

BFAP baseline cautiously optimistic about SA's agricultural sector

On Wednesday, key stakeholders from government, business and the media met in Pretoria for the launch of 2019/20 baseline by the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP). The baseline highlights the critical performance of the agricultural sector to date and includes predictions as to what can be expected from major commodities in the near future. Whilst Dr Tracy Davids took the audience through a detailed account of the key factors that will affect agricultural commodities in the near term, Prof Ferdi Meyer gave an overarching view of the sector's challenges and opportunities.

As an overarching assessment, the BFAP team showcased a mixed picture relating to the South African agricultural sector's progress towards meeting the targets set for 2030 in the NDP. We have managed to stay on target with the NDP goals of growing exports and job opportunities in the sector. However, when it comes to achieving land reform and stimulating production in the former homeland areas, we are lagging behind the NDP's targets.

Drilling down into more detail, it highlighted how emerging commercial farmers are starting to truly find their feet in the sector as key export-led commodities continue to grow. However, unemployment and inequality remain stubbornly high as household production, especially in underutilized areas in the former homelands, have not shown sufficient progress. Government spending has targeted the areas where these challenges are most prevalent with KZN, the Eastern Cape and Limpopo receiving the lion's share of spending on agricultural development. Be that as it may, these areas continue to face massive challenges which begs the question as to how effective spending on agricultural development in these provinces have been.

In closing, Prof Meyer identified a number of priority areas emanating from the baseline that should be addressed to unlock the full potential of the sector. These include policy certainty to attract investment, accelerated but stable land reform and farmer support, focused spending on water infrastructure and technological uptake, water use efficiency and a focused drive to unlock preferential market access in key export markets to accommodate the burgeoning boom in the horticultural and livestock industries.

Whilst the baseline report likely represents the most accurate and up to date assessment of the South African agricultural sector, there is still a need to bridge the data gap so that we may better understand the informal sector in South Africa.

The baseline report can be accessed on [BFAP's website](#).

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