Biosecurity and strategic investment missing from fiscal plan, say AgriSA

While South Africa's 2026 National Budget outlines fiscal consolidation and infrastructure reform, it leaves a critical gap: targeted investment to strengthen agricultural competitiveness and biosecurity, which could limit growth and export potential.

Source: Mark Stebnicki via Pexels

Agriculture continues to be one of the few sectors delivering consistent export growth, foreign exchange earnings, rural employment, downstream processing activity, and national food secu South Africa is the world's second-largest citrus exporter, with expanding market access in avocados, maize, livestock, grapes, and wine.

FMD exposes systemic weaknesses

However, recent foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreaks have exposed systemic weaknesse the country's animal health systems.

While the budget mentions biosecurity initiatives and research funding, it does not include ring fenced, measurable allocations for immediate outbreak response, rebuilding veterinary capaci modernising disease surveillance, procuring and distributing vaccines, or enforcing movemen controls. Public-private partnerships to support biosecurity are also not addressed.

Infrastructure and investment must go hand in hand

Infrastructure investment alone cannot unlock agricultural expansion without functional biose systems, regulatory certainty, efficient logistics corridors, and a competitive input and complia environment. Roads, rail, and port performance remain critical enablers of agricultural competitiveness and export growth.

AgriSA and Agbiz have partnered with the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to strengthen cooperation on road infrastructure, highlighting that while fiscal discipline creates space, targeted investment is needed to drive growth in the agricultural sector.

AgriSA CEO Johann Kotzé said: "The budget advances fiscal stabilisation, but without accelera implementation and targeted investment in biosecurity and vulnerable value chains, fiscal stab will not translate into sustained agricultural expansion."

The allocation of R274.6bn for peace and security initiatives, including R140 billion for the poli service, is noted. AgriSA emphasised that sustaining agricultural competitiveness will require coordinated action across government and industry.

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