

Agri SA congress to chart course for sustainable future of farming

Agri SA is gearing up to host its annual congress in Pretoria on 13 and 14 October 2022. Centred on the theme *Growing Local*, discussions will focus on the growing challenges facing the sector and chart a course to ensure a sustainable future for farming in South Africa, and that South Africa continues to enjoy security of food supply through growing local.



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President Cyril Ramaphosa will deliver the keynote address on the first day of the congress, setting the stage for the engagements between industry leaders, government representatives and critical stakeholders that will follow over the two days of the congress.

Over the past three years, the agricultural sector has shown enormous resilience and continues to be a vital contributor to both economic growth and employment. During this period the sector added 250 000 more jobs, contributed more than 2,4% to GDP and brought in R43bn in export revenue. These remarkable achievements have made the sector indispensable in the country's effort to combat poverty and unemployment, especially in rural parts of the country.

But despite these successes, the gathering takes place amid a difficult period for the industry. South Africa's farmers have endured extreme volatility over the past three years beginning with the supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic, followed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Local factors including unrest in July 2021, torrential floods in April 2022 and deteriorating critical infrastructure have only added to the troubles facing the embattled sector.

This confluence of factors has led to a steep increase in input costs for farmers with serious implications for consumers who already face a difficult economic climate.

In recent months the sector has faced additional challenges including threats to market access, critical failures in pestilence and disease management, rising water tariffs, inaction on the Rural Safety Strategy even as violent crime in rural communities persists, escalating loadshedding, and the advancement of legislative proposals that undermine investor confidence, most notably the Expropriation Bill.

Solutions to pressing problems

Over two days, the industry will address the role of the Agriculture and Agro-Processing Masterplan as a policy vehicle for growing local, the failure of critical infrastructure, the need to strengthen the value chain, the centrality of employment creation and skills transfers, and the need to build strong farming communities.

Speakers will include Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development Thoko Didiza, Transnet CEO Portia Derby, Eskom COO Jan Oberholzer, Gift of the Givers Founder Imtiaz Sooliman as well as the leaders of Agri SA provincial affiliates and leaders of the commodity and business chambers.

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