

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

FREE STATE AGRICULTURE FACT SHEET

- Agriculture accounts for 90 % of land use in the Free State.
- Field crops yield almost two-thirds of the gross agricultural income of the province. Animal products contribute a further 30%, with the balance generated by horticulture.
- About 57% of the land is used for stock farming, including beef and dairy cattle and sheep and 33% is for crop production, including maize, sorghum, wheat, groundnuts and sunflowers.
- The province supplies significant proportions of the nation's sorghum (53%), sunflowers (45%), wheat (37%), maize (34%), potatoes (33%), groundnuts (32%), dry beans (26%), wool (24%) and almost all of its cherries (90%).
- Intensive research is being conducted in the Qwaqwa region in soya bean and indigenous crop production. The provincial government and the Agricultural Research Council are collaborating in this venture.
- The agricultural sector of the Free State is estimated to consume 20% of the total domestic fertiliser consumption.
- The highest concentration of cattle is in Brandfort, Frankfort, Harrismith and Vrede, while the south western and southern areas, as well as eastern Free State are the dominant areas for sheep production.
- A fish hatchery project at the Gariep Dam will receive about R45-million from the Chinese government at the completion of the project. The intention is to supply fingerlings to rural projects within the Free State and other parts of central South Africa
- The Wilhelmina Cooperative (Ficksburg-district) is a flagship project and focuses on the production of cherries, peaches and dairy. The cooperative has been assisted with the necessary equipment to enable them to venture into canning and production of other dairy products. It is also envisaged as the second agri-village in the Province.
- There is increased commitment to ensure agro-processing initiatives are supported. The Anona Enterprise (Bainsvlei) produces mushrooms, lettuce, onion, spinach, sheep and free range chicken is supplying Fresh market and Mangaung Fresh produce in Bloemfontein with vegetables. The Shekeshe and Mbolekwa Soutpan Salt projects are also supported by the Department. The Bethlehem Farmers Trust is dedicated to add value to fruit produce, specifically dried fruit and fruit juice.
- The Department of Agriculture supports 10396 emerging farmers and more than 500 commercial farmers with advice. 1955 emerging farmers received training in various disciplines during the 2010/11 financial year.