

South African citrus reports 25.6% black farmer share

The Department of Agriculture has acknowledged the role of the citrus sector in South Africa's agricultural transformation. Between 2019 and 2023, black citrus farmers contributed 25.6 percent of total citrus production.

Speaking at the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa's Citrus Growers' Development Chamber (CGDC) Grower Indaba in Boksburg, Elder Mtshiza, Chief Director of the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, addressed growers on behalf of Director General Mooketsa Ramasodi. She noted that the citrus sector is the second-highest contributor to transformation, after livestock, where black producers account for 37 percent of output.

"The citrus industry has demonstrated transformation is not just possible, but profitable and sustainable," Mtshiza said. "Your achievements serve as a beacon for other agricultural sectors striving for meaningful economic inclusion."

According to the Department, the national average across all commodities is 13 percent, and the Agriculture and Agro-Processing Master Plan aims for 20 percent black production by 2030. The citrus sector has already surpassed this target.

Since 2004, the Department's Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme has invested R21 billion (US\$1.1 billion) in emerging and black farmers for infrastructure, training, mentorship, market access, and inputs. The citrus sector has been a major recipient of this support. Mtshiza outlined challenges for the sector, including land reform and tenure security, limited access to finance for smallholders, skills development, market entry for smaller producers, climate pressures, and infrastructure constraints. She added that there are opportunities for market diversification, infrastructure investment, and policy measures aimed at inclusive growth.

She called on industry stakeholders to strengthen collaboration with the government. Priorities include agreement on the shape of an inclusive sector, partnerships to address infrastructure and market access, continued focus on farmer and worker inclusion, and developing new export markets. "The citrus industry has shown that transformation and productivity can go hand in hand,"

Mtshiza said. "We encourage other agricultural sectors to learn from your example and work together to build an agricultural economy that truly benefits all South Africans."

The CGDC Grower Indaba continues this week, serving as a forum for growers to discuss challenges and strategies.

Source: African Farming (<https://www.africanfarming.com/2025/09/11/cgdc-grower-indaba-transformation-possible-profitable-sustainable/>)

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