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- **S.A biggest citrus crop in history**
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# Record Citrus. Rising Risk.

## South Africa's biggest citrus crop in history - its toughest seasons yet.

**S**outh Africa's citrus industry enters the 2026 season with real momentum, but also with growing pressure on every side.

The Citrus Growers' Association expects exports to reach between 210 million and 215 million 15kg cartons this year, up from the record 203.4 million cartons shipped in 2025. That positions citrus for yet another milestone season and reinforces its place as one of the country's most important agricultural success stories.



### A Harvest Worth Celebrating

The forecast points to strong growth in several major categories. Lemon exports are expected to climb to 45.9 million cartons, Valencia oranges to 63 million cartons, and grapefruit to 15.7 million cartons. Navel oranges may dip slightly to around 30 million cartons, but that still keeps them above 2024 levels.

On paper, the numbers are impressive. Citrus remains South Africa's largest agricultural export industry and supports around 140,000 jobs at farm level. In volume terms, the industry is clearly winning.

### But Bigger Crops Do Not Guarantee Bigger Profits

The challenge is that more fruit

***"A record citrus crop may fill the cartons, but it will take efficient logistics and stable fuel costs to protect grower margins."***

does not automatically translate into more money in growers' pockets. South African citrus moves through a value chain that is increasingly expensive, fragile and exposed.

Around 95% of the national crop is transported by road to ports. That means rising diesel costs, transport delays and shipping disruptions can quickly eat into already tight margins. With global instability continuing to affect fuel prices and

trade routes, growers are entering the season with reason for caution.

### Logistics Remain the Industry's Weak Spot

For citrus, timing is everything. A delayed shipment is not just inconvenient, it can become a direct financial loss. Recent industry

***"In 2026, the real test for South African citrus is not whether farmers can produce more fruit, but whether they can still make money from it."***

analysis has shown that inefficient logistics cost the citrus sector billions in one season alone through added costs, waste and lost revenue.

For a perishable export crop, weak roads, port congestion, unreliable shipping schedules and strained infrastructure are not side issues. They are central business risks.

### The Real Battle of 2026

South African citrus may be heading for another record year, but 2026 will test more than production.

The real question is whether growers can protect value in an environment where fuel, freight, compliance and market access all carry rising risk.

A record harvest is one thing. Turning it into a record return is something else entirely.

**Staff Writer**

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## Bumper Harvest, Brutal Fuel Bill Can South African Farmers Still Win in 2026?

**S**outh Africa's 2025/26 summer crop is shaping up as another strong production season, with maize and oilseeds offering real comfort on the supply side.

But just as farmers move into the most fuel-intensive part of the year, diesel costs have surged sharply. The harvest is there. The question is whether farmers will still be able to hold onto enough margin to make the season count.

South African agriculture heads into the 2026 harvest window with a rare mix of optimism and anxiety. On paper, this should be a season of relief. Agbiz, drawing on the Crop Estimates Committee's second production forecast released on 26 March 2026, says the country's 2025/26 summer grains and oilseeds crop is estimated at 20.3 million tonnes. That is only 1% lower than the previous season, which Agbiz describes as the second-largest on record. In production terms, this is not a weak season. It is a strong one.

### A Harvest Worth Talking About

The maize crop remains the backbone of the story. Current estimates place the 2025/26 maize har-

vest at 16.5 million tonnes, made up of about 8.8 million tonnes of white maize and 7.7 million tonnes of yellow maize. That matters because South Africa's annual maize usage is around 12 million tonnes, which means the country should remain comfortably supplied and is likely to stay a net maize exporter into the 2026/27 marketing year. Soybeans are also forecast at a healthy 2.7 million tonnes, still well above the long-term average even though they are modestly down on the previous season.

This is the kind of season farmers would normally welcome with confidence. The crop is there. The volume is there. The broader food-security picture is stable. For consumers, this level of output should help moderate excessive food price pressure. For the country, it is another reminder that South African agriculture remains remarkably productive when weather conditions cooperate and planting intentions translate into yield.

**South Africa has the crop. What it may not have in 2026 is enough cost relief to fully enjoy it.**

### Then Came the Diesel Shock

Just as harvest operations gather pace, the economics have shifted. On 31 March 2026, the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources announced a severe April fuel adjustment. Diesel 0.05% sulphur increased by R7.37 per litre, while diesel 0.005% sulphur rose by R7.51 per litre. Petrol climbed by R3.06 per litre. Government did step in with temporary support by cutting the general fuel levy by R3.00 per litre from 1 April to 5 May 2026, reducing the levy on diesel to 116.0 cents per litre during that period. Even with that relief, the increase remains painful.

That timing could hardly be worse. Diesel is not a secondary input during harvest. It is central to the season's execution. It powers combines, tractors, trucks, on-farm transport, and in many cases backup systems that keep operations moving when conditions are already tight. When diesel surges at the point of harvest, the pressure lands directly on margin, not in theory but in real-time cash flow.

Reuters reported from North West that some farmers were dealing with more than higher prices. They were also battling uncertainty

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## FARM MACHINERY SLOWS, But Agriculture Still Shows Its Backbone

South Africa's farm machinery sales lost momentum in March 2026, with tractor and combine harvester numbers slipping after a long stretch of growth. But the slowdown does not automatically point to a sector in retreat.

Strong earlier sales, solid crop prospects and production volumes that remain above long-term norms suggest a more resilient agricultural picture than the headline alone implies.

### A softer month, not necessarily a collapsing sector

March 2026 marked the first real pause in South Africa's farm machinery market after **14 consecutive months of growth**. **Tractor sales fell 8% year on year to 618 units**, while **combine harvester sales dropped 22% to 29 units**.

*The machinery market may have cooled in March, but the production outlook still tells a tougher, steadier and more resilient story.*

On the surface, that is a notable shift. But one month of weaker sales is not enough, on its own, to prove that the broader agricultural economy has turned decisively downward.

That caution matters because the run-up to March was far from weak. **January 2026 tractor sales reached 517 units, up 13% year on year**, and **February rose to 669 units, up 5%**. The previous year was also robust, with **7,668 tractors sold in 2025, up 19% from 2024**, while **combine harvester sales for 2025 reached 207 units, up 3%**. That is not the pattern of a sector already in freefall.

### The production base still looks solid

The wider production picture helps explain why the

slowdown should be read carefully.

South Africa's **2025–26 summer grains and oilseeds crop** is currently estimated at **20.3 million tonnes**, only **1% below the previous season**, which itself was the **second-largest on record**.

Within that, the maize crop is pegged at about **16.5 million tonnes**, still comfortably above annual domestic usage.

That does not mean agriculture is free of pressure.

The **Agbiz/IDC Agribusiness Confidence Index** fell **18 points to 49 in Q1 2026**, slipping just below the neutral 50 mark. The survey pointed to

major pressures including **foot-and-mouth disease, African swine fever**, weaker prices in some industries, and

concerns that the **Middle East conflict** could lift **energy and fertiliser costs**.

### A sector under pressure, but not without momentum

The fairest reading is this: the machinery numbers have softened, sentiment has become more cautious, and real risks remain in the system. Yet agriculture is still standing on a stronger base than a single month of sales data might suggest.

Crop expectations remain decent, earlier machinery demand was firm, and current sales levels are still described as being above long-term averages. For now, March looks more like a warning light than a verdict

Staff Writer



## South Africa's New Export Map

### Agricultural exports reaching a record US\$15.1 billion in 2025

**S**outh African agriculture is not just exporting more. It is exporting differently.

With agricultural exports reaching a record US\$15.1 billion in 2025, and new market breakthroughs in China, the Philippines and South Korea, the country's trade footprint is starting to shift in visible ways. The opportunity is real.

The question now is whether logistics, port performance and execution can keep pace with the momentum.

South African agriculture enters 2026 with a stronger export story than many expected. According to Agbiz, the country's agricultural exports reached **a record US\$15.1 billion in 2025, up 10% from 2024**, while the agricultural trade surplus climbed to US\$7.3 billion, up 18% year on year. Those numbers matter, but the bigger story is not only growth.

It is direction. South Africa's export map is widening, and the sector is becoming less dependent on a narrow set of traditional destinations.

#### A Record Year, But a Different Trade Story

This shift is not about abandoning established markets. It is about re-balancing them. Agbiz says that in the fourth quarter of 2025, the African continent accounted for 53% of South Africa's agricultural exports by value, making it the country's largest regional market. Asia and the Middle East accounted for 17%, the European Union 16%, the Americas 4%, and the rest of the world, including the United Kingdom, 10%. That spread tells an important story. Africa remains the anchor, but the eastward expansion is becoming harder to ignore.

The composition of exports reinforces that point. Agbiz says the products that dominated the export list included table grapes,

***South Africa's new export map is not about replacing old markets. It is about building a wider, smarter and more resilient trade footprint.***

maize, berries, wine, citrus, apples and pears, sugar, nuts, fruit juices and wool. This is not a one-product

export economy. It is a diversified agricultural system with enough range to create resilience when one market, crop line or trade route comes under pressure. In the fourth quarter of 2025 alone, fruits and nuts accounted for 26% of total agricultural exports.

#### China Moves from Promise to Practice

One of the clearest signs of this new geography is the progress made in China. In October 2025, South Africa and China signed a protocol opening the Chinese market to South African apricots, peaches, nectarines, plums and prunes. That agreement moved from policy to practice in February 2026, when the first shipment of South African stone fruit departed for China from Franschhoek. Government described it as a historic milestone, and rightly so. For the deciduous fruit industry, it was a concrete reminder that long negotiations can still translate into commercially meaningful access.

There is also a broader strategic layer to the China relationship. In February 2026, South Africa

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and China signed the Framework Agreement on Economic Partnership for Shared Prosperity, with government saying the deal is intended to deepen bilateral trade and promote the export of South African agricultural products. On its own, that does not remove every trade barrier. But it does suggest that agricultural access to China is no longer being treated as a once-off product win. It is being folded into a wider economic relationship with more structure and longer-term intent.



**New Ground for Table Grapes-** The Philippines has added another important route to the map. On 25 March 2026, government confirmed the successful arrival of the first official shipment of South African table grapes to the Philippines, calling it a significant

milestone after market access was granted in 2025. The Department

***The real expansion story is no longer only in Europe or close to home. It is unfolding across Asia, one protocol, one shipment and one market opening at a time***

of Agriculture noted that the Philippines is among the world's top 20 importers of table grapes, with imports of around 74,000 tonnes in 2024, equal to roughly 16 million 4.5kg cartons. That is not a symbolic niche market. It is a serious commercial opportunity.

South Korea adds to that momentum. South African Table Grape Industry confirmed in February that South Africa had secured official market access for fresh table grapes to the Republic of Korea, following notification from Korean authorities on 23 January 2026. The industry expects the first consignment to move in the 2026/27 season once the remaining processes are finalised. That makes the table grape story especially telling: South Africa is not only deepening its presence in existing markets, but steadily adding new Asian destinations that could strengthen long-term demand.

**New Markets, Old Bottlenecks**

Still, the export story is not without friction. Agbiz has cautioned that

while parts of the logistics system improved during 2025, inefficiencies remained costly, especially for fruit exporters. Problems at the Port of Cape Town in November and December 2025 created additional financial pressure, while exports to the United States fell 3% in 2025 overall and dropped by 39% in the fourth quarter, underscoring the vulnerability that comes with trade-policy shifts and changing tariff regimes. This is exactly why diversification matters. It is not a luxury. It is a form of risk management.

**The Export Future Will Depend on Execution**

The bigger message for 2026 is clear. South African agriculture is no longer looking at the world through a single export corridor. Africa remains the base. Europe and the UK still matter. But the most dynamic growth story is now unfolding across Asia and the Middle East, where new protocols and market openings are beginning to redraw the trade map. The challenge now is to match that diplomatic and commercial progress with reliable ports, efficient logistics and disciplined execution. If South Africa can do that, this new export map will do more than look impressive on paper. It will start changing the economics of farming on the ground.

*Staff Writer*





# SOUTH AFRICA'S NEXT GRAIN SEASON MAY REWARD PRECISION MORE THAN OPTIMISM

**A**fter a stronger 2025/26 cycle, South African producers are entering a far more delicate planning phase. Climate signals are turning, El Niño risk is building, and the latest Grain SA and Absa AgriTrends outlooks point to the same conclusion: 2026/27 may not be the season to plant on hope alone.

There are some seasons when confidence feels justified. Then there are seasons when discipline matters more.

For South African grain and oil-seed producers, the 2026/27 production season is shaping up to be the second kind.

On paper, the warning signs are not dramatic enough to trigger panic. No one is yet calling a national production disaster. But the climate pattern now developing, together with Grain SA's market projections and planting economics, suggests that producers may need to think harder about where they plant, what they plant, and how much risk they are willing to carry into the second half of the season.

## **A season that may start well, then tighten**

The latest **Absa AgriTrends Autumn 2026** outlook notes that the weak La Niña of 2025/26 came to an end in February this year. Conditions are expected to remain neutral through late autumn before shifting toward a new El Niño that could last into early 2027. More importantly for farmers, the report warns that these seasons often follow a familiar pattern in South Africa: acceptable or even helpful early-summer rainfall, followed by hotter, drier conditions from December through March.

Frost risk may also stay elevated in some areas, while heat waves could become more intense.

That kind of forecast changes the way a producer should read the season.

The question is no longer only whether planting rains will arrive.

The real question is whether enough moisture will remain in the system once crops move into their most critical reproductive stages. That is where the risk sits.

*The biggest danger in 2026/27 may not be a poor start, but a good start followed by a punishing finish.*

## **Maize: still viable, but less forgiving**

For maize producers in the traditional summer-rainfall belt, the broad outlook is one of caution rather than retreat.

If spring and early-summer rainfall arrives on time, large parts of the Free State, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, Limpopo and even sections of North West may still open the season on a reasonably solid footing. But western and more marginal dryland areas are likely to be exposed if heat intensifies and rainfall fades from December onward. That late-summer window remains crucial for pollination and grain fill, and it is exactly where the El Niño risk becomes most relevant.

Grain SA's own data reinforces the need for realism. Its March 2026 projections show strong maize area expansion in 2025/26, with total planted area reaching **2.716**

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**million hectares** and production estimated at **16.51 million tons**. Yet its 2026/27 balance-sheet outlook is more measured, with yellow maize production easing and supply resilience depending partly on larger opening stocks rather than a simple assumption of another exceptional crop.

That is often how riskier seasons announce themselves. The hectares may still go in. The confidence behind them is what changes.

**Soybeans and sunflower may gain strategic importance**

If maize becomes the crop that demands caution, **soybeans** and **sunflower** may become the crops that offer flexibility.

Soybeans should remain relatively better supported in the wetter eastern production zones, where rainfall totals and soil moisture tend to hold up better than in the west. Grain SA's figures show soybean area rising to **1.213 million hectares**, proof that the crop continues to strengthen its place in local rotations. But the same projection also suggests slightly softer production ahead, indicating that the market is not pricing in a completely comfortable weather year.

Sunflower, meanwhile, may become one of the season's quiet strategic winners. Grain SA has already noted that on lower-potential land, oilseeds such as sunflower often make stronger financial sense because they require less upfront cash than maize. If 2026/27 develops into a hotter, drier and more volatile summer, that lower-risk profile could become even more attractive.

*In a season where moisture becomes less certain, crop choice may matter more than planting ambition.*

**Wheat's story will be written by timing**

The winter-rainfall region sits slightly outside the classic summer El Niño story, but it is not outside the climate conversation.

For wheat producers in the Western Cape, the central challenge is likely to be rainfall distribution rather than rainfall totals alone.

A season can still be respectable if fronts arrive at the right times and soil moisture is maintained through key growth phases. But

son delivers enough well-timed opportunity.

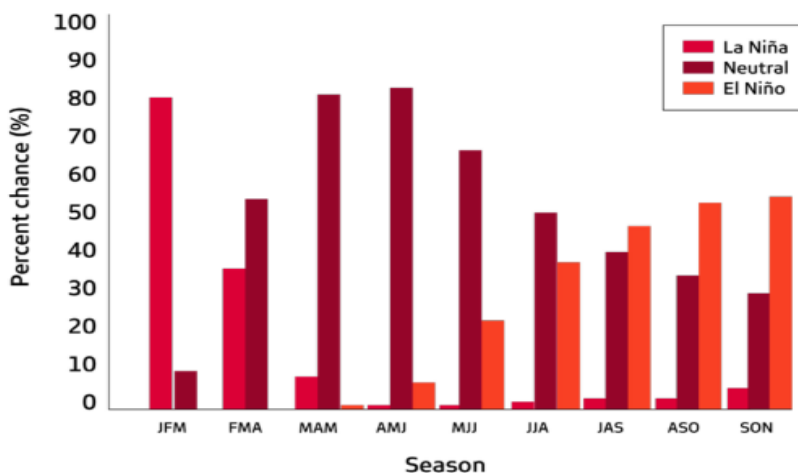
**The season ahead belongs to disciplined producers**

When the Absa AgriTrends climate signal is read alongside Grain SA's planting, market and profitability data, the message becomes clear.

This is not the kind of season that rewards blind expansion. It is the kind that rewards producers who match crop choice to rainfall zone, soil potential, input budget and downside risk.

**Official NOAA CPC ENSO probabilities (issued February 2026)**  
based on -0.5°/+0.5°C thresholds in ERSSTv5 relative Niño-3.4 index

Figure 2.3 The official Climate Prediction Centre's (CPC's) ENSO probability forecast



Source: Columbia Climate School, 2026

The official ENSO probability forecast, reinforcing expectations - Compliments ABSA AgriTrend if rainfall becomes patchy, interrupted by warmer and drier spells, yield potential can slip quickly.

That broader climate pressure is already well established. South Africa's climate-risk material continues to warn of rising temperatures, increasing rainfall variability, and growing production pressure on water, labour and livestock systems. Grain SA's wheat reporting adds another layer, showing a market environment shaped not only by local production risk, but also by global supply pressure and price sensitivity.

For wheat, then, the outlook is not binary. It is about whether the sea-

Maize may still dominate, but more selectively. Soybeans should remain attractive in stronger eastern zones. Sunflower may gain ground where risk management becomes the priority.

Wheat will depend heavily on the rhythm of the winter rainfall season, not just the total volume.

The 2026/27 season may still offer solid opportunities. But it looks increasingly like one of those years when the best decisions will not be the boldest ones.

**They will be the smartest ones.**

**Staff Writer**



# Wheat 2026: South Africa's Planting Season Opens on a Knife-Edge

South Africa's wheat farmers are moving into planting season with little room for missteps. The issue is not one dramatic threat, but a stack of pressures arriving at once: rising fertiliser costs, weak global wheat prices, and a weather outlook that still leaves too much hanging in the balance.

## Costs are already crowding the conversation

Across the wheat belt, the pre-season tone is being set by input costs. Grain SA's March input monitoring report showed that urea prices rose **10.8% month on month**, with disruption in Gulf exports linked to Middle East conflict adding fresh pressure to the fertiliser market. For wheat producers, that is not just another statistic. It lands directly on one of the most important cost items before planting is fully under way.

That matters even more in a season where profitability is already tight. Grain SA and Agbiz have both pointed to the strain higher production costs are placing on grain producers, especially in an environment where growers do

***This is not a season opening on confidence. It is a season opening on calculation.***

not have the luxury of strong prices to cushion the blow.

## The market is offering little relief

If input costs were rising into a buoyant market, the mood might be different. But global wheat supplies remain ample, and that is keeping a lid on prices. The USDA's Pretoria office says South Africa's wheat area is expected to remain broadly stable in 2026/27, with subdued domestic prices and competition from oilseeds limiting any real expansion. It forecasts planted area at about **500,000 hectares** and production at roughly **1.94 million tonnes**.

That softer outlook is also reflected in sector sentiment. The Agbiz/IDC Agribusiness Confidence Index fell by **18 points to 49** in the first quarter of 2026, slipping below the neutral 50 mark. Agbiz said weaker sentiment was partly driven by lower global wheat prices and pressure in winter crop regions.

## Rain may still decide the mood

Weather remains the wildcard. Wandile Sihlobo, citing the South African Weather Service's March seasonal outlook, noted that the **south-western parts** of the country may see a relatively

drier start to the season, while the **south-eastern and eastern coastal areas** are expected to receive above-normal rainfall. That is a serious watchpoint because the Western Cape accounts for **more than two-thirds of South Africa's winter crop area**.

***For wheat farmers in 2026, the real question is not whether they can plant, but whether the margin will justify it.***

For wheat growers, that means the season is opening with one eye on the skies and the other on the numbers. Planting will go ahead, but ambition may be tempered by margin. In 2026, wheat is not entering the season with momentum. It is entering with caution.

Staff Writer



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## Foot and Mouth Disease Frontline Can South Africa Outrun Its Livestock Threat?

South Africa's war against foot-and-mouth disease has moved into a new phase. Vaccines are landing, local production is back, and the Department of Agriculture has shifted from crisis messaging to mass rollout.

But on the ground, producer organisations are still asking the same hard question: can the country move fast enough, clearly enough and at sufficient scale to stay ahead of a disease that continues to batter confidence, disrupt trade and squeeze livestock farmers?

### From containment to campaign

Foot-and-mouth disease is no longer being treated as a contained veterinary issue. It has become a national livestock threat with serious consequences for farm cash flow, movement of animals, market access and long-term confidence in the system. Government's answer in 2026 has been to go bigger: import more vaccine, restart local production and build a vaccination strategy aimed at containing outbreaks and stabilising the national herd. The Department's January strategy set ambitious goals, including a sharp reduction in outbreaks in high-risk provinces and vaccination coverage of around 80% in targeted cat-

tle populations.

The campaign has gained momentum. On 21 February, the first major shipment of **one million doses** from Biogénesis Bagó in Argentina arrived in South Africa. Those doses were rapidly distributed to provinces, and more followed. Government later confirmed it would **cover the full cost** of vaccines administered as part of the national response. ARC/LNR said that by **26 March 2026**, more than **1.7 million animals** had already been vaccinated, with a further **3.5 million doses** expected during April. That is real movement, and far more decisive than the stop-start mood that surrounded the outbreak earlier in the year.

### The science is back — but scale is everything

One of the most important developments is that South Africa is no longer relying only on foreign supply. On **6 February 2026**, the ARC handed over the first batch of **12,900 locally produced FMD vaccines**, the first such batch released in more than 20 years. The ARC says this marks the return of a local vaccine capability that had been missing for decades. Government has also said the local line would initially produce

around **20,000 doses a week**, with far greater scale planned later. That is strategically important. A country facing recurring FMD pressure cannot afford to remain entirely dependent on offshore supply every time the disease surges.

But strategic importance is not the same as immediate sufficiency. At farm level, the question is brutally practical: is the current response big enough, fast enough and precise enough to make a difference before more damage is done? That is where the producer bodies begin to diverge from the optimism of official statements.

### SAAI: execution, not more promises

SAAI's position is that the crisis has moved beyond planning and now demands immediate execution. The organisation has called for private-sector vaccine procurement and administration, faster permits with clear turnaround times, legal clarity on movement rules, and practical protocols around milk and meat handling. Its argument is simple: South Africa already has private capacity that could be used more aggressively, and delays in using that capacity are costing farmers money. SAAI is not rejecting vaccination. It is warning that

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vaccination without speed, coordination and legal certainty will not restore trust in the system.

**TLU SA: Are we fighting with the right vaccine?**

TLU SA is pressing a more technical and more uncomfortable challenge. It says that during a February visit to Onderstepoort, it was indicated that a **trivalent vaccine** covering **SAT 1, SAT 2 and SAT 3** would be developed and rolled out. According to TLU, what appears to be happening in practice is different: a **single-strain** approach is now being produced and distributed. The organisation argues that this raises serious questions about regulatory approval, strain coverage and whether farmers are

being protected against the strain actually present in their area. It has also warned that blood testing and proper strain identification should come before vaccine deployment if the response is to be scientifically and practically sound.

This concern matters because the Department’s January strategy referred to a **trivalent vaccine** tailored for South Africa, while ARC and government statements around the restarted local production line refer to **monovalent SAT 1, SAT 2 or SAT 3 vaccine** output from the ARC. That distinction may make sense scientifically inside an emergency system, but it is exactly the kind of complexity that creates distrust when communication on the ground is not crystal clear.

**The real frontline**

South Africa can outrun this livestock threat, but only if FMD is treated as a systems battle and not a vaccine headline. The country now has more momentum than it had a few months ago: imported doses, a funded national roll-out, local production, and a formal strategy. Yet the warnings from SAAI and TLU SA point to the same deeper truth.

Vaccines alone will not win this war. The outcome will depend on traceability, movement control, strain matching, laboratory support, regulatory clarity and the speed at which government and industry can work together. That is the real frontline now. And that is where this fight will be won or lost.

*Staff Writer*

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around access to supply. According to a March AgriSA survey cited by Reuters, slightly fewer than half

***In 2026, the challenge is not only growing the crop. It is affording to harvest it.***

of surveyed farmers had difficulty sourcing diesel, while some were only able to buy limited volumes. That makes the issue more serious than a routine price complaint. It becomes an operational risk.

**Margin, Not Yield, May Decide the Season**

This is why the 2026 story deserves national attention. South Africa is not facing a classic production crisis. The risk is not mainly in the field. The risk is what happens after the crop is ready. If diesel stays elevated for an extended period,

the cost of harvesting, handling and transporting grain begins to eat into returns at speed. For grain producers already operating within tight margins, that can turn a good season into a frustrating one. Reuters quoted one North West farmer saying that if fuel prices remain at these levels, it may stop

***This season may be measured less in tonnes per hectare and more in how much value farmers are still allowed to keep.***

making financial sense to grow maize at all. Agbiz has already pointed to the same fault line. Its assessment is that the crop outlook is encouraging and that grain and oilseed supplies should support a moderating path for food inflation in 2026. But it also notes

that the major risk to that view is higher fuel prices linked to events in the Middle East. That is the real tension of the season: strong agricultural fundamentals on one side, external cost shocks on the other.

**Can Farmers Still Win?**

Yes, but the win is no longer guaranteed by yield alone. South African farmers can still come through 2026 with a solid result if the current crop estimates hold, if diesel supply stabilises, and if the present fuel shock proves temporary rather than prolonged. The production foundation is sound. What threatens profitability is the cost of getting the crop off the land and into the market. For now, the fields have done their part. The combines and trucks will decide how much of that success remains in farmers’ hands. *Staff Writer*





## Planting Tobacco in South Africa

**From the Lowveld to the Klein Karoo, tobacco remains a precision crop that rewards growers who get the timing, water and leaf handling exactly right**

**T**obacco is not a broad-acre crop in South Africa anymore, but where it is planted well, it can still deliver strong value per hectare.

What makes it challenging is that it is far less forgiving than many other crops. Soil structure, irrigation design, balanced feeding, careful topping, disease control, staged harvesting and correct curing all have to work together.

In South Africa, production is spread across distinct pockets rather than one single belt, with the main growing areas in Limpopo, North West, Mpumalanga, the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape, including Oudtshoorn in the Klein Karoo. Two classes dominate the local industry: flue-cured and air-cured tobacco.

### **Different provinces suit different tobacco systems**

The country's main flue-cured tobacco zones remain the familiar irrigated belts of Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West. Official commodity profiles identify

the major areas as Ellisras, Moko-pane, Naboomspruit, Sterkrivier and Vaalwater in Limpopo, Brits, Groot Marico and Rustenburg in North West, and the Lowveld and Loskop areas in Mpumalanga.

At the same time, air-cured tobacco has a clear place in the South African map too, particularly in parts of the Eastern Cape and Western Cape. Oudtshoorn is specifically listed in official profiles as a Western Cape tobacco-growing district, which is why the Klein Karoo should not be treated as a side note in any serious overview of the crop.

### **Soil preparation decides whether the crop ever reaches its potential**

Tobacco likes a well-drained, well-aerated root zone and does not tolerate prolonged waterlogging. South African research also shows that the crop can be grown successfully on heavier black clay soils, but only if drainage and irrigation are handled properly. CORESTA work on black clay soils found that low infiltration and

rainfall swings make surface drainage and supplementary irrigation essential for good production. On those soils, ridging is not cosmetic; it is practical risk management.

For flue-cured tobacco, South African cultivar work points to a preferred soil pH range of roughly 5.5 to 6.5, which means soil testing before planting is not optional. Growers chasing a bumper crop need to know what they are correcting before they throw on lime or fertiliser.

Good tobacco soils are not necessarily the richest soils on the farm, but they must be friable, balanced and able to drain properly after heavy rain or irrigation.

### **Planting starts long before the first transplant hits the land**

Tobacco is established from seedlings, not by direct sowing into the field, and that early nursery phase often has a bigger influence on the final crop than many growers realise. Long before fertiliser programmes, topping decisions or curing schedules come into play,

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the crop's potential is already being shaped by the quality, uni-



formity and health of the young plants going into the soil. Strong seedlings give growers a far better chance of achieving even establishment, balanced growth, more predictable maturity and, ultimately, more consistent leaf quality across the land.

That is why the choice of nursery partner matters. In a crop as technically demanding as tobacco, weak or uneven transplants can create problems that never fully disappear. Patchy establishment leads to patchy fields, irregular maturity, uneven leaf size and more difficult harvesting management later in the season. A grower can do many things right after transplanting, but if the seedlings are inconsistent from the start, the crop is already working against them.

### **Watering method can change both yield and profitability**

All flue-cured tobacco in South Africa is grown under irrigation, and the choice of system matters. South African CORESTA work comparing drip and sprinkler irrigation in Rustenburg, Groblersdal and Nelspruit found that drip-irrigated tobacco outperformed sprinkler systems, with reported yield gains of 10% to 70% and

yields in the region of 3.0 to 3.6 t/ha under drip, depending on site and management. The same work also noted sharply lower pumping costs under drip.

That does not mean every tobacco farmer must switch overnight. It does mean that where water is scarce, electricity is expensive and management is disciplined, drip deserves serious consideration. Sprinklers can still work, but poor design, maintenance or timing can drag both yield and leaf quality down.

### **Fertigation must feed the crop without overdriving it**

Tobacco is a hungry crop, especially for potassium. South African nutrient uptake data presented through CORESTA found average uptake by the aerial parts of about 145 kg nitrogen, 18 kg phosphorus and 224 kg potassium per hectare. That alone explains why balanced nutrition matters so much.

But the crop also punishes excess. Too much nitrogen can delay ripening, increase sucker growth, complicate curing and pull the crop away from the clean, uniform maturity that buyers want. The best approach is still the least glamorous one: base the programme on a soil test, correct pH first, supply early nutrition steadily, and avoid feeding for lush growth at the expense of leaf quality. Rapid nutrient uptake occurs during the strong vegetative phase, which is when the crop must not be allowed to run short.

### **The small management details are what secure a bumper crop**

A bumper tobacco crop is usually built on discipline rather than dramatic interventions. It starts with healthy, even transplants. It depends on clean land preparation, reliable irrigation, weed con-

trol, and steady crop development without repeated setbacks. It also relies on timely topping and sucker control. Production guidance and trial material consistently show that topping too late costs yield and makes the crop harder to manage.

Tobacco should generally be topped once roughly 40% to 50% of plants reach the elongated button stage, with the rest topped as soon as practical.

Disease pressure also changes by region. South African cultivar-development work notes that in faster-growing, higher-rainfall areas, the main disease problems include Black Shank, Granville Wilt, Alternaria and PVY virus, while root-knot nematodes and angular leaf spot are more prominent in slower-ripening, hotter areas. That is why no serious tobacco programme should talk about cultivar choice without talking about local disease pressure at the same time.

### **Harvesting is staged, not rushed**

Tobacco is not harvested in one sweep. The leaves ripen progressively and are usually removed by priming, starting lower down the plant and moving upward as maturity develops.

Rushing immature leaf into the curing system is one of the easiest ways to lose value. Good tobacco growers harvest mature leaf, not merely convenient leaf. Food For Mzansi reports one South African example where harvesting starts about 52 days after transplanting, but the broader reality is that leaf picking then continues in stages as different positions reach maturity.

Once cured, the leaf must be handled like the valuable product it is. Official value-chain guidance notes that the leaf is graded according to colour, size and texture,

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## Living With the Risk

### How South Africa's Sheep Farmers Are Coming to Terms With FMD

For South Africa's sheep farmers, foot-and-mouth disease is not always a crisis that arrives with obvious warning signs. Often, it is quieter than that.

The symptoms may be subtle, but the impact is not.

From movement controls and quarantine to auction pressure, lost confidence and constant uncertainty, FMD is forcing sheep producers to farm more cautiously than ever before.

South Africa's sheep farmers are not coming to terms with foot-and-mouth disease because they want to. They are doing so because they have no real choice.

That is the uncomfortable truth behind one of the country's most emotional livestock challenges. FMD has become more than a veterinary issue.

It is now a daily management issue, a market issue, a movement issue and, for many farming families, a mental and emotional burden that hangs over every decision involving livestock.

For sheep producers, the challenge is even more difficult because the disease does not always reveal itself dramatically.

**The danger is often what you do not see**

In cattle, FMD tends to attract attention quickly. In sheep, it can be

*"For sheep farmers, the most dangerous thing about FMD is not always what is visible, but what can move quietly through the system."*

much quieter.

A slight limp. A small lesion. A bit of discomfort. An animal that seems just slightly off. These are not the kinds of signs that always trigger alarm bells in a busy production

hold, the implications may already stretch far beyond one flock.

This is what sheep farmers are having to adjust to most: the idea that looking healthy is no longer enough.

A flock may appear normal and still pose risk.

That changes the way producers watch their animals. It changes the way they think about movement.

It changes the way they approach sales, transport, replacement stock and contact with other farms.



**The real pain is often in the movement chain**

Ask many sheep farmers where FMD hurts the most, and the answer is often in the movement chain. **Continue on Page No. 18**

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swer is often not in the symptoms. It is in everything that follows.

Movement controls, declarations, isolation periods, stricter auction conditions and heightened scrutiny around gatherings have changed the ordinary rhythm of livestock farming. What used to be routine is now layered with caution. Buying, selling, transporting and introducing animals all require a more disciplined approach.

For producers who depend on regular livestock movement, this is not a small inconvenience. It affects timing, flexibility and confidence. It can slow trade, complicate logistics and create uncertainty around deals that might once have been simple.

That is one of the hardest parts of this reality. The flock may be fine, but the system around the flock no longer moves as freely as it once did.

**Biosecurity is no longer optional language**

Another major shift is how deeply biosecurity has entered everyday farming life.

It is no longer a word reserved for meetings, regulations and veterinary briefings. It now lives in the practical details of the farmyard. Boots matter. Vehicle tyres matter. Loading ramps matter. Trailers matter. Visitors matter. A shared piece of equipment matters.

That is because FMD is not only about animal-to-animal spread. It is also about what moves between farms, auctions and properties without anyone thinking twice.

For sheep farmers, this demands a mindset change. Farming cannot rely on habit alone anymore. It requires a more deliberate way of working, where small lapses can carry outsized consequences.

**Vaccination brings support, not freedom**

South Africa's national response has increasingly focused on vaccination, surveillance, traceability, movement control and stronger farm-level biosecurity. That matters, and it brings some reassurance that the issue is being tackled with seriousness.

But vaccination is not a magic release valve for sheep producers.

It does not remove the need for caution. It does not erase the pressure around paperwork, transport and isolation. It does not remove the emotional strain of knowing that one wrong move, one missed sign or one risky contact point can create serious problems.

So while national disease control efforts are essential, sheep farmers still carry the daily burden where it matters most: on the ground, in real time, with real consequences.

**This is a farming story, but it is also a human one**

That is why FMD remains such an emotional topic in South Africa.

Behind every regulation is a farmer trying to stay productive. Behind every outbreak zone is a family trying to plan ahead in an environment that keeps shifting.

Behind every movement restriction is a producer worrying about timing, income, market access and the health status of the flock.

FMD tests more than disease control systems. It tests patience. It tests resilience. It tests trust between farmers, buyers, transporters and the institutions meant to stabilise the sector.

***“Coming to terms with FMD does not mean farmers are at peace with it. It means they are learning to farm with one eye constantly on risk.”***

For sheep farmers especially, it also tests confidence, because the disease can be so easy to underestimate.

**Farming under pressure is becoming the new discipline**

So how are South Africa's sheep farmers coming to terms with FMD?

By farming differently.

They are watching more closely. Recording more carefully. Moving more cautiously. Isolating more seriously. Questioning more. Cleaning more. Reporting earlier. In short, they are learning that resilience now includes biosecurity, traceability and restraint alongside production.

No one would choose this version of farming. But it is the reality many sheep producers are now navigating.

Coming to terms with FMD does not mean accepting it lightly. It means learning to operate in a harder environment, where vigilance has become part of survival and where the quietest signs can carry the heaviest cost.

*Staff Writer*



# Nature vs Nurture

## The Power of Livestock Genetics in Modern Animal Production

**Animal performance is shaped by far more than feed, climate and management. Beneath the surface lies a microscopic world of DNA, chromosomes and genetic variation that determines what cattle are truly capable of achieving. Understanding the balance between Nature and Nurture is becoming increasingly important for building herds that are productive, resilient and fit for the future.**

For generations, livestock farmers have relied on instinct, observation and experience to shape the animals that form the backbone of modern agriculture. Through careful selection, herds have been refined to meet the demands of productivity, resilience and efficiency. Today, that same principle continues, but with a deeper understanding and far more precise tools at our disposal.

At the heart of animal production lies a powerful dynamic: **Nature versus Nurture.**

While management practices such as nutrition, disease control and environmental conditions play a vital role in shaping performance, there is another force, less visible yet equally influential, that determines what an animal is truly capable of achieving. That force is Livestock Genetics.

### A Bigger Picture Worth Remembering

It is easy to focus on what we can see and control. Feed quality can be measured. Growth rates can be tracked. Environmental conditions can be adjusted. These are all critical components of livestock production.

But every animal carries a genetic blueprint that sets the limits of its potential long before it enters the production system.

Performance, therefore, is never

***“An animal’s performance is never shaped by genetics alone, or management alone — it is the result of both Nature and Nurture working together.”***

purely a result of management. It

is the outcome of how well an animal’s genetic potential is supported by its environment and care.

Understanding this relationship is essential for building herds that are not only productive, but also resilient in the face of modern challenges such as climate variability, rising input costs and shifting market demands.

### A Glimpse into the Microscopic World

Beneath the surface of every animal lies an extraordinary level of biological complexity.

Genes, which carry the instructions for life, are organised into structures known as chromosomes. These chromosomes contain DNA, long sequences of genetic information that guide growth, development, survival and perfor-

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mance.

They also determine an animal's phenotype, or visible traits, such as coat colour, size and muscle development.

What makes this even more remarkable is the scale of it all.

Within a single cell of a human or a head of cattle, there is approximately two metres of DNA. When considered across the entire body, this DNA could stretch to the sun

***“Within a single cell of cattle, there is around two metres of DNA packed into chromosomes.”***

and back, roughly 150 million kilometres, around 80 times.

It is a staggering reminder of just how much information is packed into every living organism.

### **The Engine of Variation**

The true power of genetics lies in its ability to create variation.

Genetic variation is what allows breeders to select animals with desirable traits and gradually improve herd performance over time. Without it, there would be no progress.

This variation is largely determined by how genes are organised and inherited.

Humans have 46 chromosomes, while cattle have 60 chromosomes — a number that significantly increases the potential for genetic diversity. During reproduction, offspring inherit a unique combination of chromosomes from both parents.

The possibilities are almost unimaginable.

A human couple, for instance, can

produce a child with more than 70 trillion unique chromosome combinations. When additional genetic processes such as recombination are considered, the number grows exponentially.

In cattle, the numbers are even more striking. With more than 22,000 genes and 60 chromo-

***“A single calf from a bull and cow may inherit one of more than a million trillion possible chromosome combinations.”***

somes, a single calf may inherit one of more than a million trillion ( $10^{18}$ ) possible genetic combinations.

This immense diversity forms the foundation of all breeding and selection efforts.

### **From Theory to Application**

While the science behind genetics may seem abstract, its practical applications in livestock farming are both real and far-reaching.

Over the past few decades, DNA technology has become an integral part of modern breeding programmes.

Farmers can now identify animals that carry beneficial or harmful genetic traits, including mutations linked to conditions such as curly calf syndrome or chromosomal abnormalities that affect reproduction.

Genetic markers have also been identified for economically import-

***Modern DNA technology allows farmers to identify profitable traits long before they are visible in the animal.”***

ant traits such as feed efficiency, growth rate, feed intake and milk production. This allows producers to make more informed selection decisions, often before these traits are even expressed.

In addition, genetic testing can be used to identify characteristics such as polledness, meaning naturally hornless cattle, and double muscling — traits that have direct implications for management and production.

### **Did You Know?**

#### **The Hidden Power of Livestock Genetics**

Every animal carries an astonishing amount of genetic information.

Cattle have **60 chromosomes** in each cell and more than **22,000 genes** that influence everything from growth and fertility to feed efficiency and resilience.

Inside just one cell, there is about **two metres of DNA**. Across the whole body, that adds up to enough **DNA to stretch to the sun and back around 80 times**.

#### **Why it matters on the farm**

- Identify harmful genetic mutations
- Verify parentage accurately
- Select for feed efficiency, growth and milk production
- Monitor inbreeding and genetic diversity
- Improve breeding decisions with greater confidence

#### **The bottom line**

Good management helps animals perform.

Good genetics determines what they can perform.

***Used together, they create stronger, healthier and more productive herds.***

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One of the most valuable tools available to breeders today is DNA-based parentage verification.

By accurately identifying the sire and dam of each animal, farmers can maintain reliable pedigree records, which are essential for stud breeding and genetic evaluation.

Beyond pedigree, genomic technologies now allow for the estimation of Genomic Breeding Values (GBVs). These values provide insight into an animal's genetic potential and its likely performance as a breeding candidate.

This means that selection decisions

***“The future of livestock production will belong to producers who combine strong genetics with strong management.”***

can be made earlier, faster and with greater accuracy.

Another critical application lies in understanding genetic diversity within and between populations. DNA analysis can reveal levels of inbreeding, gene flow and breed purity, factors that are essential for maintaining healthy, adaptable

herds. These insights support not only breeding decisions, but also long-term management and conservation strategies.

**Bringing Nature and Nurture Together**

Despite the remarkable advances in genetics, it is important to remember that genes alone do not guarantee performance.

An animal with excellent genetic potential will still underperform if it is poorly managed. Likewise, optimal management cannot fully compensate for weak genetics.

The real opportunity lies in combining the two.

By aligning strong Livestock Genetics with effective management practices, producers can unlock higher levels of efficiency, productivity and resilience.

**A Future Built on Knowledge**

As the demands on livestock production continue to grow, so too does the need for smarter, more informed decision-making.

The integration of genetic knowledge into everyday farming practices offers a powerful way forward. It allows producers to move

beyond reactive management and towards a more strategic approach, one that builds herds capable of thriving in complex and changing environments.

For thousands of years, farmers have shaped livestock through observation and selection. Today, with access to genetic information and advanced technologies, that process can be refined with unprecedented precision.

The challenge, and the opportunity, lies in understanding the balance between Nature and Nurture, and using both to their fullest potential.

**Dr Ben Greyling**

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**Read the expanded version online**

**For a deeper look at the role of DNA technology, genetic variation and genomic tools in livestock production, read the full article on the NuFarmer Africa website:**

**<https://nufarmerafrika.com>**

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after which tobacco is packed and sold on according to buyer specifications. Transport is therefore not a minor afterthought. Poor packing, bruising, moisture pickup and sloppy grading can undo months of good field management.

**New developments are less flashy and more practical**

The biggest advances in South African tobacco are not gimmicks. They are better region-specific cultivar development, stronger disease resistance, and more efficient water-use strategies. South African flue-cured tobacco

is grown across four very different production environments, and breeding work has focused on tolerance or resistance to Black Shank, Granville Wilt, root-knot nematodes, angular leaf spot, Alternaria and PVY virus. That work, importantly, is based on conventional breeding rather than genetic modification.

That is where the future of the crop lies: not in farming tobacco as though every hectare is the same, but in matching the right cultivar, irrigation system and management plan to each district's specific

climate, soils and disease profile.

From the irrigated flue-cured lands of Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West to the air-cured production pockets of Oudtshoorn and the Klein Karoo, tobacco in South Africa remains a crop for growers who pay attention.

Get the soil right, transplant evenly, water precisely, feed for balance, protect the crop from stress, and only harvest leaf at the right maturity. Do that, and tobacco can still deliver the kind of crop that justifies the effort.

**Staff Writer**



## Standardised Testing: The Quiet Foundation of Accurate Genetic Evaluation in Cattle

When buyers study a sales catalogue, they often focus on the indexes attached to each animal.

Those figures can shape major breeding decisions, influence buying confidence, and affect the long-term direction of a herd. But one important question sits behind every number on the page: how carefully were those measurements actually taken?

In-herd indexes remain an important decision-making tool when purchasing animals from a seed stock breeder. They are meant to provide context for how animals have performed within their own herd and environment. Yet those figures are only as trustworthy as the data collection and testing systems behind them.

At the heart of the issue is a simple principle from quantitative genetics: **Phenotype = Genotype + Environment**. This equation may appear straightforward, but it explains why standardised testing is so critical in cattle recording and genetic evaluation.

*"Breeders want to select animals with good genotypes, not just good phenotypes."*

### Why performance alone does not tell the full story

The phenotype is the observable trait of an animal. It is what can be seen or measured, such as weight, height, milk production, growth rate, muscling, or calving percentage.

The genotype, by contrast, is the animal's genetic makeup. It is the inherited portion of performance, the part that can be passed on to the next generation.

Environment includes everything else that influences how those traits are expressed. This covers factors such as nutrition, climate, disease exposure, management practices, and the wider production setting. Even animals with the same genotype can perform very differently if they are raised under different conditions.

### The equation breeders cannot ignore

Because phenotype is shaped by

both genes and environment, performance records can easily be misleading if environmental effects are not properly controlled. A strong-performing animal may owe much of that result to favourable conditions rather than superior genetics. Likewise, a genetically valuable animal may underperform in a weaker environment.

This is exactly why raw performance should never be treated as the full story.

### The role of heritability in breeding decisions

The article highlights an important example: if a trait is 20% heritable, then 80% of its observed expression is influenced by the environment. That means the visible trait may be driven far more by non-genetic factors than by the animal's actual breeding value.

For breeders, this has serious implications.

If environmental conditions are not standardised as far as possible, the measurements collected may

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reflect feeding conditions, management differences, or temporary influences more than real genetic merit. In that case, the resulting indexes can lead buyers and breeders in the wrong direction.

desirable traits on to its offspring. These values are calculated from performance records and pedigree data, and more recently can also include genomic information.

a specific animal's performance. Without that discipline, the accuracy, reliability, and comparability of genetic evaluations are weakened.



***“The goal for any person collecting performance data should be to reduce and control the environmental variation as much as possible.”***

**The real goal of data collection**

The person collecting performance data should therefore aim to reduce and control environmental variation as much as possible. When that happens, differences in phenotype are more likely to reflect genuine differences in genotype.

That is what gives breeders a stronger basis for selection and improves the likelihood of sustained genetic progress.

**Why standardised testing matters**

The primary goal of performance testing is to produce **Estimated Breeding Values**, or EBVs.

An EBV is a prediction of an animal's genetic potential to pass

EBVs are generated using **Best Linear Unbiased Prediction (BLUP)** models. These models are designed to separate genetic influences from environmental effects so that breeders get a more accurate picture of an animal's breeding potential.

**Accuracy depends on the quality of the test**

The higher the accuracy of an EBV, the more dependable it is as a guide to future genetic contribution. But this only works if the underlying measurements were collected using sound, standardised procedures.

That is why standardised testing is not a technical side issue. It is central to the integrity of the entire evaluation system.

Standardised procedures in animal performance recording are intended to identify and control, as far as possible, the environmental effects that may have influenced

**Contemporary groups: where fair comparison begins**

One of the most important tools in collecting accurate data for EBVs is the correct use of **contemporary groups**.

A contemporary group creates a standardised framework for comparing cattle fairly by ensuring that animals have been exposed to similar environmental conditions. This helps separate environmental effects from genetic differences more effectively.

**What is a contemporary group?**

A contemporary group is defined as animals that:

- are born in the same year or season, within a similar age range,
- are kept at the same location, such as the same herd or farm,
- are of the same sex, and
- are managed in the same way from birth to the time of measurement, including the same feeding regime and date of measurement.



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## South Africa's Private-Land Hunting Season in 2026

**Good veld in many regions, strong domestic demand, and an industry now shaped as much by paperwork and disease controls as by trophy quality**

**F**or South Africa's private-land hunting sector, 2026 is not shaping up as a weak year. In many of the country's summer-rainfall hunting regions, decent summer moisture should leave animals in fair condition heading into winter, even if thicker cover may make early hunts slower and more tactical.

But this is not a carefree season. Private land remains the centre of South African plains-game hunting, yet Foot-and-Mouth Disease, transport controls, provincial permit rules and firearm compliance are now part of the hunt itself.

For hunters targeting kudu, impala, swartwitpens, eland and springbok, success in 2026 will depend as much on planning and administration as on the veld.

### **Private land still carries the season**

Any serious discussion of hunting in South Africa has to begin with private land. Recent academic work places wildlife ranching on roughly **14% to 17%** of the country's land area, larger than the formal protected-area footprint, and estimates millions

of herbivores on private wildlife land. That matters because private ranches and game farms are not a side-show in South African hunting. They are the operational backbone of the sector, especially for plains game.

That also explains why the 2026 season will be judged property by property rather than by one national mood. The farms that perform best will be the ones that combine good habitat, stable game numbers, lawful access, proper cold-chain handling and clean compliance. In the current environment, professional management is no longer a bonus. It is the difference between a smooth season and an expensive headache.

***"In 2026, a good hunting farm is not only measured by the quality of its game, but by the quality of its compliance."***

### **The veld should help later rather than earlier**

The latest SAWS seasonal outlook points to warmer late-autumn and winter conditions across much of the country, with significant rainfall focused mainly on the southern and eastern coastal parts.

For hunting country in the summer-rainfall belt, that generally means many areas may enter the season with fuller veld and more cover than in a very dry year.

Experienced operators are already cautioning that early rifle hunts in bushveld and lowveld conditions may be slower because visibility is reduced while the veld is still holding. As winter progresses, however, northern and central hunting areas should become more open and easier to read.

For species such as kudu and swartwitpens in thicker terrain, that could make the early part of the season more demanding. Hunters may need to glass harder, stalk longer and accept that success is not always quick when the veld still has body. In more open country, springbok and eland should become more huntable sooner.

By mid- to late winter, reduced foliage and drier conditions should favour tracking, visibility and shot placement across much of the plains-game market.

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## The market still leans heavily local

The safest published reading of the current market is that South Africa's hunting economy remains **domestic-heavy by volume** and **internationally valuable by spend**. In the latest post-Covid analysis from North-West University researchers, the average local hunting tourist spent about **USD 3,594** per season, while the average



international hunting tourist spent about **USD 32,663** per trip. NWU's own summary of the study reaches the same basic conclusion: local hunters make up the bulk of the activity, while international hunters spend far more per person.

The same study estimates direct annual in-country hunting expenditure at about **USD 888.3 million**, made up of **USD 718.7 million** from domestic hunters and **USD 169.6 million** from international hunters after adjusting offshore costs that do not stay in South Africa. Through multiplier analysis, the researchers place the broader production impact at roughly **USD 2.54 billion**, or about **R44 billion**, and estimate that nearly **95,000 job opportunities** depend on hunting

tourism. Those are not small numbers, but they should still be read as research-based estimates rather than audited national counts.

For private landowners, the practical message is clear enough even without exaggeration. Domestic hunters remain essential to calendar volume and recurring seasonal trade. International hunters remain strategically important because their trips carry much higher spend per booking.

## Permits and firearms are part of the hunt, not admin after the fact

One of the biggest mistakes in magazine coverage is to write about private-land hunting as if the farm gate replaces the law. It does not.

Hunting in South Africa remains regulated mainly at provincial level, and written landowner permission still sits at the centre of lawful hunting on another person's property. In the Eastern Cape, the law is explicit that no one may hunt or remove a wild animal or carcass from another person's land without the owner's written permission, and that the permission must be reduced to writing before the hunt.

CapeNature's guidance reaches

the same practical conclusion in the Western Cape: even where the exact licence or permit requirement differs by species status, the landowner's written permission is still required.

The hunting season itself also remains provincial. The Western Cape's 2026 annual hunting notice, for example, shows why South Africans should stop asking for one national opening day. In that province, some huntable species such as **impala** and **springbok** are listed for **1 January to 31 December**, while **eland** is listed for **1 July to 31 August**. That provincial variation is exactly why outfitters and hunters have to work from the current notice for the relevant province and species, not from hearsay.

For South African hunters, firearm possession remains governed by the Firearms Control Act, which provides for licences for **occasional hunting**, **dedicated hunting**, and **professional hunting**. SAPS also makes it clear that an applicant must first complete accredited training and obtain a competency certificate before applying for a firearm licence.

For foreign hunters, the SAPS 520 process remains the key entry point. SAPS states that applications lodged directly with the Central Firearms Control Register should be submitted at least **21 days in advance**. At the port of entry, a temporary import permit may be issued to a foreign visitor hunting in South Africa, subject to conditions that include being **21 years or older**, limiting imports to **one firearm per calibre**, restricting ammunition to **200 rounds per firearm**, and generally excluding ordinary port-of-entry approval for semi-automatic or fully automatic rifles.

SAPS also states that the tempo-

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 rary import permit is not issued for longer than **six months**.

***“This season, the shot may still happen in the veld, but the hunt now begins with permits, movement rules and a calculator.”***

**FMD changes the hunt after the shot**

This is where 2026 breaks from the old rhythm of “shoot, load, go home”. South Africa’s official FMD technical report of **31 March 2026** recorded unresolved outbreaks in **all nine provinces**. The Minister of Agriculture has repeatedly said that movement control, vaccination, traceability, diag-

nostic capacity and enforcement are central to the recovery plan. In other words, the disease is no longer a cattle-only issue sitting somewhere in the background. It directly affects how hunters, farms and processors think about animal movement and meat handling.

That is most obvious in the movement rules. The KwaZulu-Natal DMA movement protocol states that meat and meat products from cloven-hoofed game, excluding warthog and buffalo, may move out of, within or through the DMA only with a movement permit and only under specific conditions. For hunters, that includes limits such as **own consumption only, one carcass per hunter or accompa-**

**nying person**, and requirements that the skin be removed, the carcass be cut up, and the meat be dry, drip-free and matured. Heads, feet and offal may not leave the property where the animal was slaughtered.

So the final lesson for 2026 is simple. South Africa’s private-land hunting season still has every chance to be commercially strong, especially for classic antelope species. But this year, the farms that win will not only be the ones with good animals and comfortable lodges. **They will be the ones that understand that biosecurity, lawful transport and proper paperwork are now part of the product.**

Staff Writer



*Continue From Page 24*  
**Why group structure matters**

The purpose of defining contemporary groups properly is to ensure that the most significant environmental influences are the same for all animals in that group. When this is done well, and when there are good genetic links between groups, BLUP models can more effectively separate genetic and environmental effects.

That makes the data more useful, the EBVs more accurate, and the selection decisions more reliable.

Ultimately, the use of contemporary groups in performance testing supports beef production efficiency and sustainability by improving the quality of genetic evaluation.

**Can catalogue indexes really be trusted?**

This brings the discussion back to the practical question many buy-

ers ask when flipping through a sales catalogue: can the indexes be trusted?

According to the article, there is only one real answer. Buyers can have confidence in those figures only if the breeder made every effort to take accurate measurements and to control and standardise the environment as far as possible through standardised testing procedures.

If that has not happened, environmental influences may have pushed performance up or down in ways that have little to do with genetic merit. The result is an index that tells an incomplete, or even distorted, story.

**Trust starts long before the sale day**

Accurate genetic evaluation does not begin in the catalogue ring. It begins much earlier, in the disci-

pline of performance recording, the quality of measurements, the consistency of management, and the careful construction of contemporary groups.

When breeders treat standardised testing as non-negotiable, they strengthen the value of EBVs and improve the chances of better-informed selection decisions. In the long run, that is what drives sustained genetic improvement in beef cattle.

***“The only way to know is to be sure that the breeder made every effort to take accurate measurements.”***

Written By Freek Botes and Melville Ferreira  
 ARC National Beef Recording and Improvement Scheme  
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## Poultry Under Pressure

### Why Biosecurity Has Become a Business Strategy

In South Africa's poultry sector, biosecurity is no longer a box-ticking exercise for auditors or veterinarians. It has become a business discipline tied to continuity, confidence and competitiveness. As disease pressure remains part of the operating environment, producers are being forced to rethink how birds, people, vehicles, water, litter and equipment move through the farm.

South Africa's poultry industry is too important to treat disease control as a side issue. Chicken remains one of the country's most accessible protein sources, and the sector supports value creation across grain, feed, farming, processing and retail. Yet the Poultry Sector Master Plan makes it clear that the industry has operated under strain for years. Consumption kept growing while local production stagnated and imports increased, leaving domestic producers to defend margins in an increasingly pressured environment. In that setting, disease shocks do more than affect flock health. They interrupt bird flow, unsettle contracts, weaken planning and shake confidence across the value chain. That is why biosecurity has moved far beyond routine hygiene. It now shapes

production continuity, investment decisions and the credibility of a poultry business under pressure.

#### **Why avian influenza changed the conversation**

South African research on highly pathogenic avian influenza shows that the country remains exposed to recurring risk through wild-bird pathways. Surveillance studies

***"Biosecurity is no longer a defensive spend. It is part of how serious producers protect output."***

have highlighted areas of elevated vulnerability and shown how quickly infection pressure can move once local bird populations become involved. That matters because outbreaks are not just veterinary events. They affect through-

put, labour planning, customer expectations and the willingness to reinvest. Once producers understand that a disease event can disrupt much more than mortality figures, biosecurity starts to look less like a compliance task and more like a core operating strategy. The industry cannot assume that the biological environment will become easier in the near future. Instead, it has to prepare for repeated pressure and build systems that reduce the chance of entry, amplification and spread.

#### **A checklist is not the same as a system**

Footbaths, fencing and visitor logs still matter, but they are only part of the picture. The real test is whether daily movement through the farm reduces biological risk

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in a consistent way. That includes staff traffic between houses, vehicle access, equipment handling, water hygiene, litter management, pest control and the separation of clean and dirty zones. Peer-reviewed work on South African chicken production identifies biosecurity, hygiene and vaccination as central disease-prevention tools, but it also makes the point that risk is never reduced to zero. That is why the strongest farms focus on systems, not slogans. A written protocol is only useful if it can be followed under pressure, by tired staff, in a busy production environment, without shortcuts becoming normal.

**The people problem is often the real weak point**

Behaviour matters as much as infrastructure. A disinfectant is only effective if it is used properly. A

***“The safest farms are not always the ones with the most rules, but the ones with the fewest weak points.”***

movement policy only works if the site is designed so that people can follow it without cutting corners. A vaccination programme can only support flock resilience if storage, handling and timing are disciplined. In practice, the strongest biosecurity systems are often the ones that make the right action the easiest action. Good design reduces temptation, confusion and

inconsistency. That is one reason many producers are looking beyond products alone and focusing instead on better routines, clearer traffic flow and more practical ways to enforce standards every day.

**Why this matters for suppliers**

For suppliers, the commercial opportunity sits inside that logic.

create a farm where prevention is embedded in the daily rhythm of production rather than bolted on after something goes wrong.

**Discipline is becoming a competitive advantage**

The next phase of poultry competitiveness in South Africa will favour the most disciplined operators. Researchers continue to point to the



Poultry producers are not simply looking for more products. They are looking for fewer points of failure. That makes practical, system-based solutions especially relevant: access control, water treatment, sanitation chemistry, wild-bird exclusion, rodent control, improved wash-down design, hygienic housing materials, protective wear, staff training systems and tools that make compliance easier to monitor. The real value of these solutions is not only technical. It is operational. They help

country’s exposure to avian influenza introductions and the need for stronger surveillance coordination. That means private-sector biosecurity cannot wait for perfect conditions elsewhere in the system. It has to be proactive, repeatable and commercially serious. In the years ahead, the farms that treat biosecurity as a business discipline rather than a veterinary afterthought are likely to be the ones best positioned to protect output, defend relationships and keep growing. **Staff Writer**

***Biosecurity Pressure Points on a Modern Poultry Farm***

**The most common weak points in a poultry system are often ordinary ones:**

- uncontrolled staff movement,
- contaminated equipment,
- poorly managed visitor access,
- poor litter control and
- inconsistent sanitation,
- unreliable water hygiene.
- weak wild-bird exclusion,

***The cost of these gaps can be much greater than the cost of preventing them.***



## SA Poultry Under Pressure Feed Efficiency, Climate Control and the Rise of *Smarter Infrastructure*

***In a high-cost, high-pressure poultry environment, feed efficiency can no longer be treated as a nutrition issue alone. In South Africa, the real performance story runs through shed design, air quality, water systems, thermal stability and smarter monitoring. The farms that master those links are the ones most likely to defend margins and perform consistently.***

In modern poultry production, the shed is no longer just a structure around the birds. It plays a direct role in how efficiently feed is converted into growth, health and stable commercial performance.

### **Feed efficiency begins long before the feeder line**

When poultry producers talk about feed efficiency, the first instinct is often to focus on formulation, ingredient quality or feed cost. Those factors matter, but they are only part of the story. In practice, feed efficiency is shaped just as much by the environment in which birds are expected to perform. A well-formulated ration cannot deliver its full value inside a shed that is too hot, too wet, poorly ventilated or inconsistent in water delivery.

That is why the performance con-

version in modern poultry is changing. Producers are under pressure to convert every input into stable, repeatable output. In South Africa, where margins remain exposed to cost pressure, the production environment has become a commercial issue, not just a technical one. Feed may begin in the bin, but its value is carried through the shed, the drinker line, the ventilation pattern and the daily management decisions that determine whether birds can convert nutrients efficiently.

***"In modern poultry, the shed is part of the ration."***

### **Heat stress quietly erodes profitability**

Heat stress is one of the clearest examples of how infrastructure and performance intersect. Birds under

thermal stress do not behave like birds in stable conditions. They reduce feed intake, shift energy away from growth and become harder to manage consistently. The result is not only weaker performance, but a more expensive production cycle.

This is why temperature control should no longer be viewed as a background utility. It is a production variable. Roof design, insulation, airflow, cooling systems and the ability to maintain a stable internal climate all influence how well birds respond to the ration in front of them. A feed programme can only perform as intended if the bird is in a condition to use it properly.

In practical terms, every period of preventable heat stress pushes efficiency in the wrong direction. It

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affects growth, uniformity and the predictability that modern poultry businesses depend on. When producers invest in a better climate environment, they are not simply

**"A better environment helps every tonne of feed work harder."**

spending on comfort. They are protecting conversion efficiency.



### Air quality is a production variable

Air quality often receives less attention than feed and temperature, but it can quietly strip value out of a flock. Poor ventilation, damp litter and rising ammonia levels all create conditions that force birds to cope when they should be growing. Once that happens, performance begins to slip, and the cost of poor environmental control starts to show up in the wrong places.

This is where smarter sheds begin to separate stronger operators from weaker ones. Better airflow, more stable ventilation, tighter litter management and cleaner water systems all contribute to a more reliable growing environment. These are not cosmetic improvements. They are part of the production system itself.

The same principle applies to water. If water delivery is inconsistent,

poor in quality or badly managed, the feed programme loses value. Birds cannot perform efficiently without consistent access to clean water. In a pressured industry, that makes water systems part of the feed-efficiency conversation too.

### Smarter sheds are becoming smarter businesses

Smarter infrastructure does not only mean automation or expensive sensors. It includes practical

upgrades that reduce avoidable stress and help producers respond earlier when something begins to drift. Better monitoring, faster detection of environmental change, more reliable ventilation control, improved cooling, tighter water management and more stable housing conditions all support more consistent output.

That is why infrastructure is increasingly being viewed in a different light. It is no longer just overhead. It is becoming a performance tool. The modern poultry shed does far more than house birds. It shapes how efficiently those birds convert feed, handle stress and move through the production cycle.

For suppliers, this creates strong commercial relevance. **Feed brands, additive companies, ventilation specialists, water-system providers, climate-control businesses, generator suppli-**

**ers, automation firms and poultry-equipment manufacturers all sit inside the same performance story.** Producers are not simply buying products. They are looking for practical ways to reduce waste, improve stability and defend margins.

**"Infrastructure is no longer overhead. It is a performance tool."**

### Conclusion

South Africa's poultry competitiveness will depend not only on the price of inputs, but on how efficiently producers can convert those inputs into stable, repeatable output. **The more tightly nutrition, airflow, water and infrastructure work together, the stronger the production system becomes.** In a sector under pressure, smarter sheds are not a luxury. They are part of the path to resilience.

Staff Writer

### What Smarter Infrastructure Really Means

Smarter infrastructure is not only automation or high-end sensors.

It includes practical improvements that help birds perform more consistently:

- *steadier temperature control,*
- *more effective airflow,*
- *better litter management,*
- *cleaner water delivery,*
- *faster detection of environmental drift, and*
- *housing systems that reduce avoidable stress.*

**When those factors improve, feed efficiency usually improves with them.**



## Open-Field Tomatoes Still Carry South Africa's Supply

### Why precision, resilience and field discipline are defining the next production standard

South Africa's tomato industry still depends heavily on open-field production. That keeps the crop central to the country's vegetable economy, but it also leaves growers exposed to the realities of weather, water, soil and disease pressure. The encouraging part is that the sector's response is becoming sharper: stronger cultivar choice, better soil preparation, tighter irrigation discipline and more structured field management are helping shape a more resilient future for open-field tomatoes.

Tomatoes remain one of South Africa's most important vegetable crops, both in commercial agriculture and in informal trade. They are a staple fresh-market product, a key income source for producers, and an essential part of vegetable supply across the country. In Limpopo, provincial guidance iden-

tifies the province as the major producer, with about 3 590 hectares planted to tomatoes. Just as importantly, South African sources continue to show that most of the country's tomatoes are still produced in open-field systems rather than under protection.

That reality is what makes the current discussion around tomato production so important. The central question is no longer simply how to grow tomatoes well. It is how to produce a reliable, profitable, good-quality crop in open fields while managing climate variability, water pressure, soil limitations and an increasingly demanding disease environment.

Field production remains more accessible because it requires less capital and infrastructure than protected systems, but that accessibility comes with exposure. Growers

have less control over weather, greater variability in yield, and a heavier reliance on planning and discipline.

***"Open-field tomato production remains the backbone of South Africa's supply, but it increasingly rewards growers who manage every detail with precision."***

#### **A climatic advantage, but not a free pass**

One of South Africa's major advantages is its climatic range. Commercial production guidelines note that the country's diverse conditions allow good-quality fresh tomatoes to be planted and grown in open fields across different regions during different periods of the year.

That flexibility supports continuity of supply and gives producers the

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chance to align production with regional planting windows.

Yet tomatoes remain a sensitive crop. South African production guidance makes it clear that performance depends on relatively stable temperatures. Starke Ayres notes that large deviations from suitable ranges can reduce yield and fruit quality.

The national Department of Agriculture's tomato brochure states that fruit set and quality are poor below 12°C and at 35°C, while hot, dry winds can lead to flower drop and prolonged wet conditions encourage foliar disease. For open-field growers, planting date is therefore not just an operational decision. It is one of the season's most important risk-management choices.

**The crop's strength starts below the surface**

If there is one area receiving renewed attention in South African tomato production, it is soil preparation. Tomatoes need deep, well-drained soils, adequate aeration, good organic matter and conditions that allow roots to move freely.

Limpopo's provincial guidance notes that compacted soils hamper root development, while Farmers Weekly recently highlighted the value of proper soil preparation in reducing compaction, improving oxygen availability, increasing water retention and reducing root disease pressure.

This is more than a technical detail. In open-field production, strong root development is one of the

***"In open-field tomatoes, resilience starts below ground. Soil preparation is not background work — it is production strategy."***

crop's best buffers against stress. Healthy root zones help plants draw moisture more efficiently, withstand short dry periods more effectively and maintain steadier nutrient uptake through the season. Resilience, in other words, starts below ground.

**Irrigation is a quality issue as much as a quantity issue**

South African guidance is unambiguous on water: irrigation is critical in tomato production. But irrigation is not just about supplying enough water. The Department of Agriculture notes that excessive irrigation after a long dry spell can cause fruit cracking, while late irrigation can produce watery fruit of poor quality. That makes irrigation discipline just as important as irrigation volume.

For growers, the message is practical. Water management influences far more than plant survival. It directly affects fruit quality, firmness, appearance and marketability. In a crop where visual presentation and shelf life play such a large role in returns, irrigation must be viewed as part of quality control, not only crop maintenance.

**Disease pressure keeps raising the management standard**

Tomato production in South Africa has always required close management, and disease pressure remains one of the strongest reasons. National guidance lists an extensive range of diseases affecting tomatoes, including early blight, late blight, grey mould, bacterial canker, bacterial spot, bacterial speck, bacterial wilt, Fusarium wilt, anthracnose, septoria leaf spot, mosaic and spotted wilt.

That list alone explains why growers are placing more emphasis on prevention, hygiene and long-term field health.

The South African response is

consistent across sources: plant resistant cultivars where possible, maintain sanitation, control weeds, and rotate properly. The national tomato brochure recommends resistant cultivars, proper sanitation, crop rotation and integrated pest and disease management.

Farmers Weekly adds a practical industry benchmark, citing guidance that tomatoes should ideally return to the same field only after three years. In open-field systems, that kind of discipline is not excessive. It is essential.

***"The future of open-field tomato production will belong to growers who treat prevention as seriously as production."***

**Cultivar choice is now a business decision**

South African research also points to the growing importance of cultivar selection. Producers are working with a fast turnover of available cultivars, each with its own



strengths and weaknesses in yield, fruit size, fruit quality, disease tolerance and response to temperature extremes. That means cultivar choice has become one of the earliest and most important commercial decisions in the crop cycle. The wrong variety in the wrong place or season can carry a real cost.

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Matching cultivar to climate, market channel and field conditions is therefore no longer optional refinement. It is part of professional crop planning. In a production environment where margins depend on consistency, the seed decision increasingly shapes the season long before the first harvest begins.

**A positive direction for the industry**

What stands out in the current South African tomato conversation is that it is not defeatist. Open-field production remains relevant, widespread and commercially important. The sector is not moving away from field tomatoes.

It is improving how they are man-

aged. Better soil preparation, smarter irrigation, tighter rotation, stronger cultivar choices and more disciplined marketing are all helping define the next standard. Farmers Weekly also notes the importance of securing a market before planting and spreading risk across multiple channels. That combination of agronomic discipline and sound business planning is what will keep open-field tomatoes strong in South Africa.

Open-field tomatoes are still carrying much of South Africa's supply. The challenge is real, but so is the opportunity. With the right management, field-grown tomatoes remain fully capable of delivering quality, volume and value.

*Staff Writer*

**Key priorities in South African open-field tomato production include:**

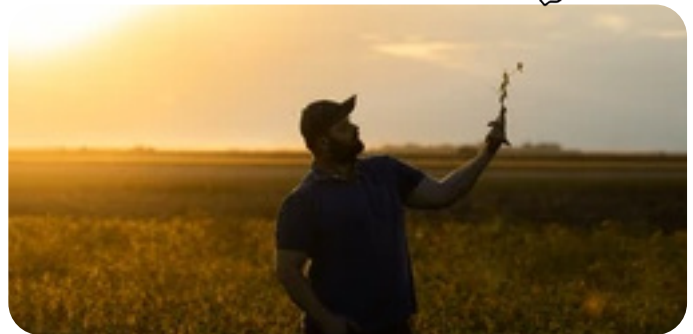
- Matching cultivar choice to region, season and market
- Preparing soils to reduce compaction and improve rooting
- Managing irrigation for both yield and fruit quality
- Strengthening crop rotation to reduce disease build-up
- Controlling weeds as hosts for pests and diseases
- Using sanitation and resistant cultivars as part of integrated management
- Securing market access before planting begins

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# Why Advertising in NuFarmer Africa Magazine Is No Longer Optional

## A Strategic Business Imperative for Agricultural Brands

**A**griculture is changing fast. Farmers are under pressure to produce more, reduce risk, protect margins and adopt better technology. At the same time, agribusinesses are fighting harder than ever to stay visible in a crowded market.

***“Visibility is no longer a marketing extra. In modern agriculture, it is a business advantage.”***

This is where advertising changes from a “nice-to-have” into a serious business decision.

For companies that supply farmers, producers, growers, input buyers, exporters and agricultural decision-makers, visibility is not decoration. It is market position. It is trust. It is the difference between being remembered when buying decisions are made, or being forgotten completely.

NuFarmer Africa Magazine has

spent more than 30 years earning that trust. It is not a new platform chasing attention. It is an established agricultural voice with a proven record, a loyal readership and a strong digital presence across the African agricultural sector.

### **TRUST CANNOT BE BOUGHT OVERNIGHT**

#### ***Thirty Years of Agricultural Credibility***

In agriculture, trust matters. Farmers do not easily change suppliers. Producers do not gamble with inputs, equipment, nutrition, genetics, machinery, biosecurity or technology. They look for companies that appear stable, knowledgeable and committed to the industry. NuFarmer Africa Magazine gives advertisers that environment.

For more than three decades, the magazine has served the agricultural community with reliable information, technical insight and

industry news. That consistency creates credibility. When a brand advertises in a trusted publication, it benefits from the trust already built with readers.

That is powerful.

A once-off social media post may disappear in a day. A random digital advert may be ignored in seconds. But a brand placed inside a respected agricultural publication enters a space where readers are already paying attention.

### **REACH THAT MATTERS**

#### ***Targeting the Right Agricultural Audience***

Mass exposure is not always valuable. The real question is not “How many people saw the advert?” The better question is: “Did the right people see it?”

NuFarmer Africa connects advertisers with progressive farmers, agribusinesses, input suppliers, industry bodies and decision-makers

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ers across Sub-Saharan Africa. Its audience is invested in productivity, sustainability, innovation and practical agricultural development.

The publication's 2026 rate card also reports strong social media impact, with more than 185,000 readers measured over 28 days through Meta data.

That means advertisers are not only appearing in a magazine. They are entering a wider media ecosystem that includes digital visibility, social reach and website traffic.

***"The value of advertising lies not only in being seen, but in being seen by the right agricultural audience."***

**ADVERTISING IS NO LONGER JUST ABOUT SELLING**

***It Is About Owning Mindshare***

Many agricultural businesses make the mistake of advertising only when they want immediate sales. But strong brands do not wait until the market is ready to buy. They stay visible long before that moment.

Visibility creates familiarity.



Familiarity creates confidence.

Confidence creates enquiries, conversations and commercial opportunity.

When farmers repeatedly see a company in a credible industry publication, that company begins to feel established. It becomes part of the agricultural conversation. It becomes easier to trust.

This is especially important in sectors such as animal health, seed, feed, mechanisation, irrigation, crop protection, genetics, technology, finance, insurance, training and infrastructure. These are not impulse purchases. They are decisions based on confidence.

**EDITORIAL VALUE ADDS MORE WEIGHT**

***More Than an Advert on a Page***

One of the strongest advantages in the 2026 advertising offer is the editorial value attached to selected bookings. Full-page and half-page advertisers receive one page of free editorial with paid bookings, while full-page bookings are also featured on NuFarmer Africa's social media platforms.

That matters because readers often engage more deeply with editorial content than with straight advertising.

A well-written editorial can explain a company's value, educate the

***"An advert creates awareness. A strong editorial builds authority."***

market, introduce products, unpack technical benefits and build authority around a brand. It gives advertisers space to tell the real story behind their offering.

Even better, all editorials include backlinks to the client's website, helping readers click through directly to the advertiser.

That turns awareness into action.



**Why NuFarmer Africa Works for Advertisers**

- **Established Authority**  
*Published for more than 30 years, NuFarmer Africa has long-standing credibility in the agricultural sector.*
- **Targeted Agricultural Reach**  
*The magazine reaches farmers, agribusinesses, suppliers, industry bodies and decision-makers across Sub-Saharan Africa.*
- **Strong Digital Impact**  
*More than 185,000 readers measured over 28 days through Meta data.*
- **Editorial Support**  
*Paid full-page and half-page bookings include one page of free editorial.*
- **Website Traffic Opportunity**  
*Editorials include backlinks to the advertiser's website, helping readers click through directly.*
- **Campaign Flexibility**  
*Advertisers can choose from full-page, half-page, third-page, quarter-page and eighth-page placements.*
- **Long-Term Brand Building**  
*Six editions per year allow advertisers to build consistent visibility across the agricultural calendar*

**CONSISTENCY WINS**

***One Advert Is Visibility. Repeated Presence Is Strategy.***

NuFarmer Africa publishes six editions per year: Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr, May/June, Jul/Aug, Sep/Oct and Nov/Dec.

This gives advertisers the opportunity to build a consistent presence throughout the year. And consistency is where real brand equity is built.

A single advert can create awareness. But repeated placement

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builds recognition. It tells the market that your business is serious, stable and invested in agriculture for the long term.

Contract discounts also support ongoing campaigns, with 5% off for three consecutive bookings and 10% off for six consecutive bookings.

For brands planning growth, this is not simply media spend. It is strategic positioning.

**THE COST OF SILENCE**

**If You Are Not Visible, Someone Else Is**

In a competitive agricultural market, silence is risky.

If your competitors are appearing in trusted agricultural media and

you are not, they are shaping the conversation. They are becoming familiar. They are earning recognition before the sales conversation even begins.

That is why advertising in NuFarmer Africa Magazine is no longer optional for serious agricultural brands.

It places your business where farmers, suppliers, innovators and decision-makers are already looking. It gives your brand credibility, reach, repetition and a direct pathway to engagement.”

**Final Word**

**Be Seen Where Agriculture Pays Attention**

Agriculture rewards trust. It rewards consistency. It rewards

**“In agriculture, the brands that stay visible are the brands that stay trusted.”**

brands that show up, add value and stay present in the market.

NuFarmer Africa Magazine offers advertisers more than space. It offers authority, targeted reach, editorial support, digital visibility and access to an engaged agricultural audience.

For companies that want to grow in the agricultural sector, the message is clear:

Do not wait for the market to find you.

Be visible where the market already is.

**Staff Writer**

**SUSTAINABILITY OF GROWING GRAFTED & UN-GRAFTED SEEDLINGS**



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### CONTACT & PUBLICATION REACH

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### ADVERTISING RATES

Ad Size	Dimensions	Rate ex VAT.	Editorial
Full Page	Full page 210 x 297 mm	R20 763,00	Free*
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1/4 Page	1/4 Page (Horizontal)	R6 000,00	-
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Rates are VAT Excluded | \*1 Page FREE editorial with paid Full Page or Half Page bookings | Full Page bookings featured on Nufarmer Africa Social Media

### TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS & KEY INFORMATION

Technical Specifications	Additional Information
<p><b>Full Page:</b> 297 x 210 mm  <b>1/2 Page Vertical:</b> 297 x 105 mm  <b>1/2 Page Horizontal:</b> 150 x 210 mm  <b>Third Page:</b> 99 x 210 mm  <b>Quarter Page:</b> 150 x 105 mm</p> <p><b>Bleed:</b> 10 mm all around  <b>File Format:</b> PDF or JPG, Full Colour</p>	<p><b>Agency Commission:</b> 16.5% (Prices do NOT include agency commission. Agents: Add commission to rates.)</p> <p><b>Contract Discounts:</b>                      3 Consecutive bookings less 5%                      6 Consecutive bookings less 10%  <b>Example:</b> Booking 6 Full pages = save R12 300.00</p> <p>All editorials have back-links to the clients website which means readers will click through to the advertisers website.</p>

### CLOSING DATES FOR 2026

Edition	Closing Date for Bookings	Closing Date for Material / Editorial
JANUARY / FEBRUARY	28 November 2025	12 December 2025
MARCH / APRIL	30 January 2026	13 February 2026
MAY / JUNE	27 April 2026	27 April 2026
JULY / AUGUST	23 June 2026	23 June 2026
SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER	23 August 2026	23 August 2026
NOVEMBER / DECEMBER	23 October 2026	23 October 2026

### TARGET AUDIENCE

Nufarmer Africa Magazine is a trusted voice in the continent’s agricultural sector, connecting advertisers with progressive farmers, agribusinesses, input suppliers, industry bodies, and key decision-makers driving agricultural development across Sub-Saharan Africa. It offers focused access to a diverse, high-value audience invested in productivity, sustainability, and innovation across both commercial and emerging farming sectors. With strong editorial credibility and industry insight, the publication serves as a platform where technology adoption, value chain growth, and market expansion converge, while also addressing critical issues such as biosecurity—highlighting the importance of protecting farms against pests, diseases, and cross-border risks to ensure resilient and sustainable food production.



# Why Every Farmer Should Attend the Undercover Farming Western Cape Conference

## Strategic Business Decision to Future Proof Your Income

South African farming is changing fast. Heat, wind, water pressure, input costs and unpredictable seasons are no longer occasional challenges. They are now part of everyday production planning. For many farmers, the real question is no longer whether conditions will change, but whether their farming system is strong enough to survive the change.

That is why the Undercover Farming Western Cape Conference, taking place on 21 and 22 October 2026 at Allee Bleue in Groot Drakenstein, Franschhoek, should be seen as more than another agricultural event. It is a practical business opportunity for farmers who want to protect production, improve income and keep their farming legacy alive.

Undercover farming is often misunderstood as something only linked to expensive greenhouse production. That is no longer

true. Protected farming includes greenhouses, tunnels, shade-net systems, controlled irrigation, climate-smart structures, improved crop monitoring and more resilient production methods. It is just as relevant to vegetable growers, fruit producers, emerging farmers and commercial operations that want better control over risk.

***“Undercover farming is not only about growing under plastic. It is about farming with more control, less risk and greater confidence.”***

The official Undercover Farming conference platform has already positioned these events around urgent themes such as profitability, climate resilience, smart irrigation, seed innovation, integrated pest management and practical technology adoption. These are not abstract talking points. They are the pressure points that determine whether farms remain profitable in a diffi-

cult production environment.

### **Climate Change Has Made Protection a Business Decision**

Farmers cannot control the weather, but they can control how exposed their crops are to it. Shade-net farming, tunnels and greenhouse systems help reduce the direct impact of harsh sun, wind, hail, pests and water loss. In the Western Cape, where water efficiency and crop quality are central to long-term farming success, this kind of thinking is becoming essential.

***“The farmers who protect production today are the farmers who will still be producing tomorrow.”***

Undercover farming can help farmers produce more consistently, improve crop quality and reduce avoidable losses. It also allows better management of irrigation,

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fertigation, pest control and harvesting cycles. That means fewer surprises and stronger planning.

### It Is About Income, Not Just Infrastructure

The biggest mistake is seeing undercover farming only as a capital expense. It should be viewed as a production strategy. When correctly planned, protected farming can support higher yields, better market timing, improved quality, reduced waste and stronger margins.

For farmers supplying retailers, packhouses, fresh markets or export channels, consistency matters. Buyers want reliable volume and quality. Undercover systems can help farmers meet those expectations more often, **especially when open-field conditions become unstable.**

The conference gives farmers access to practical insights, suppliers, technology providers and other producers who are already working with these systems. That kind of knowledge can prevent costly mistakes and help farmers make better investment decisions.

### Not Only for Large Commercial Farmers

This conference is also important for small-scale and emerging farmers. Shade-net systems and smaller tunnel structures can offer

a more accessible entry point into protected production. For farmers working with limited land, these systems can help maximise output from smaller spaces.

The Undercover Farming platform highlights that protected production is relevant across the farming spectrum, from commercial growers to small-scale and urban farmers. This makes the Western Cape Conference especially valuable for anyone looking to expand, diversify or stabilise income.

### What Farmers Can Expect to Learn

Delegates can expect discussions around more resilient production systems, water-saving irrigation, crop protection, technology, seed choices, climate control and practical ways to improve profitability. These topics matter because they all connect to one thing: **keeping farms productive despite rising pressure.**

The value of attending is not only in listening to speakers. It is in asking questions, comparing systems, meeting suppliers and seeing where the industry is moving before being forced to adapt too late.

### Final Word

Every generation of farmers has had to adapt. Today, adaptation means more than working harder. It means farming smarter, protect-

## Why Attend?

**Event: Undercover Farming Western Cape Conference**

**Date: 21–22 October 2026**

**Venue: Allee Bleue, Groot Drakenstein, Franschhoek**

### Who should attend:

- **Greenhouse growers,**
- **shade-net farmers,**
- **fruit and vegetable producers,**
- **emerging farmers,**
- **commercial farmers,**
- **suppliers and**
- **agribusiness decision-makers.**

### Main reason to attend:

**To learn how protected farming systems can reduce climate risk, improve consistency and support long-term farm income.**

ing production and investing in systems that can withstand uncertainty.

For farmers who want to stay competitive, reduce risk and protect the future of their farms, the Undercover Farming Western Cape Conference is not optional. It is a strategic step toward a more secure farming future.

*Staff Writer*



# ucf Undercover farming

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HARVEST SYSTEMS EMPLOY COMPUTER VISION  
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CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF THE UNDERCOVER FARMING EXPO  
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WHY YOUR FERTIGATION RECIPE MATTERS  
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<https://www.linkedin.com/company/undercover>

farmers gain immediate access to credible insights, expert-driven content, and the latest developments shaping protected agriculture across Southern Africa. This is where innovation meets practicality—where farmers can learn what is working on the ground, not just in theory.

From greenhouse and shade-net production systems to water-use efficiency, pest management, climate-smart solutions, and profitability strategies, the platform delivers information that can be directly applied to improve farm performance. It also keeps farmers informed about upcoming conferences, technical sessions, and supplier innovations that are driving the industry forward.

Importantly, Undercover Farming is not limited to large-scale greenhouse operations. It speaks to a wide audience, including commercial producers, emerging farmers, and those looking to transition into more controlled and resilient farming systems.

Farmers can also access the full publication **free of charge** by visiting: <https://undercoverfarmingexpo.com/publications/>

***Undercover Farming is more than a magazine***

In a time where climate pressure, input costs, and market demands are constantly shifting, staying connected to a credible, industry-led platform is a strategic advantage. ***Undercover Farming is more than a magazine—it is a vital knowledge hub helping farmers protect production, improve income, and secure the future of their operations.***  
Staff Writer

## Every Farmer Should Follow Undercover Farming Magazine

The recognized mouthpiece for Farming under Protection in Southern Africa

In today's fast-moving agricultural environment, access to reliable, practical information is no longer optional—it is essential. As the **official, elected mouthpiece of the farming-under-protection industry in South Africa**, **Undercover Farming Magazine** has been at the forefront of greenhouse and shade-net agriculture since its inception. It is a

trusted platform that reflects the realities, challenges, and opportunities within this highly specialised sector.

By clicking, liking, and following **Undercover Farming Magazine** on:

- **Facebook**  
<https://www.facebook.com/UndercoverFarming>

# Undercover Farming Expo & Conference: Western Cape 2026

**21 & 22 October 2026**

Allee Bleue Estate,  
Groot Drakenstein, CapeTown, South Africa

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TODAY!**



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