

Mixed reaction to new South African cabinet

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 1 July 2024

Lack of experience in international matters could be problematic for the country's fresh produce export business

South African president Cyril Ramaphosa has finally announced his cabinet of National Unity, after his ANC party lost its majority of the first time in 30 years during last month's general elections.

Key ministries affecting the fresh produce export sector are being headed by what are regarded as inexperienced new ministers.

This comes at a time as the country's citrus sector is engaged in a key confrontation with the European Union at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) regarding restrictions imposed by the EU to control spread of the insect *Thaumatotibia leucotreta*, or false codling moth, and the fungus *P. citricarpa*, or citrus black spot.



Cyril Ramaphosa

South Africa has asked the World Trade Organization to establish two dispute panels to review European Union measures affecting imports of South African citrus after negotiations with the EU aimed at resolving the dispute failed to find a mutually agreed solution.

The country's new minister of agriculture is opposition leader John Steenhuisen; minister of trade, industry and competition is Parks Tau from the ANC; and foreign affairs minister is Ronald Lamola, better known as the previous minister of justice and for launching South Africa's bid at the International Criminal Court to indict Israel for war crimes.

"They will have to hit the ground running to be in a position to deal with formidable challenges," said one industry observer.

Steenhuisen is seen as a man who has not had much personal contact with the fresh produce industry and will have to fill the boots of the formidable Thoko Didiza, who had been in the position for many years.

She is now the new speaker and has piloted most of the recent access success for South African fruit in foreign markets.

EUROFRUIT have to fill the boots of the veteran Naledi Pandor who managed foreign affairs for many years. He was the second democratically elected mayor of Johannesburg, following Amos Masondo.

Tau currently serves as the deputy minister of cooperative governance and traditional affairs. He was not originally on the ASNC's list as member of Parliament and only entered the fray when Ramaphosa was elected as president and relinquished his parliamentary seat.

The new minister of land reform and rural development is the PAC's Mzwanele Nyhontso, which indicates that land restitution projects are being taken very seriously.

"Rather underwhelming," is how South African Citrus Association CEO Justin Chadwick described the new appointments. "We will look forward to establishing contact with them as soon as possible."

In general, observers have said that in a bid to accommodate as many of the new government's 11 party GNU participants as possible, the new cabinet has become rather bloated, and this will not be well received.

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The president was also criticised for retaining a number of ineffective ministers.

The new ministers will be sworn in tomorrow and the first sitting of parliament will be held in the middle of July.

