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SA farm jobs fell mildly in the third quarter of 2026

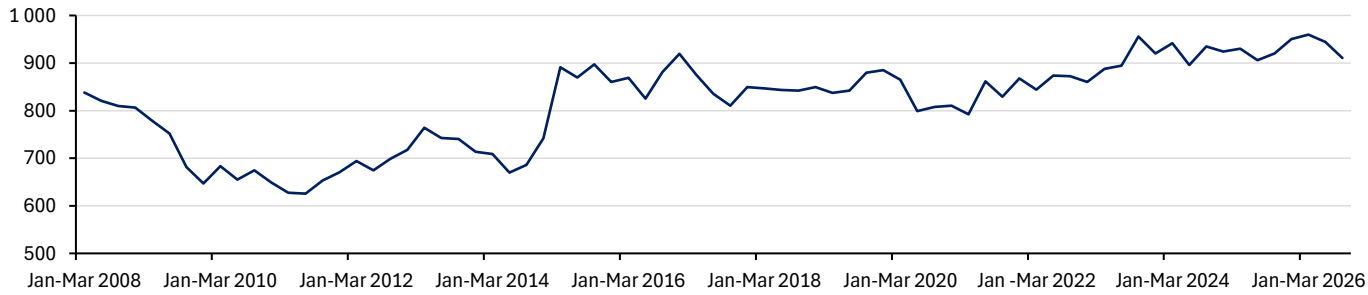
- **Employment in the South African farming sector declined mildly in the third quarter of 2026. The Quarterly Labour Force Survey data released by Statistics South Africa this morning show that agricultural employment in the third quarter of 2026 fell by 4% from the second quarter and by 1% from the same period a year ago, to 911k jobs. While this trend is disappointing, these job levels remain well above the long-term average employment level of around 800k, showing the sector's employment remains resilient.**

- From a provincial perspective, we see annual job losses across most provinces, except the Western Cape and Limpopo. Job gains in these provinces can be attributed to the robust, labour-intensive fruit production industry. It is also important to view employment conditions in agriculture this year in the context of the sector's performance. We are in a challenging space, with the farming industry facing rising input costs from the Iran-U.S. war and broader trade friction driven by rising geopolitical tensions. Moreover, some subsectors, such as livestock, also continue to struggle with foot-and-mouth disease, although vaccination has gained momentum over time. Thus, it is unsurprising that the livestock industry is amongst those that showed a decline in employment compared to last year. Employment in some field crops also declined compared to last year, although this year has been a year of ample harvest.

- The agricultural industries that showed a mild annual uptick in employment were forestry and fishing. Still, these are relatively small and didn't change the overall national picture. Thus, annual agricultural jobs fell 1% year on year to 911k jobs, as mentioned above.

- Looking ahead, the 2026-27 agricultural season will be challenging as farmers face rising input costs due to the Iran-U.S. war. An El Niño drought will also weigh on agricultural production. Thus, we remain concerned that employment in the sector will be under pressure over the coming year and will likely recover as agricultural fortunes improve and the weather outlook improves in the seasons to come.

Exhibit 1: South Africa's agricultural jobs



Source: Statistics South Africa and Agbiz Research

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