

Press Release

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SOUTH AFRICAN
INSTITUTE OF
RACE RELATIONS

South Africa's Leading Research and Policy Organisation

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Commercial farming drives the country's food security

Commercial farmers account for 95% of the country's locally-produced food, planting their crops on only 5% of total agricultural land and owning 72% of all livestock, according to the South African Institute of Race Relations.

There are 94.5 million hectares of agricultural land in South Africa of which 13.1 million, or 14%, are cultivated, which means they are tilled and used to plant crops. The remaining 81.3 million hectares, or 86%, are used for grazing though some agricultural land could also be used for mining and other activities.

The figures come from Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy, and a statement released by the minister of economic development, Ebrahim Patel.

The commercial agriculture census, published by Stats SA, shows that the 47 500 commercial farmers in the country plant all their crops on 4.6 million hectares, which works out to 36% of cultivated agricultural land and 5% of total agricultural land. Commercial farmers keep 72% of the country's total livestock.

Commercial farmers account for 95% of the country's locally-produced food, according to the minister of economic development. The remaining 5% of food is therefore produced by the 220 000 emerging farmers and 1.3 million subsistence farmers in the country.

'While emerging and subsistence farmers may feed their own families and some others, the above information demonstrates that national food security depends on commercial farming,' said Kerwin Lebone of the Institute's research department.

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