spinach, beetroot, and onions. He has a National Diploma in Marketing and has completed several short courses ranging from vegetable cultivation to business management.





He took short courses in basic vegetable production, inorganic vegetable production, project management, finance, and organic vegetable production. In 2020, during Covid 19, he began farming in his back yard.

"I have a personal connection to farming, having practiced it at home from the age of 12. After coming to Ermelo, I observed a shortage of high-quality veggies during Covid. This prompted me to begin farming." Said Njabulo

He is currently farming 42 ha of land, with three core productions: vegetable production on 2 ha, primarily spinach. Due to a scarcity of irrigation water, he plans to produce sugar beans and sweet potatoes on the remaining 40 ha. He hired two temporary (male) and two permanent (female) employees.

"I prefer working by weight rather than calculating actual quantities of spinach; we have already picked almost 800 kg of spinach in two weeks. We receive an average weight of 13 kg per bag, with a cycle yielding approximately 6 tons. The harvest cycle for spinach is 3 to 4 months," – Said Njabulo

Njabulo uses drip irrigation because it saves water and delivers water to the plant's root zone. He fertilizes by hand and applies it to other veggies. The spinach is grown organically and he prefers to plant crops that utilize few or no chemicals.

Furthermore, he has received some assistance from local agricultural extension offices, which is insufficient..

Regarding pests, Njabulo and his team scout each morning for potential pests and diseases. Scouting and monitoring are critical elements in making informed pest and disease management decisions.

This allows him to serve both informal and formal marketplaces consistently, and he is already selling spinach to Boxer Store and the local fresh produce market Midway.

Njabulo feels that competition is good for business and motivates people to achieve better. However, market access is limited, as it requires compliance with demand compliance certificates such as SAGAP or Local GAP certificates.

Planting in an open field with limited water supply and fertilizers are Njabulo's main challenges, yet he believes that challenges are always present and must be acknowledged to create our own opportunities.

Njabulo emphasizes the importance of passion and dedication in farming, particularly among young farmers. "You must display resilience because farming is a never-ending journey of learning and progress, and keep in mind that success will not come overnight, but rather gradually over time." – He said

His short-term goal is to develop a sustainable farming approach that enables him to produce more with less space. The long-term goal is to graduate to commercial farming.

FAIRPLAY PROPOSES AN ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN FOR THE POULTRY INDUSTRY

By: Francois Baird



FairPlay founder Francois Baird has proposed an economic action plan to sustain South Africa's poultry industry.

The proposals are based on the 10-point plan put forward by President Cyril Ramaphosa. In an article in the Afrikaans publication *Landbouweekblad*, Baird said six of the president's 10 points related directly to relieving what he termed a government "assault" on the poultry industry.

"Poultry is the largest agricultural sector, employing more than 100,000 people, mostly in rural South Africa and which produces 66% of all the meat consumed by South Africans," Baird said.

"If the domestic poultry industry collapses, so too will the grain industry, the local economies in rural areas taking those municipalities with it, rural small businesses and so on. This chain reaction will result in collapsed rural economies and mass unemployment."

Unless fixed, worsening child stunting rates of 28.8% and malnutrition death rates could implode the nation, beyond rescue.

FairPlay's poultry economic action proposal covered the following areas:

- **Energy affordability:** All poultry farmers should have cheaper, more reliable electricity. High prices and the need for back-up generation raised the cost of producing more affordable chicken, and had driven many small-scale farmers out of business.
- **Transport infrastructure:** Ensure affordable and reliable rural rail and road transport. Potholed roads and unreliable rail drove up chicken feed and other production costs.

- **Water infrastructure:** Fix small town and rural water infrastructure, especially where poultry was produced to feed the nation.
- **Rural development:** Enable growth in rural economies by helping poultry producers to survive and grow. Poultry, produced in rural areas, was the starting point for economic growth.

- **Bird flu vaccination and culling compensation:** While the poultry industry had invested R2.2 billion in extra capacity, and created thousands of jobs, the Government refused compensation for chickens it ordered culled during bird flu outbreaks, and had launched an ineffective and expensive bird flu vaccination programme, currently only at one site.

- **Ending predatory and unfair trade:** The DTIC has granted the United States a concession that allowed it to dump 72 000 tonnes of American chicken in South Africa every year “risking the South African chicken industry for nothing in return”.

- **A return to impartial bird flu protocols:** The DTIC and the agriculture department had also surrendered their sovereignty by allowing the US government to decide for itself when and from where its chicken could be exported to South Africa after bird flu outbreaks.

FairPlay suggested a few things that the President’s economic “war room” could get done immediately.

- Make chicken VAT-free – needed now more than ever to help poor and malnourished households,
- Compensate poultry farmers for culling at government direction to contain bird flu,
- Implement a simple and effective poultry vaccination programme,
- Prevent chicken dumping in South Africa by applying WTO rules and apply proper import protocols,
- Provide a cheap, reliable electricity supply for large and small poultry and chicken feed producers,
- Prioritise the restoration of reliable and affordable water supply in chicken-producing rural towns,
- Fix rural roads and direct Transnet to provide poultry and chicken feed producers with lower rates and reliable transport,
- Abandon the unnecessary and expensive poultry Competition Commission lawfare.

“These emergency chicken economy actions will serve all South Africans and go a long way to reviving the entire South African economy,” Baird concluded.



BUDGET'S INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOGISTICS REFORMS **OFFER HOPE FOR FARMERS**

By: Francois Baird

Government's latest medium-term budget has been welcomed by the agricultural sector for its strong emphasis on infrastructure rehabilitation, logistics reform, and municipal recovery; crucial elements to the long-term growth of South African farming and food production.

Government's latest medium-term budget has been welcomed by the agricultural sector for its strong emphasis on infrastructure rehabilitation, logistics reform, and municipal recovery; crucial elements to the long-term growth of South African farming and food production.

Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana outlined plans to restore the country's logistics system, improve port and rail efficiency, and stabilise critical water infrastructure. He noted that 11 private train operators are now active across 41 routes, and port waiting times have dropped by 75%, with Durban's Pier 2 opening to private investment expected to unlock R200 billion over five years.

These logistics improvements are particularly relevant for agriculture, where the efficient movement of feed, poultry and other goods remains vital to competitiveness.

Wandile Sihlobo, chief economist at Agbiz, said the budget's focus on network industries (roads, rail, ports, water and municipalities) is key to unlocking growth in agriculture. He also welcomed the lower inflation target and Treasury's commitment to structural reform.

Water security emerged as another major theme. The Water Services Amendment Bill and the establishment of a National Water Resource Infrastructure Agency by 2026 aim to clarify institutional roles and boost investment. With R12 billion pledged for 80 water projects, including 36 in South Africa, the sector could see much-needed relief for both crop and livestock producers.

Additional measures include a new infrastructure bond to raise R15 billion, R4.1 billion for flood-related repairs, and a reconfigured Budget Facility for Infrastructure with four annual bid windows. Municipal reforms are also being fast-tracked, with new partnerships involving the Development Bank of Southern Africa and the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent to strengthen water and electricity delivery.

For the poultry and wider farming sector, the renewed infrastructure and logistics agenda signals progress toward a more stable, cost-efficient production environment — one that could ease transport bottlenecks, reduce input costs and strengthen food security in the medium term.

SUGAR INDUSTRY SPAT OVER IMPORT TARIFFS

By: Francois Baird

South Africa's sugar industry and the country's beverage makers are at odds over import tariffs for sugar. Sugar producers want higher tariffs, while the beverage industry wants them lowered.

The Sunday Times reports that the sugar industry, concerned about dumped sugar import from countries such as Brazil and India, wants import tariffs raised from \$680 (about R11 650) a tonne to \$905 (about R14 869,69) per tonne. The sugar industry says dumping causes regional losses of up to R2bn a year.

Beverage makers, represented by Beverages Association of South Africa (BevSA), use sugar in various beverages, including soft drinks. They want the tariff reduced to \$400 (about R6 571,85) per tonne.

The tariff dispute is causing tensions that could undermine progress on South Africa's sugar value chain master plan, the newspaper said. Phase two of the master plan was due to be signed at the end of this month.

Thomas Funke, CEO of the South African Cane Growers Association, told Business Times that BevSA's application would damage the local industry and put an estimated 300,000 jobs at risk in regions such as KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga.

"The short-term destruction of the local sugar industry because of temporary global price distortions serves absolutely no-one — not producers, not workers, and not even BevSA's members," he said. "The current low world sugar price is an artificial moment driven by heavy subsidisation and dumping from major exporting countries."

South Africa's trade regulator, ITAC, has confirmed it has received tariff applications from both the sugar association and from beverage producers. While the government suggested both parties had agreed to withdraw their applications, Thomas Funke denied that the sugar industry had committed to doing so.



SOUTH AFRICAN PECAN NUT PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION (SAPPA) TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS VISIT

By: Maremo Mphahlele, Bernard Manganyi, Lesedi Mokoena and Nokuthula Khulu



* NAMC delegates, SAPPA delegate and farm owner.

1. Background

According to the South African Pecan Nut Producers Association (SAPPA), South African pecan production has increased significantly from 10 479 metric tons in 2015 to 37 157 metric tons in 2024. South Africa's share of global output almost doubled from 6% to 11% over the past five years. The Vaalharts region in the Northern Cape remains the dominant production area.

The South African pecan industry exports more than 93% of its production, with China as the main destination for in-shell pecans. At the same time, Europe is the main destination for shelled pecans (kernels), particularly the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. It is evident that this industry is lucrative; therefore, transforming the sector will contribute to inclusive growth.

The Marketing of Agricultural Products (MAP) Act No 47 of 1996, section 15, allows agricultural industries in South Africa to establish statutory measures such as levies to drive transformation. In accordance with the MAP Act, the SAPPA was approved to collect a levy in 2012, which has been continuously renewed to this date. The MAP Act stipulates that 20% of the collected funds should

be dedicated to transformation, specifically to help smallholder farmers reach commercial level. SAPPA classifies farmers with 10 ha or more pecan trees as commercial and those with less than 10 ha as smallholder farmers.

2. Project visits observations

A team of economists from the NAMC visited transformation projects in the Northern Cape, South Africa, in December 2025 representing the Transformation Review Committee. The main observation is that SAPPA follows a community-focused approach in implementing transformation projects. Their main beneficiaries are disadvantaged individuals who possess small or large pieces of land and water (with ownership or long-term lease agreements).

In addition, they also focus on social impact by supporting schools' orchard projects. Given the basic requirement of land and water, SAPPA donates trees to deserving beneficiaries. They start by donating between 30 to 100 trees to beneficiaries, then beneficiaries are continuously supported based on their success rate with the trees that were initially donated.

The support for orchards establishment is although limited due to most of the farmers not having enough land to commercialize (10ha). A full list on the detailed numbers of trees donated is accompanying this report (these are only the farms visited in Northern Cape).



* Some pictures of the farms and transformation

If success is satisfactory or failure is not due to negligence, beneficiaries are continually supported with trees annually until they reach the commercial stage. This support is coupled with extension support for irrigation scheduling, fertilisation, pruning, and pest control. Many farmers stressed that without this assistance, they would not be able to maintain the orchards till date.

Some farmers reported accessing Land Bank blended finance to support orchard establishment, while others indicated that access to the farmland they occupy was secured through structured lease arrangements with the government and other private

landowners, both of which have been critical enablers of their participation in pecan production. The farmers though still raise the challenge of getting access to other government grants such as CASP and producer support programs.

While some operational shortfalls remain, these forms of support have provided stability and allowed farmers to invest confidently in long-term orchards. This emphasizes the importance of coordinated institutional support in reducing entry barriers for emerging producers and enabling them to participate meaningfully in high-value agricultural value chains.

A consistent observation across all projects is that pecan production offers the potential for much higher farm income than most annual crops. Many farmers described pecans as the commodity that would allow them to move from survival to real growth.

The transformational outcomes are evident in diversified systems. Several farmers grow grapes, maize, lucerne, barley, livestock and raisins while building pecan orchards toward commercial maturity. Others are purely pecan-focused but use lucerne to intercrop and sustain working capital. In both cases, pecan trees are positioned as a source of future wealth, and farmers are willing to wait the required years.

Across all the farms visited, progress is real, but infrastructure gaps, financial constraints, and limited mechanisation slow growth. Farmers remain positive because the market outlook for pecans is promising and the technical support they receive is reliable. Many farmers already produce nuts, some in commercial volumes, and others are on the verge of breakthrough yields. There is a clear trajectory from small orchard establishment to future commercialisation as farmers' capabilities grow.

With all the efforts, there were although failed projects which were noted. A school project which SAPPA started funding unfortunately experienced two main challenges in the project. Firstly, the school could not continue to pay labour to look after the project and there was a

drainage issue which was noted at the farm as shown in the picture below. After the visit, SAPPA has since contributed to fixing the drainage in the project: Before, during and after picture below.

3. Concluding Remarks

The visit to SAPPA transformation projects confirms a well-structured and impactful model for transformation. SAPPA has effectively channelled resources to develop smallholder and emerging black farmers, aiming to drive a fundamental shift from subsistence to commercial pecan production.

The association's patient, community-focused approach by providing trees, sustained technical support, and gradual scaling based on proven success. Farmers are integrating pecans into their livelihoods, viewing the crop as a reliable future asset despite the long maturation period. The observed diversification and growing volumes indicate real progress toward sustainability and wealth creation. However, persistent challenges such as infrastructure deficits, financial constraints, and limited mechanisation highlight the need for enhanced complementary support.



LEVY ADMINISTRATORS



Red Meat Levy Admin



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What is SMAT?

Smallholder Market Access Tracker (SMAT) is a tool that has been developed by the NAMC, with the help of a reference group, to measure the progress in the achievement of the market access goal for smallholder farmers in South Africa.

Why do we need SMAT?

Despite a number of interventions that seek to enhance market access (both locally and abroad) for farmers in the country, smallholder farmers still face barriers to entry into the mainstream marketing channels. Furthermore, there is no tool used currently to track market access for this group of farmers, hence there is a need for the SMAT tool.

Who is going to use SMAT?

The SMAT seeks to provide information to assist with policy debate and the formulation of more effective programmes towards achievement of market access. As such, the SMAT could be used (largely) by policymakers.

www.namc.co.za/about-smat