

Fast News 

AgriSA seeks fix for rural-road 'crisis'

South Africa's economy expanded 0.5% in 2024, the slowest pace in four years, with agriculture contracting almost 9%.

By Ana Monteiro, Bloomberg · 15 Oct 2025 ⌚ 14:09



Image: Bloomberg

South Africa's biggest farming lobby said the nation's rural roads are in a state of "crisis" and is working with government organisations to improve them and keep agricultural goods moving.

About 60% of South Africa's roads are in poor to very poor condition, and many rural ones are not maintained, AgriSA Deputy President Willem de Chavonnes Vrugt said Wednesday at the organisation's annual conference in Pretoria, the capital.

They connect "farms and communities with markets, schools and clinics," he said, adding that

AgriSA is working with the departments of public works and transport and the South African National Roads Agency “to address this crisis and secure the infrastructure.”

The state of roads is yet another obstacle for farmers in the world’s biggest exporter of citrus after Spain and the continent’s largest corn producer as they battle high power prices, water scarcity and legal uncertainty owing to land-expropriation laws.

Those challenges are in addition to US tariffs of 30% on South African products entering that market in the absence of a trade deal between the two nations.

AgriSA wants the government to prioritise free- and preferential-trade pacts with Asia and Pacific Rim nations to “open markets, lower tariffs and strengthen global competitiveness,” de Chavonnes Vrugt said. The nation also needs to tackle tariff and non-tariff barriers that still restrict market access to nations such as those in the Brics bloc that includes Brazil, Russia, India and China, he said.

Electricity costs

De Chavonnes Vrugt singled out electricity costs as “one of the biggest threats to competitiveness.”

The energy regulator approved an average 12.7% hike in electricity tariffs in the current financial year, but with changes in power rates that vary by the time of day, some farmers are seeing increases of as much as 50%, he said.

The cumulative hike in prices since 2011 exceeds 260%, “far beyond” the increase in commodity prices and the sector can’t pass these costs onto consumers, he added.

De Chavonnes Vrugt said crime “continues to devastate farming and rural communities,” and said water scarcity and failing infrastructure limit growth and productivity.

South Africa’s economy expanded 0.5% in 2024, the slowest pace in four years, with agriculture contracting almost 9%. The industry employs more than 900 000 people in a country that has one of the world’s highest jobless rates among those tracked by Bloomberg.

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