



Debate on Budget Vote 29: Agriculture

Honourable Chairperson,
Honourable Minister,
Honourable Members, and
Fellow South Africans, Good day.

Chairperson, having listened to today's contributions, I must confess, it becomes increasingly difficult to refer to some members of this House as "honourable." And I will tell you why.

Once again, ANC members, including the committee chairperson Hon Modise, have refused to take full accountability for decades of mismanagement, cadre deployment, failed land reform projects, and ghost beneficiaries. Instead, we were fed tired slogans about "transformation," with nothing tangible to show.

Farmers, black and white, want access to markets. Beef producers want to export red meat. Citrus farmers want to export their produce and create jobs. The ANC failed to make this happen. The DA is making it happen. That's the DA difference.

Chairperson, it is with pride that I rise in support of this budget, which signals a return to competent, ethical, and visionary leadership in agriculture.

The Department of Agriculture's 2025/26 Annual Performance Plan is not just a technical document, it is a political and moral commitment to make agriculture central to job creation, food security, and rural prosperity.

This turnaround is no coincidence. It is the result of bold, evidence-based leadership under a DA-led ministry. Minister Steenhuisen has ushered in a new era, one focused on outcomes, not ideology.

We welcome the Minister's clear focus on four strategic pillars:

1. Secure tenure and strong property rights; As Hon Pienaar rightly said, farmers remain concerned about land expropriation without compensation. But let me be clear: under a DA government, there will never be unlawful seizure of land.
2. Enabling infrastructure and access to markets
3. Robust biosecurity and disease control
4. Farmer support that empowers, not enslaves, through dependency

These values are embedded in the department's plan. The R7.6 billion budget for 2025/26 aligns with DA priorities, with 43% dedicated to food security and farmer support. Over R2.3 billion is allocated to



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CASP and Ilima/Letsema conditional grants, not just to spend more, but to spend better through a fair, digital, and transparent application process.

Now, let's talk about progress.

Honourable Members, and I know some don't want to hear this, under DA leadership, we've seen significant progress in biosecurity, particularly in controlling Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD). The department has consistently monitored animal diseases, launched the National Biosecurity Hub Charter, and partnered with the Agricultural Research Council, backed by R1.2 billion in support. This has restored international confidence in South African exports.

And the results are real. The APP targets a 5% increase in agricultural exports this year a number that represents thousands of jobs in Limpopo's citrus belt, the Western Cape vineyards, and livestock farms in Free State and my province, KZN. We are reclaiming our global agricultural standing.

To combat hunger, the National Food and Nutrition Security Council is now fully operational, and the 2024–2029 NFNSP has been tabled. This year, 100 producers will be supported through the Blended Finance Scheme, and 800 new students have enrolled at agricultural colleges from Cedara in KZN to Elsenburg in the Western Cape.

This is how we build a new generation of black agricultural professionals, through skills, not slogans.

But we must also be honest. The greatest threat to agriculture is not drought or disease, it is still corruption, underperformance, and poor implementation. Even the department's own SWOT analysis admits this.

That's why the DA supports urgent digital transformation. The APP targets a 4% increase in digitalisation this year and 40% automation over five years including digitising grant applications, import/export certification, veterinary services, and supply chain processes. It's not moving fast enough but at least we're now headed in the right direction.

The future of agriculture lies in trade, innovation, and market access. This year alone, the Department will participate in five bilateral and six multilateral trade missions, including engagements with BRICS, SACU, and the AU. These are not ceremonial they're strategic moves to open global markets and unlock new export opportunities.

In conclusion, the DA doesn't romanticise poverty. We believe in growing prosperity. And to those in this House who still refuse to take responsibility for the damage they've caused, let me say this: The ANC captured agriculture through inefficiency. The DA is liberating it through capability and clean governance.

With the DA at the helm, South Africa is not just feeding itself better it is feeding the world. As Hon Boshoff rightly said, agriculture is not just about crops and commodities it is about dignity restored.

Let us support this budget not just with words, but with the political will to implement it and hold it accountable.

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Under Minister Steenhuisen and this DA-led department, South Africans can rest assured:

Sizokwenza konke okusemandleni ukulungisa umonakalo owenziwe i ANC ukubulala ezolimo kuleli..

I thank you.

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