

R7bn to support farmers

More than R7bn will be spent on conditional grants for provinces to support about 435,000 subsistence and 54,500 smallholder farmers.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Senzeni Zokwana made the announcement at the Agricultural Youth Summit at Nasrec in Johannesburg on Monday, before he jetted off to the AU Year of Agriculture summit in Equatorial Guinea.

"The sector's significance is largely because of its potential to create jobs, and is a key focus of the [National Development Plan](#), a plan by the government to create one million new jobs by 2030," the minister said.

He said farming remains vitally important to the economy with 638,000 people formally employed - although it's estimated that around 8.5 million people are directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture for their employment and income (about 5% of South Africans are employed in agriculture).

Strengthening youth in agriculture

Zokwana vowed to use his five year-term to establish and strengthen the Agricultural Sector Education Training Authority (AgriSETA) to attract more young people into the sector.



"South Africa should invest more in agriculture to create jobs" - Senzeni Zokwana. (Image: Ibrahim Husain Meraj, via Wikimedia Commons)

"My goal, in the next five years, is to work on establishing and strengthening SETAs for, specifically, agriculture, with the aim of attracting young people like you, into the sector," he said, adding that the future of agriculture indeed looks bright.

It is estimated that more than 50% of young South Africans between 15 and 24 are unemployed. South Africa has the third highest unemployment rate in the world for people between the ages of 15 to 24.

"While in many emerging markets there are jobs and the potential for more jobs to be created, many young people do not have the skills to meet that demand.

"South Africa should invest more in agriculture to create those jobs and education and training so that youth can take advantage of them," he said.

Importance of agro-processing

Zokwana said world-class infrastructure, counter-seasonality to Europe, vast biodiversity and marine resources, and competitive input costs make South Africa a major player on the world's markets.

"Agro processing contributed R280 million to the GDP in 2011, which is 20% of the total amount generated by the manufacturing sector. It is the third largest contributor to GDP within the sector, after chemicals and metals," he said.

Agricultural Youth Summit

The Agricultural Youth Summit is an annual event that seeks to empower and encourage young people to get active in the agriculture sector.

The Summit takes place as African leaders and Heads of State will be meeting in Equatorial Guinea, in commemoration of the AU Year of Agriculture Summit, which is being held from 20 - 27 June in the capital city of Malabo.

This year's commemoration calls for an agricultural revolution in Africa to help lift more than 85 million Africans out of poverty, create jobs for youth and women, and recommit to the 2003 Maputo Declaration.

This year, the AU will have its commemoration under the theme, "Transforming Africa's Agriculture for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, through Harnessing Opportunities for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development".

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