



Natural Resources

Centre of Excellence

DRAFT
Nov 2025

Natural Resources COE

VISION

A stable, sustainable and profitable agricultural industry

MISSION

The achievement of national strategies developed by government to improve food security and economic, social and environmental sustainability

MANDATE

- Leading the debate on sound environmental governance as it relates to agriculture in South Africa
- Expanding AgriSA's natural resources leadership role within the South African agricultural sector
- Advocating for implementation of sustainable and viable agricultural practices in South Africa
- Creating a conducive environmental regulatory and policy dispensation for agriculture to thrive



KEY FOCUS AREAS

1. Water
2. Biodiversity, Land Use and Soil Conservation
3. Climate Change
4. Mining and Fracking

Advocacy and Stakeholder Objectives

Stakeholder	AgriSA's Objectives
South African Association for Water Users' Associations	Support local water management institutions through collaboration with SAAFWUA
Organised mining sector	Ensure responsible water use and environmental practices that protect agricultural land, uphold ecological integrity, and foster cross-sectoral accountability; Memorandum of Understanding with Minerals Council
Embassies and Business Chambers	Foster international cooperation and knowledge exchange that supports sustainable water management, environmental protection, and climate-smart agricultural development in South Africa
Water Research Commission	Collaborate on evidence-based research and innovation that informs sustainable water governance, enhances agricultural resilience, and drives environmental stewardship
Presidential Climate Commission	Contribute agricultural sector insights toward shaping inclusive, science-based climate policies that support a just transition and enhance rural resilience

WATER

Natural Resources COE • Water - Focus areas

1



Water
Intelligence

2



Policy and
legal affairs

3



Advocacy

4



Communication

1 Water Intelligence

OBJECTIVE



Digital database
providing an overview
of water resources

Focus Area	Objective / Description
1. Mapping and Quantification	Map and quantify agricultural water availability, licensed water use, and infrastructure capacity (dams, boreholes, irrigation schemes) across provinces and catchments.
2. Tracking Trends and Transitions	Track trends in water-use authorisations, compliance notices, infrastructure failures, drought cycles, and policy changes to identify emerging risks and opportunities for farmers.
3. Water Rights and Allocation Profiling	Profile water allocation patterns (licensed, historical, and communal use) to inform debates on equity, security of rights, and impacts on agricultural investment.
4. Spatial and Economic Integration	Integrate spatial (GIS) and economic data to link water availability and quality with farm productivity, irrigation efficiency, and climate resilience across regions.
5. Policy and Advocacy Support	Provide credible, up-to-date water intelligence to strengthen Agri SA's advocacy on water licensing, infrastructure investment, municipal services, and climate-related water regulation.
6. Evidence Base for Partnerships	Build a trusted evidence base for collaboration with DWS, CMAs, municipalities, water user associations, financiers, and development partners to improve water governance and investment.

2

Policy and legal affairs

Provision	Implication for Agriculture
Public Trusteeship of Water	Water is a national resource managed by government for equitable and sustainable use.
Water Use Licensing	Agricultural water use requires registration or licensing, subject to conditions and availability.
Protection of Water Resources	Farmers must prevent pollution and manage water responsibly to protect resource quality.
Catchment Management Agencies & WUAs	Localized water governance enables stakeholder participation in water allocation and planning.
The Reserve	Water allocations must first meet basic human needs and ecological sustainability before other uses.

3

Advocacy

Stakeholder	AgriSA's Objectives
1. Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS)	Ensure predictable, fair, and efficient water-use licensing and reform processes that protect agricultural water security while enabling equitable access.
2. Catchment Management Agencies (CMAs)	Advocate for transparent allocation decisions, accurate hydrological planning, and improved engagement with agricultural water users.
3. South African Association for Water Users' Associations	Support local water management institutions through collaboration with SAAFWUA
4. Department of Agriculture	Align agricultural support programmes (CASP, AAMP) with water availability constraints and promote investment in water-efficient technologies for farmers.
5. Department of Forestry, Fisheries & the Environment (DFFE)	Advocate for alignment between environmental authorisations and water licensing requirements to reduce delays and duplication.
6. Agri SA Affiliates & Commodity Organisations	Improve reporting, data sharing, and local mobilisation to strengthen water governance and farmer resilience at provincial and commodity level.
7. Private Sector / Agribusiness	Promote investment partnerships for water-saving technologies, shared infrastructure, and improved water-use efficiency along the value chain.
8. Water Research Commission	Collaborate on evidence-based research and innovation that informs sustainable water governance, enhances agricultural resilience, and drives environmental stewardship

4

Communication

Stakeholder	AgriSA's Objectives
1. Promote Transparency on Water Availability and Risks	Communicate accurate, timely information on dam levels, drought conditions, infrastructure failures, and water restrictions to support farmer preparedness and risk mitigation.
2. Strengthen Understanding of Water Rights and Licensing	Provide clear guidance to farmers on water-use rights, licensing requirements, compliance obligations, and regulatory changes to reduce uncertainty and improve decision-making.
3. Improve Stakeholder Awareness of Water Policy Issues	Highlight emerging policy developments (e.g., Water Act amendments, CMA restructuring) and explain their potential impacts on agriculture to ensure informed advocacy and engagement.
4. Build Agri SA's Position as a Trusted Water Intelligence Source	Publish credible water insights, policy briefs, and early-warning updates that position Agri SA as the leading voice on agricultural water security in South Africa.

Biodiversity, Land Use and Soil Conservation

Natural Resources COE • Biodiversity, Land use and soil - Focus areas

1



Policy and
legal affairs

2



Advocacy

3



Communication

1

Policy and legal affairs

Act Policy

Purpose and Relevance

Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Act (PDALA), Act 39 of 2024**Purpose**

- Establishes a national framework for preserving and sustainably developing agricultural land
- Prevents fragmentation and degradation of high-value farmland
- Promotes viable farming units and long-term food security

Agricultural Relevance:

- Introduces agro-ecosystem authorisations and protected agricultural areas
- Requires provincial agricultural sector plans and land classification systems
- Aligns with spatial planning and environmental legislation for integrated land use

Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (CARA), Act 43 of 1983**Purpose:**

- Regulates soil conservation, water management, and control of invasive species

Agricultural Relevance:

- Obligates farmers to prevent erosion and manage vegetation sustainably
- Enforces clearing of invasive alien plants

National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (NEMBA), Act 10 of 2004**Purpose:**

- Conserves biodiversity and regulates species and ecosystems

Agricultural Relevance:

- Limits farming in sensitive areas
- Requires permits for certain land uses and species

1

Policy and legal affairs

Act Policy

Purpose and Relevance

National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), Act 107 of 1998**Purpose**

- Provides overarching environmental governance and EIA requirements

Agricultural Relevance:

- EIAs required for large-scale agricultural developments
- Promotes sustainable land-use planning

National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act 57 of 2003 (DFFE)**Purpose**

- Provides for the declaration and management of protected areas to conserve biodiversity

Agricultural Relevance

- Possible concerns with respect to management of animals moving from protected areas to adjacent farmland.

Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act 36 of 1947 (DA)**Purpose**

- Regulates the registration, importation, sale, and use of fertilizers, farm feeds, agricultural remedies, and stock remedies

Agricultural Relevance

- All fertilizers, farm feeds, agricultural remedies, and stock remedies must be registered with the Registrar before they can be sold or used; sets out requirements for the sale and distribution of registered products, including labelling and advertising standards; prevents the use of substances that could pose a risk to human health, animals, or the environment.

1

Policy and legal affairs

Act Policy

Purpose and Relevance

Genetically Modified Organisms Act 15 of 1997 (DA)

Purpose

- Aims to ensure that all activities involving GMOs are conducted responsibly and safely, minimizing potential risks to the environment and human health

Agricultural Relevance

- Activities involving GMOs must be carried out in ways that limit possible harmful consequences to the environment; measures for the evaluation of risks arising from GMO activities; approval for the importation, production, release, and distribution of GMOs

National Veld and Forest Fire Act 101 of 1998 (DFFE)

Purpose

- Aims to prevent and combat veld, forest, and mountain fires throughout the country by establishing a framework for fire management and control

Agricultural Relevance

- Formation and registration of Fire Protection Associations by landowners to manage fire risks in their areas; Landowners are required to prepare and maintain firebreaks on their properties to prevent the spread of fires; specifies the requirements for firebreaks, including their width and maintenance

1

Policy and legal affairs

Act Policy

Purpose and Relevance

National Environmental Management: Waste Act 59 of 2008 (DFFE)

Waste management hierarchy (reduce, reuse, recycle); Licensing and control of waste management activities; Measures to prevent pollution and ecological degradation

National Forests Act 84 of 1998 (DFFE)

Protection of indigenous forests; Regulation of forest management practices; Promotion of community forestry

Agricultural Pests Act 36 of 1983 (DA)

Outlines control measures to prevent and combat agricultural pests, including the use of pesticides and other methods; Importers must obtain permits for controlled goods to ensure they meet safety standards

Animal Diseases Act 35 of 1984 (DA)

Lists specific diseases and prescribes measures to prevent their spread; Safeguards the health of animals to support trade and protect the economy

Animal Improvement Act 62 of 1998 (DA)

Establishments involved in breeding must register with the Registrar of Animal Improvement; Premises used for activities must be registered and meet specific standards

National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999

Provides for the protection and management of conservation-worthy places and areas by local authorities. Establishes a unified system for identifying, assessing, and managing heritage resources across the country.

2

Advocacy

Act Policy

Purpose and Relevance

DFFE (Department of Forestry, Fisheries & the Environment)

Advocate for clear, practical, and farmer-aligned environmental regulations — including permitting, offsets, buffer zones, and biodiversity requirements — to reduce compliance burdens and delays.

SANBI (South African National Biodiversity Institute)

Ensure agriculture has full access to biodiversity datasets and decision-support tools (BGIS, LU-DST), and that agricultural realities are incorporated into national biodiversity planning.

DALRRD (Department of Agriculture, Land Reform & Rural Development)

Align soil health monitoring, conservation agriculture programmes, and land-use extension services with national biodiversity and land-degradation intelligence.

Provincial Environmental Departments

Advocate for consistent and predictable environmental permitting processes across provinces, with reduced duplication and faster turnaround times for agriculture.

CSIR & Research Institutions

Strengthen scientific collaboration on soil health metrics, degradation monitoring, invasive species modelling, and restoration potential to support evidence-based advocacy.

3

Communication

Act Policy

Purpose and Relevance

Improve Awareness of Environmental Regulations

Clearly communicate environmental permitting requirements, biodiversity guidelines, and compliance obligations so farmers understand what is required and how to navigate regulatory processes.

Share Biodiversity & Soil Health Insights

Provide accessible updates on soil health trends, land degradation, invasive species risks, and biodiversity sensitivity to support informed decision-making at farm and provincial level.

Promote Best Practice in Sustainable Land Management

Highlight practical, locally relevant guidelines — such as grazing protocols, burning schedules, erosion control, and regenerative agriculture techniques — to strengthen adoption.

Strengthen Transparency in Land-Use and Conservation Planning

Communicate how biodiversity tools (BGIS, LU-DST) and spatial data influence land-use decisions, offsets, and buffer zones, improving predictability and reducing uncertainty for farmers.

Position Agri SA as a Trusted Environmental Intelligence Source

Publish credible intelligence reports, policy briefs, and early warnings that establish Agri SA as a key authority on soil conservation, biodiversity, and land-use issues affecting agriculture.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Natural Resources COE • Climate Change - Focus areas

1



Climate
Intelligence

2



Policy and
legal affairs

3



Advocacy

4



Communication

1 Climate Intelligence

OBJECTIVE



Digital database providing an overview of climate change and weather.

Focus Area	Objective / Description
1. Mapping and Quantification	Map and quantify climate-sensitive agricultural resources including water availability, soil health, productive land, and critical infrastructure (dams, boreholes, irrigation schemes) — to understand regional exposure and adaptive capacity.
2. Tracking Climate Trends and Transitions	Track trends in climate-related stressors and transitions such as drought cycles, extreme weather events, infrastructure failures, shifts in water-use authorisations, and compliance notices to identify emerging risks and opportunities for farmers.
3. Climate Risk and Resource Rights Profiling	Profile climate-linked resource rights (water allocation, land capability, grazing capacity, communal and historical use) to understand vulnerability, equity considerations, and impacts on long-term agricultural investment.
4. Spatial and Economic Integration for Resilience	Integrate spatial (GIS), climate, and economic data to link resource availability and environmental quality with farm productivity, irrigation efficiency, and climate resilience across provinces and catchments.
5. Policy, Regulation, and Climate Advocacy Support	Provide credible, up-to-date climate intelligence to strengthen Agri SA’s advocacy on water licensing, resilient infrastructure investment, disaster preparedness, municipal service reliability, and climate-related regulatory reforms.
6. Evidence Base for Resilience Partnerships	Build a trusted, science-based evidence platform to support collaboration with DWS, CMAs, municipalities, water user associations, financiers, insurers, research institutions, and development partners to drive investment in climate adaptation and resilient agricultural systems.

2 Policy and legal affairs

Act / Policy

Purpose

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

South Africa's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Paris Agreement (2015) is shaped by several factors, including national priorities, equity considerations, and scientific assessments. The country updates its NDC periodically to align with global climate goals and domestic sustainability efforts.

South Africa has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to between 398 and 440 MtCO₂e by 2030, aligning with its fair share of global climate action. A significant shift towards renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind, is a key component of the mitigation strategy. A specific measure in terms of South Africa's NDC focusses on sustainable land use, promoting conservation agriculture and reforestation to enhance carbon sequestration.

Purpose: To enable South Africa's transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society, aligned with its commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Core Mechanisms:

- **Sectoral Emission Targets (SETs):** Each high-emitting sector, including agriculture, will be assigned specific emission reduction targets to drive transformative change.
- **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reporting:** GHG reporting will now fall under the Climate Change Act, replacing the previous framework under the Air Quality Act. This centralizes climate accountability.

Climate Change Act 22 of 2024 (DFFE)

Implications for Agriculture

1. **Inclusion in SETs:** Agriculture is explicitly listed as a sector subject to emission targets. This means:
2. **Regulatory Compliance:** Agricultural entities may face new reporting obligations and performance benchmarks tied to emissions and climate resilience.

2 Policy and legal affairs

Policy	Target	Indicator
Conservation of Agriculture Resources Act, Climate Smart Strategic Framework, Climate Change Sector Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the key policies to incorporate climate mitigation and carbon sequestration, including supporting measures (including the Conservation of Agriculture Resources Act, Climate Smart Strategic Framework and Climate Change Sector Plan) Update policies with the following activities, where relevant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nitrogen inhibitors in crops Updating fertilizer schedules Increase availability of soil sampling, standardise nitrogen testing. Feed changes in livestock subsector Conservation agriculture Sharing best practices across Provinces for climate mitigation 	<p>Policies updated</p> <p>Number of climate mitigation activities identified from policy reform</p>
Conservation Agriculture Policy	Provide training and capacity to extension officers to support smallholder farmers on zero cost climate change mitigation options	Number of extension officers trained
Livestock emissions research programme	<p>Identify emissions reduction technologies and opportunities in the livestock subsector</p> <p>Develop programme implementation plan</p>	Programmed implementation plan
Agriculture Sector Implementation Plan	Develop a sector implementation plan to for applying climate mitigation activities	Sector implementation plan developed

3

Advocacy

Stakeholder	Objective / Description
Department of Agriculture	Advocate for a national climate-smart agriculture framework, aligned incentives for adaptation, improved extension services, and protection of productive land from climate-related degradation.
Department of Forestry, Fisheries & the Environment (DFFE)	Strengthen climate policy coherence, secure farmer access to climate finance (carbon markets, adaptation grants), and ensure practical regulatory requirements for emissions, reporting, and biodiversity protection.
Department of Water & Sanitation (DWS)	Advocate for resilient water governance, improved licensing efficiency, protection of agricultural water rights, investment in water infrastructure, and climate-adaptive catchment management.
National Treasury	Promote climate-aligned financial incentives (tax relief, credit guarantees, resilience funds), enable blended finance for adaptation, and ensure agricultural inclusion in national climate budgeting.
Agricultural Commodity Organisations	Coordinate sector-specific climate strategies, promote adoption of climate-smart technologies, and ensure value chains prepare for global sustainability and trade requirements.
Financial Institutions & Insurers	Promote climate-adaptive financing, risk-based premium models, access to sustainability-linked loans, and investment in resilience-enhancing technologies.
International Partners (FAO, IFAD, IFC, EU, development agencies)	Advocate for technical support, climate finance mobilisation, and alignment with global climate frameworks that benefit South African farmers and rural communities.

4

Communication

Stakeholder	Objective / Description
Department of Agriculture	Advocate for a national climate-smart agriculture framework, aligned incentives for adaptation, improved extension services, and protection of productive land from climate-related degradation.
Department of Forestry, Fisheries & the Environment (DFFE)	Strengthen climate policy coherence, secure farmer access to climate finance (carbon markets, adaptation grants), and ensure practical regulatory requirements for emissions, reporting, and biodiversity protection.
Department of Water & Sanitation (DWS)	Advocate for resilient water governance, improved licensing efficiency, protection of agricultural water rights, investment in water infrastructure, and climate-adaptive catchment management.
National Treasury	Promote climate-aligned financial incentives (tax relief, credit guarantees, resilience funds), enable blended finance for adaptation, and ensure agricultural inclusion in national climate budgeting.
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International Partners (FAO, IFAD, IFC, EU, development agencies)	Advocate for technical support, climate finance mobilisation, and alignment with global climate frameworks that benefit South African farmers and rural communities.

MINING and FRACKING

Natural Resources COE • Mining & Fracking - Focus areas

1



Intelligence

2



Policy and
legal affairs

3



Advocacy

4



Communication

1 Mining Intelligence

OBJECTIVE



To build a comprehensive, evidence-based intelligence capability that monitors, analyses, and anticipates the impacts of mining and fracking.

Focus Area	Objective / Description
1. Spatial & Environmental Surveillance	Map and track mining, prospecting, seismic testing, and fracking activities to identify overlaps with high-value agricultural land, fragile ecosystems, and water-sensitive regions.
2. Risk & Impact Assessment	Analyse cumulative impacts on soil, groundwater, surface water, air quality, biosecurity, and agricultural infrastructure to produce early-warning insights for farmers and affiliates.
3. Regulatory & Policy Intelligence	Monitor EIA processes, water-use licences, mining rights, social and labour plans, and regulatory amendments to identify gaps, risks, and advocacy intervention points.
4. Economic & Food Security Analysis	Evaluate trade-offs between mining expansion and agricultural productivity, food security, rural employment, and long-term land value to inform sector policy positions.
5. Partnership & Governance Interface	Build a credible evidence base for collaboration with DMRE, DWS, DALRRD, municipalities, water user associations, traditional authorities, financiers, and civil society to support transparent and sustainable decision-making.

Act Policy

Purpose and Relevance

Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Act (PDALA), Act 39 of 2024

Purpose

- Establishes a national framework for preserving and sustainably developing agricultural land
- Prevents fragmentation and degradation of high-value farmland
- Promotes viable farming units and long-term food security

Agricultural Relevance:

- Introduces agro-ecosystem authorisations and protected agricultural areas
- Requires provincial agricultural sector plans and land classification systems
- Aligns with spatial planning and environmental legislation for integrated land use

Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, 28 of 2002; and Upstream Petroleum Resources Development Act, 23 of 2024

Purpose:

- Aims to ensure the equitable access, sustainable development, and state custodianship of South Africa's mineral and petroleum resources. It replaced private ownership of mineral rights with a system where the state regulates exploration and extraction in the public interest.

Agricultural Relevance:

- Land Use Conflicts: Mining rights granted under the MPRDA can overlap with agricultural land, leading to disputes over land access, degradation, and water use.
- Environmental Impact: Mining activities may affect soil quality, water availability, and biodiversity which is critical to farming viability.
- Consultation and Compensation: Farmers and landowners must be consulted before mining begins, but processes can be opaque or contested.
- Policy Interface: The Act intersects with environmental laws (e.g. NEMA), requiring integrated land-use planning and stronger safeguards for agricultural zones.

3 Advocacy

Stakeholder	Objective / Description
Department of Mineral Resources & Energy (DMRE)	Advocate for transparent licensing processes, rigorous environmental safeguards, and meaningful agricultural impact assessments before approval of mining/fracking rights.
Department of Water & Sanitation (DWS)	Ensure strict protection of agricultural water resources, enforce groundwater monitoring, and prevent licences that risk contamination or depletion of strategic water sources.
Department of Agriculture	Strengthen joint oversight to protect high-value agricultural land, enforce land capability considerations in EIAs, and secure farmer rights in land-use planning.
Minerals Council	Push for responsible exploration and extraction practices, binding mitigation commitments, compensation frameworks, and co-existence agreements that protect farmers.
Farmers, Commodity Organisations & Local Agribusinesses	Empower farmers with intelligence on risks, support objections where land or water is threatened, and strengthen compensation and co-existence mechanisms.

4

Communication

Stakeholder	Objective / Description
Build Public Awareness of Agricultural Risks	Clearly communicate how mining and fracking can affect water resources, soil health, land productivity, and rural livelihoods to ensure informed public discourse.
Strengthen Farmer Preparedness and Support	Provide farmers with accessible, evidence-based information on applications, risks, impacts, and available channels for objections or engagement.
Position Agri SA as a Credible Evidence-Based Authority	Communicate Agri SA's intelligence, research, and policy positions to reinforce its role as the trusted national voice on land and water protection.
Influence Policy and Regulatory Decision-Making	Deliver clear, targeted messages to government and regulators advocating for stronger safeguards, transparent processes, and agricultural impact consideration.
Foster Constructive Engagement with Mining Stakeholders	Communicate expectations for responsible mining practices, promote co-existence principles, and encourage transparent dialogue between farmers and mining companies.



Thank you