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SA agriculture sector coping with challenges – FNB economist

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South Africa's agricultural sector remains resilient, but needs to learn how

to cope with challenges such as drought and policy uncertainty, First National Bank (FNB) senior agricultural economist **Paul Makube** said on Monday.


The industry has faced severe headwinds over the past few years, including uncertainty over government policy, drought, devastating disease outbreaks, infrastructure constraints and non-tariff barriers and other trade-related problems.

Its contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) has declined consistently from around 8.9 percent in 1975 to 2.6 percent in 2017.

"However, the industry is learning to dance with the wind, rather than fighting it. It remains resilient despite these major challenges and limitations," Makube said.

He said the country was exploring new markets and had for the first time exported a shipment of soya beans to Turkey to see if this was viable.

"South Africa is also talking to China to import maize and soya-beans from South Africa," Makube said.

New new technology in the form of drought-resistant, disease-resistant varieties, irrigation water saving techniques and changes in livestock breeding and feeding had shown that the industry was getting lighter on its feet, he added. 

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