

Agri-estates before golf estates as Gauteng moves to boost food output

By [Sarah Hudleston](#)

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New residential golf estates may become a thing of the past in Gauteng if policy on which the province's agriculture department is working is adopted, agriculture MEC Nandi Mayathula-Khoza has said.

The African National Congress identified rural development, food security and land reform as among government's priorities for the five years from May 2008.

A new concept for SA - agri estates, comprising housing across a mix of income ranges, all linked to commercial farming ventures - was being devised to strengthen Gauteng's food security and increase jobs in the agricultural sector, she said.

Gauteng planned to legislate the protection of remaining agricultural land, Mayathula-Khoza said.

"About 96% of Gauteng is urban and it is particularly important that any remaining agricultural land should be preserved," she said.

AgriSA Gauteng president Andre Botha said his organisation backed the province's plans.

"Gauteng can feed itself, unlike Europe, that mostly imports its food ... We support anything in the agricultural sector that leads to job creation," he said.

Agriculture in Gauteng only contributes 0.6% to the province's gross domestic product, said Mayathula-Khoza. The department could improve this by protecting high-potential land.

"We are pleased to say that there is some interest in this and community developer Caesar Molebatsi is working on the first agri-estate in the Doornkop area, (close to Krugersdorp)," she said.

Molebatsi said he believed subsistence farmers could be "grown into" viable commercial farmers.

"I am thinking in terms of progressive co-operatives which would own the title deeds to the land, be given vigorous training and be market-led."

Mayathula-Khoza said several "nodes" had been identified in Gauteng for agricultural development. She also said her department had got a "nice surprise" when the results of a recent land audit were published.

"It was discovered that Gauteng has 60000ha of agricultural land it did not know it owned. It will now be put to good use," she said.

Botha said AgriSA was involved in a pilot project in western Gauteng in which 253 small farmers were growing market vegetables.

Source: [*Business Day*](#)

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