

South Africa and Italy target citrus trade and investment

South Africa and Italy are seeking to expand cooperation in agricultural trade, investment, technology, agro-processing, and research through a new partnership discussed at the inaugural South Africa-Italy Agribusiness Forum in Cape Town on 9 and 10 June 2026.

Speaking at the event, South African Agriculture Minister John Steenhuisen said agricultural trade between the two countries exceeds R650 million (US\$36.3 million) annually. Horticultural exports account for approximately R190 million (US\$10.6 million).

According to Steenhuisen, future opportunities lie in combining South Africa's agricultural production with Italy's expertise in processing, packaging, technology, and branding. The forum brought together businesses, policymakers, and industry representatives from both countries to explore investment opportunities, technology exchange, and market access.

Several fresh produce sectors were identified for potential cooperation. In the Western Cape, discussions focused on citrus, food processing, and packaging technologies. In Limpopo, opportunities were highlighted in avocados, citrus, mangoes, and nuts, with potential collaboration involving fruit processing, avocado oil production, citrus value addition, and export partnerships.

"Whether through avocado oil production, fruit pulp processing, citrus value addition or export partnerships, there is considerable scope to build integrated value chains that create more value on both sides," the Minister said.

Horticultural production in Mpumalanga was also identified as an area that could benefit from Italian expertise in orchard technologies, precision agriculture, irrigation systems, and packaging.

The forum also addressed cooperation in agricultural research, biosecurity, and innovation. Steenhuisen said stronger collaboration between South Africa's Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and Italy's Council for Agricultural Research and Economics (CREA) could support work on plant health, innovation, and agricultural resilience.

One expected outcome of the forum is the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) covering agricultural mechanisation, digital agriculture, agro-processing, technology transfer, extension services, seed development, soil health, and sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

The MoU will also establish a Joint Working Group to oversee implementation of projects and cooperation initiatives between the two countries.

Source: SA News (<https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/south-africa-italy-move-deepen-agricultural-trade-and-investment-partnership>)

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