

You can farm alone. You cannot build agriculture alone

AgriSA used its 2026 Congress to set out a consolidated mandate for action across its five policy Centres of Excellence areas critical to the future of South African agriculture: land and development, natural resources, labour, rural safety, and economics and trade.

Under the theme **“The Path is Clear”**, AgriSA argued that the next phase of agricultural growth will depend not only on better policy, but on stronger institutions, clearer accountability and more effective collaboration between government, organised agriculture, commodity organisations, business and farmers.

“You can farm individually, but you cannot build agriculture individually,” said AgriSA President Willem de Chavonnes Vrugt.

The mandate reflects the realities producers face on the ground. Land reform must move beyond transfer towards commercially viable enterprises, with secure property rights, credible beneficiary selection, adequate finance and effective post-settlement support. Water governance and infrastructure require urgent attention, alongside climate adaptation, biodiversity protection and sustainable production practices.

On labour, AgriSA highlighted agriculture’s role as a major rural employer and called for a more predictable wage-setting framework, a dedicated agricultural visa, reform of agricultural colleges, better alignment of skills funding and practical solutions to rural housing and transport.

Rural safety was positioned not only as a social issue, but as an economic and investment issue. AgriSA called for stronger policing, intelligence-led enforcement, formal cooperation between the SA Police Service (SAPS) and organised agriculture, and practical mechanisms that allow rural communities to improve their own safety.

The economics and trade mandate focuses on South African agriculture’s competitiveness. Priorities include port and rail reform, rural roads, energy pricing, embedded generation, trade diversification, biosecurity, rural broadband and policy certainty around taxation and investment.

AgriSA President Willem de Chavonnes Vrugt said the central challenge is no longer simply asking what government should do, but determining which institutions are best placed to deliver specific functions and how to coordinate these capabilities.

South African agriculture increasingly operates through a network of public institutions, commodity organisations, businesses, provincial structures and farmers. He said AgriSA and national partners' role is to connect those levels, taking evidence from farms into national policy, translating national decisions back into value chains, and building the partnerships required for implementation.

The Congress endorsement therefore places execution at the centre of AgriSA's work for the period ahead.

The five mandates give us the substance. Our network gives us the reach. Our partnerships give us leverage. What matters now is execution by all organisations that has an impact on agriculture. The path is clear.

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