



WESTERN CAPE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT PERFORMANCE IN THE LAST QUARTER OF 2024

Summary

The Western Cape employment grew by 2% in the fourth quarter of 2024, bringing the total provincial employment to 2.8 million employed individuals. Sectoral employment numbers show the largest employment in terms of the relative share of total provincial employment are in community and social services (22%), finance (21%) and trade (18%). Agriculture (incl. forestry and fisheries) accounted for (7%) and Agriprocessing (4%), therefore combined agricultural value chain accounts for at least 11% (313 083) of the provincial employment. Primary agriculture jobs increased by 10% adding 17 903 jobs when compared to Q3_2024. It is also evident that agricultural jobs were severely affected by floods and other extreme environmental conditions, and employment growth of 18% is required to return to the levels last seen in Q4_2023. Despite this, the Western Cape contributed 21% to the total national agricultural employment, highlighting its significant role in South Africa's agricultural sector.

1. Introduction

One of the main priorities of the Western Cape government is to stimulate economic growth to create more job opportunities. This objective supports South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) for sustainable and inclusive growth, aimed at reducing the unemployment rate, increasing the labour force participation rate to 65% and creating an additional 11 million jobs in 2030 (NPC, 2011) . Chapter 6 of the NDP emphasises the importance of an integrated and inclusive rural economy, with agriculture identified as a key sector that could contribute 11 million jobs by 2030. Existing literature and policy papers highlight the need for targeted investment to stimulate the economy. Agriculture requires investment in irrigation infrastructure, expansion of the area under production, energy security and provision of support to enable smallholders to transition to commercial farming (Nhemachena, Matchaya, Nhlengethwa, & Nhemachena, 2018.). In addition, the overall support of down and upstream sectors. This report analyses the agricultural labour market performance in the Western Cape, based on the fourth quarter labour force survey statistics for 2024 (Q4_2024) from Statistics South Africa. It will begin with an overview of employment and performance of various sectors in this quarter (Q4_2024) (Stats SA, 2025), followed by a discussion of jobs in agriculture and agri-processing.

2. Overview of employment

The South African QLFS is a household-based sample survey that gathers information on the labour market activities of individuals aged 15-64 years, who reside in the country and are not institutionalised (Stats SA, 2024b). Table 1 presents employment numbers by sector in the province, including absolute numbers per quarter and annual growth rates for Q4_2024. During the last quarter of 2024, there were 2 811 717 employed individuals in the Western Cape. The sectors employing the largest share of the labour force in the province are community and social services 22% (607 989 jobs), finance 21% (587 048 jobs), trade 18% (509 127), manufacturing 11% (306 689 jobs), construction 11% (245 239 jobs), agriculture (incl. forestry and fisheries) 7% (192 818 jobs), transport 7% (184 123 jobs), Agriprocessing 4% (20 265 jobs), private household services 6% (158 187 jobs), utilities 0.4% (10 426 jobs) and mining 0.4% (10 071 jobs).

Overall employment in the Western Cape increased by 2% (62 493 jobs), and there was an improvement in job numbers in four sectors namely Community and social services, finance, agriculture and transport. Notably, primary agriculture¹ employment increased by 10%, adding 17 903 jobs in the province. However, compared to the same quarter in 2023 (Q4_2023 versus Q4_2024), the agricultural sector's current employment base needs to increase by 18% to rebound to previous levels.

Table 1: Western Cape fourth quarter 2024 labour market performance per sector

Sectors	Number of Jobs (Q4_2024)	% Change (Q3_2024 vs Q4_2024)	% Change (Q4_2023 vs Q4_2024)	Relative share of total_Q4_2024 (%)
Agriculture (incl. Forestry & Fisheries)	192 816	10%	-18%	7
Community and social services	607 989	6%	6%	22
Construction	245 239	-2%	2%	9
Finance	587 048	11%	8%	21
Agri-processing (Food, beverage & tobacco)	120 265	-2%	16%	4
Other manufacturing	186 424	-6%	-7%	7
Mining	10 071	-6%	161%	0
Private households	158 187	-17%	-12%	6
Trade	509 127	-3%	-0.2%	18
Transport	184 123	14%	24%	7
Utilities	10 426	-20%	-35%	0
Total for WC	2 811 715	2%	2%	100

Source: (Stats SA, 2025)

3. Agricultural labour market performance

Figure 1 illustrates trends in agricultural employment across the nine provinces of South Africa in the period Q4_2023 to the same quarter in 2024. Additionally, it shows the relative contribution of each province to total agricultural employment in Q4_2024. The Western Cape leads in agricultural jobs, contributing 21% (192 818 jobs) to total agricultural employment in the country. KwaZulu Natal follows it at 16% (152 294 jobs), and Mpumalanga and Limpopo are in third place each at 14%.

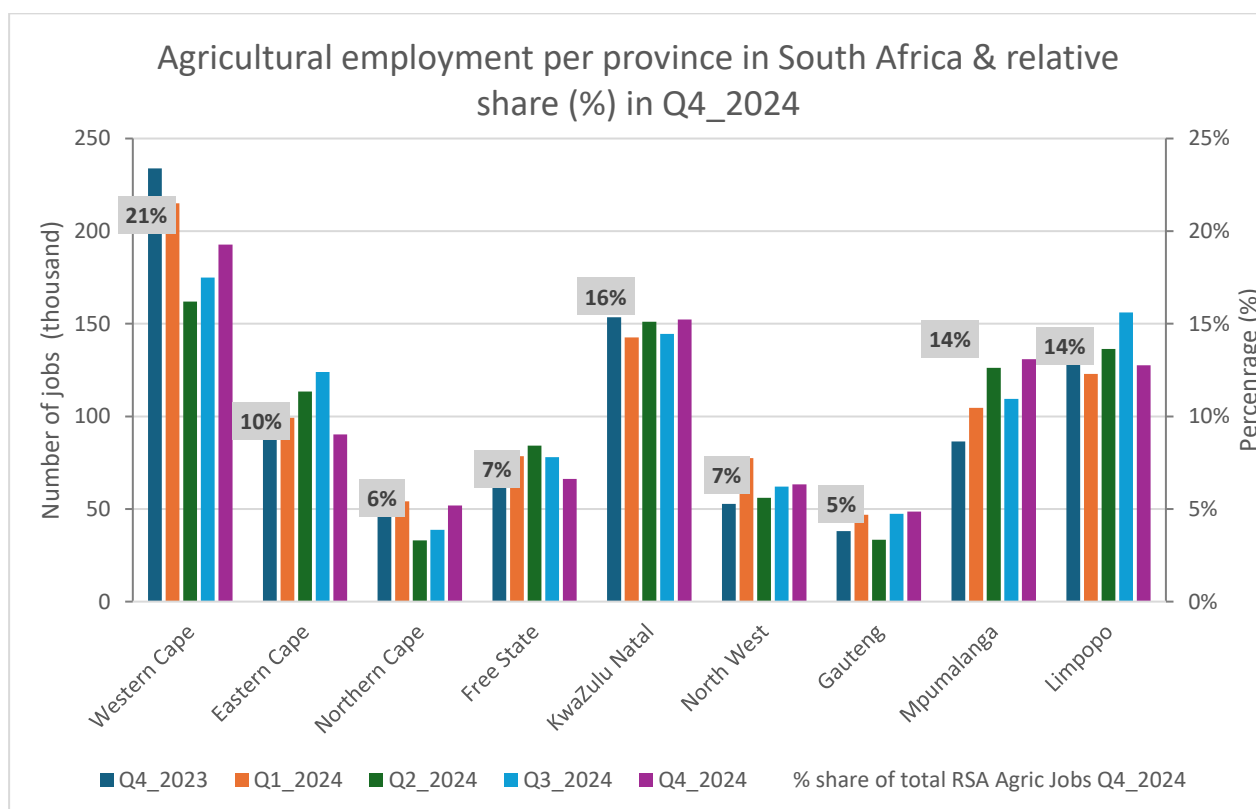


Figure 1: Quarterly primary agricultural employment trends per province Q3-2023-Q4_2024 & % share in Q4_2024

Source: (Stats SA, 2025)

Figure 2 below illustrates a disaggregation of the primary agricultural employment by subsectors in the Western Cape based on Statistics South Africa data (Stats SA, 2025a). It can be noted from the Figure that the significant share of agricultural employment in the province is in the growing of crops at 78% (149 693), followed by farming of animals at 13% (25 974) and the remaining 9% (17 151) distributed in other primary agriculture sub-sectors. The agricultural sector is important to the economy of the province and creates jobs in the rural areas absorbing low, semi and skilled labour force

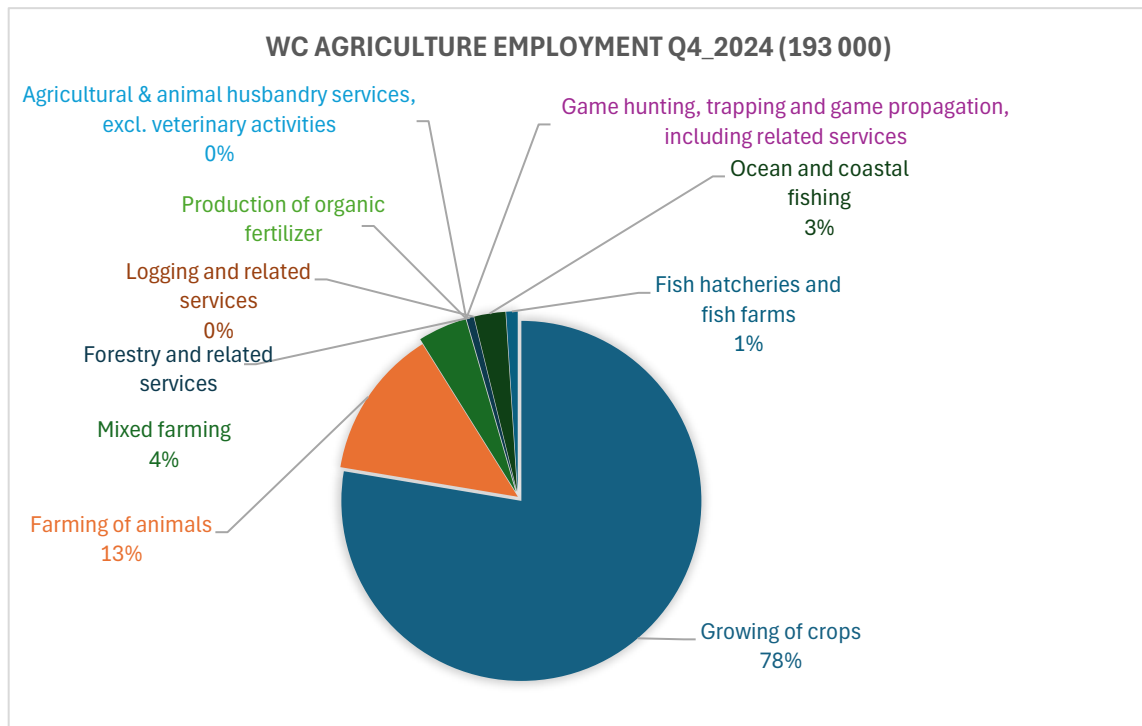


Figure 2: Western Cape primary agricultural employment by share of subsector
Source: (Stats SA, 2025a)

Figure 3 illustrates the Western Cape quarterly total Agriprocessing jobs in absolute terms and percentage share (%) per subsector for the period Q1_2022 to Q4_2024. Overall, a total of 120 jobs were generated in fourth quarter of 2024. It can be observed from the figure that a significant share of jobs in Agriprocessing are the manufacture of other food products 40% (48 000 jobs), followed by the production, processing and preservation of meat, fish, fruit, vegetable, oil & fats sub-sector 30% (36 000 jobs); then manufacture of beverages 23% (28 000 jobs); and rest of other jobs in the manufacturing of grain mills and dairy products. A look at the last quarter of 2024 (Q4_2024), there was an improvement in job numbers 16% (16 929 jobs).

Figure 4 shows the Western Cape agriculture and agri-processing sectors employment number for the period Q1_2022 to Q4_2024. Overall agricultural employment shows an upward trend (see trend line). Both sectors combined recorded 313 083 jobs in Q4_2024, contributing 11% to total provincial employment.

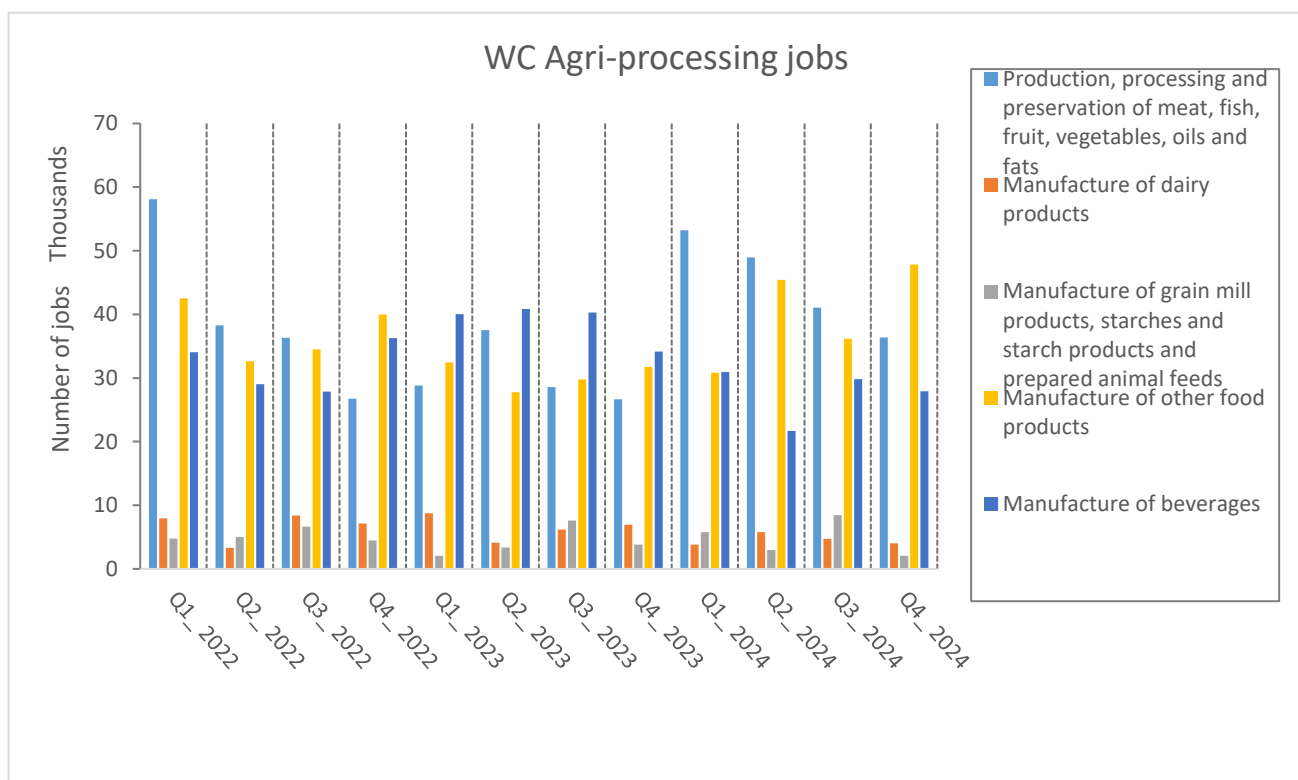


Figure 3: Western Cape Agriprocessing jobs and percentage share per subsector, Q1_2022-Q4_2024

Source: (Stats SA, 2025a)

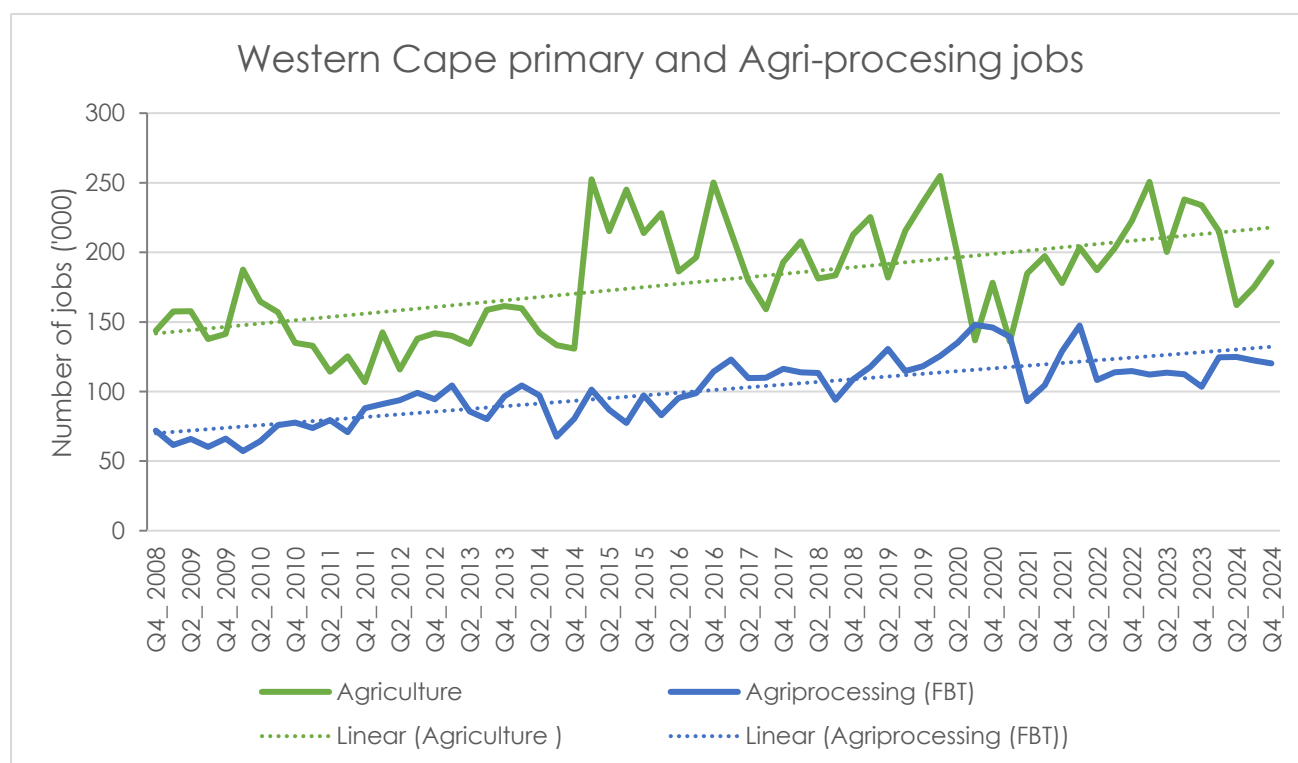


Figure 4: Western primary and agri-processing employment trends, Q4_2008 to Q4_2024

Source: (Stats SA, 2025)

4. Conclusion

In the fourth quarter of 2024, the Western Cape labour market increased by 2% due to growth in the community and social services, financial services and transport services on a quarterly and annual basis. Despite the annual decline in agricultural jobs, this sector continues to show resilience since it accounts for a large share of 21% in national agricultural primary agricultural jobs. In the province, agriculture and Agriprocessing accounts for 11% of the 2.8 million jobs in the province. Agricultural jobs increased by 10%, adding 17 903 jobs compared to the previous quarter. However, when compared to the same quarter in 2023, the provincial agricultural job numbers have not yet fully rebounded.

5. Policy recommendations

- Investment in agriculture for irrigation infrastructure, energy security and expansion of area under production.
- Provide tailored support to farmers to enhance the productivity and adoption of relevant technologies. Providing comprehensive support to enable smallholder farmers to transition to commercial farming, and access to finance, capacity development and market access
- Integrated rural development that promotes agricultural development and encourages youth participation in agriculture
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of agricultural value chains to track progress and bottlenecks affecting productivity and employment generation, coupled with reliance on data-driven insights to inform adjustment to policies and programs at the landscape.
- Active participation and collaboration among all key stakeholders based on shared values and support for the growth of agriculture

6. References

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