South African government hands large volume of state land to black farmers

By Fred Meintjes | 13 October 2026

President Cyril Ramaphosa says the move will expand access to land, creating jobs and benefit food security



Image: CGA

The South African government is releasing approximately 2.5mn hectares of state-owned land to black farmers and providing them with title deeds as part of efforts to grow a new generation of commercial farmers.

In his weekly letter to the nation, president Cyril Ramaphosa said expanding access to land, financing and agricultural training was essential to transforming the sector, creating jobs and

strengthening South Africa's food security.

Ramaphosa said the country's agricultural sector had more than doubled since 1994, with exports of R270bn in 2025, making the country the world's 32nd-largest agricultural exporter.

Through the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy, the government is releasing the land in various parts of the country to black farmers.

The country exports products including table grapes, maize, beef, wine, citrus, sugar and wool. Nearly half of its agricultural exports go to other African countries, while the remainder reaches markets in the EU, Asia, the Middle East and the Americas.

However, the sector's growth has not benefited all communities equally.

"We still have what has been called 'two agricultures'," he said. "Predominantly white-owned commercial farms account for the bulk of the country's commercial farming output, while black farmers only account for around 10 per cent.

Ramaphosa warned that relying on a relatively small segment of the population to meet the country's food needs is unsustainable as the population grows and demand for food increases.



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Transformation is therefore necessary to address both historical inequalities and to ensure the country can meet future food demand.

Agriculture employed around 944,000 people in 2025, with a further 200,000 working across the broader value chain.

Ramaphosa also cited a 2025 University of Pretoria study that found a strong correlation between investment in agriculture and poverty reduction.

Land ownership alone does not guarantee success, as farmers also needed practical experience and knowledge of crops, weather conditions and animal diseases.

"The first step in building a new generation of South African farmers is providing them with titled access to land," he said.

He stressed, however, that access to land needed to be accompanied by funding, skills development, mentorship and technology to help emerging farmers establish commercially successful businesses.

“Far too often, emerging farmers are kept trapped at subsistence level because they cannot get the financing they need for farming inputs, infrastructure and additional land,” he said.

He encouraged more lenders and agribusinesses to participate and develop additional funding instruments for farmers.

‘’As government, we are on a concerted drive to expand and diversify export markets for our agricultural products. We are engaging with agribusinesses and farmers around issues such as new breeding techniques and advances in agricultural biotechnology,’’ noted Ramaphosa.

Stronger partnerships between government, farmers, businesses, lenders, traditional leaders and communities would help grow the sector and create jobs.

“We can bring more land under cultivation, create a new generation of black commercial farmers and ensure that we grow enough not only to feed all our people, but to sell to markets across the world,” he added.

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