



WESTERN CAPE AGRICULTURE AND AGRIPROCESSING EMPLOYMENT PERFORMANCE IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 2026

Summary

The Western Cape agricultural sector continues to play an important role at both provincial and national level, contributing 24% (227 650 jobs) to total South Africa's primary agricultural employment in Q2_2026. At provincial level, agricultural employment increased by 13% (4 499 jobs) on year-on-year basis (y/y) in the second quarter of 2026. Employment growth was primary driven by crop and livestock farming, with crop farming accounting for 74% (167 505 jobs) of primary agricultural jobs in the province due to the labour-intensive nature of the horticultural sector. The livestock sector employment has start to recover some jobs showing a growth of 51% (11 310 jobs) when compared the same quarter last year, this worth noting given the impact of Food and Mouth Disease (FMD) on this industry. Agri-processing employment contracted -0.2% (157 jobs) on quarter-on-quarter and 7% (4 939 jobs) (y/y). Overall, agriculture and agri-processing combined accounted for 12% (323 195 jobs) of provincial employment, adding 7% (20 591) jobs to labour market in this quarter, when compared to the same quarter in 2025, indicative of the strategic importance to the economy.

1. Introduction

This report analyses the Western Cape agricultural labour market performance in the second quarter of 2026 (Q2_2026) based on quarterly labour force survey statistics (QLFS) released by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). Employment is an apex priority of the Western Cape government, and central to the Growth for Jobs Strategy (G4J) aimed creating more than 600 000 new jobs in the province by 2035.

To accomplish this goal, it is essential to regularly monitor the labour market performance in order identify barriers and gather intelligence to inform strategic interventions aimed at creating a conducive environment to drive economic and employment growth. Hence, this report analyses the labour market dynamics in the Western Cape, focusing on the agricultural sector. Starting with overview of employment in the province by sector, then followed a descriptive discussion of agriculture and agri-processing employment trends in Q2_2026.

2. Overview of employment

Figure 2.1 below illustrates break-down of employment by sectors in Western Cape during the second quarter of 2026(Q2_2026). The province recorded a record a total of 2.8 million jobs. The top three sectors with the largest share of employment were financial services at 21% (591 023 jobs) and trade at 20% (575 989 jobs), followed by community services at 19% (542 991 jobs). Primary agricultural sector with a share of 9% (227 650 jobs) ranks in the sixth position as major employer after Construction 8% (257 506 jobs), and agri-processing (Food, beverage and tobacco) contributed 4% (95 545 jobs). Therefore, agriculture and agri-processing combined contributed 12% to total provincial labour force.

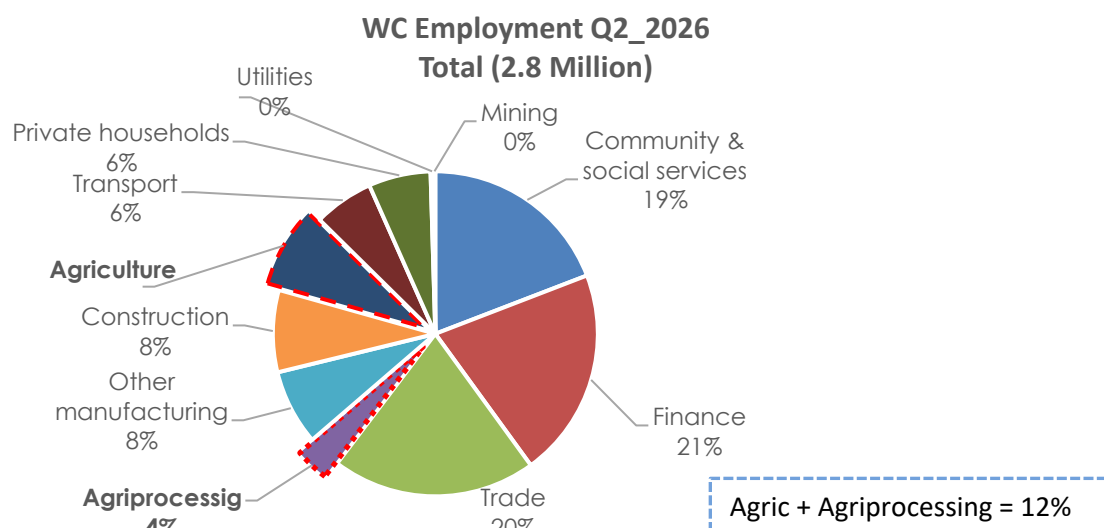


Figure 2.1: Western employment breakdown by sector Q1_2026
Source: (Stats SA, 2026)

3. Agricultural labour market performance

Figure 3.1 illustrates trends in agricultural employment across the nine provinces of South Africa for the period Q2_2025 to Q2_2026. Nationally, a total of 94 432 agricultural jobs were recorded in Q2_2026, and a large of these jobs are concentrated in the Western Cape (24%).

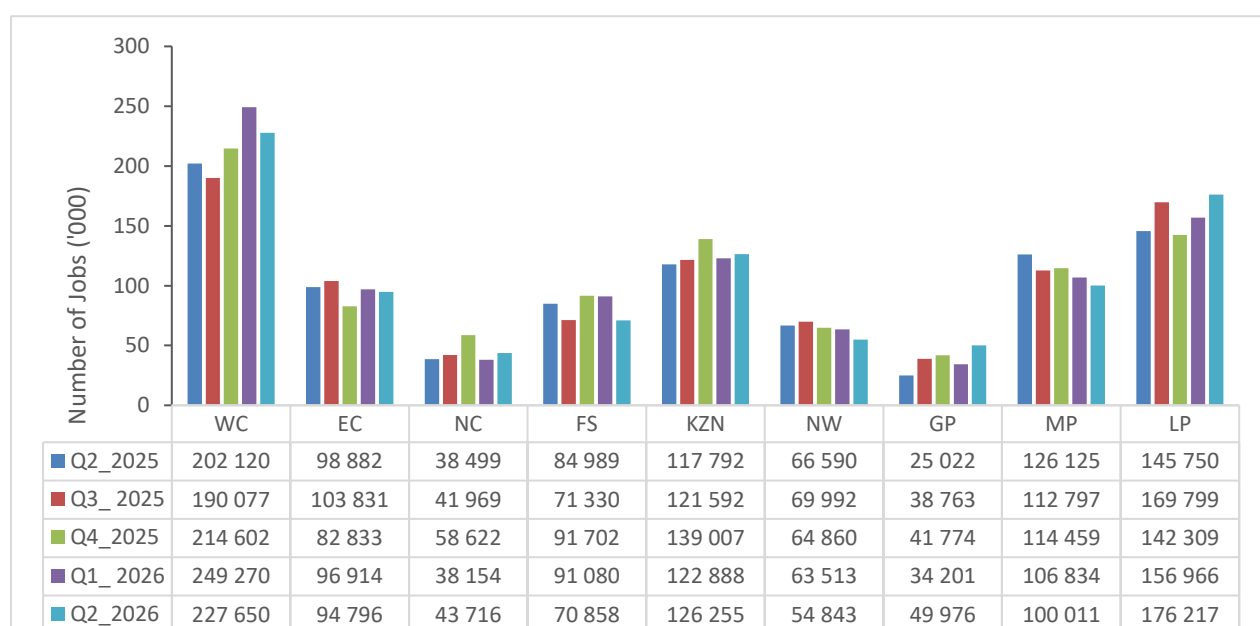


Figure 3.1: RSA agricultural jobs by province and relative share Q2_2025 to Q2_2026
Source: (Stats SA, 2026)

Figure 3.2 shows the Western Cape agriculture and agri-processing sectors' employment numbers for the period Q1_2016 to Q2_2026. Overall, both agricultural and agri-processing combined contributed a total of 323 195 jobs in Q2_2026, showing an annual increase of 7% (20 591 jobs)

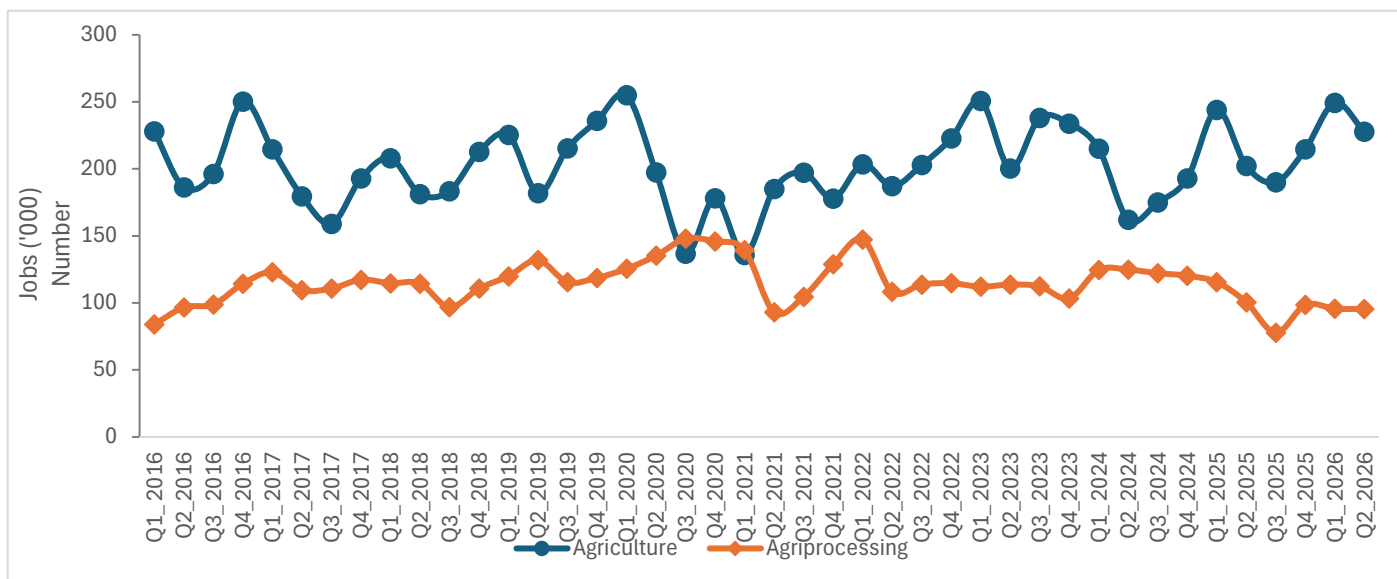


Figure 3.2: WC primary and agri-processing employment trends, Q1_2012 to Q1_2026

Source: (Stats SA, Publication, 2026)

Table 3.1 presents a further disaggregation of the agriculture and agri-processing employment by industry in the Western Cape based on Statistics South Africa data (Stats SA, 2026a). The agricultural sector is important to the economy of the province and creates jobs in the rural areas, absorbing low, semi-skilled and skilled labour force. It's growth in this quarter was significant despite job losses in the livestock and animal feed firms.

Table 3.1: WC Jobs In Agric And Agri-Processing Jobs In Q2_2026, Growth Rates (%)

DISAGGREGATED AGRICULTURE AND AGRIPROCESSING ACTIVITIES	Y/Y % change (Q2: 2025 v 2026)	Y/Y % change (Q2: 2025 v 2026)	Y/Y % change (Q2: 2025 v 2026)	Y/Y % change (Q2: 2025 v 2026)
AGRICULTURE, HUNTING, FORESTRY AND FISHING				
Growing of crops	167 505	73,6	-20,3	2,8
Farming of animals	33 434	14,7	59,4	51,1
Growing of crops combined with farming of animals (mixed farming)	9 686	4,3	-14,7	8,8
Production of organic fertiliser	973	0,4	-49,5	-
Forestry and related services	3 331	1,5	-	181,1
Logging and related services	1 008	0,4	-	-
Ocean and coastal fishing	10 669	4,7	125,2	109,9
Fish hatcheries and fish farm	1 043	0,5	-	-
Primary agriculture	227 650	100,0	-8,7	12,6
AGRI PROCESSING JOBS (FOOD, BEVERAGE AND TOBACCO)				
Production, processing and preservation of meat, fish, fruit, vegetables, oils and fats	29 863	31,3	-1,6	-18,8
Manufacture of dairy products	7 609	8,0	-18,0	65,3
Manufacture of grain mill products, starches and prepared animal feeds	2 015	2,1	4,9	-51,6
Manufacture of other food products	29 984	31,4	-7,7	-21,2
Manufacture of beverages	24 834	26,0	14,7	46,7
Manufacture of tobacco products	1 240	1,3	-	-
Agri-Processing	95 545	100,0	-0,2	-4,9

Source: Stats SA, 2026

4. Conclusion

The Western Cape agricultural sector labour market showed an increase in primary agricultural jobs on annual basis, driven by crop and livestock farming. Compared to the same quarter last year, the overall growth for agriculture and agri-processing was modest at 7%, due job losses in the agri-processing sector. The third quarter labour market results will be revealing in terms of the impact of the impact of floods and related infrastructural damages. Therefore, the focus on biosecurity risks and climate change mitigation continues to be priority in building the resilience of the sector.

5. Acknowledgement

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6. References

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