

South Africa



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Commodities

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What's happening

57%

Population below international poverty line

€235

per month

National minimum wage

€255

per month

Rural living wage

5%

Agricultural workforce

2%

Agriculture share of GDP

3

medium

Risk to workers' rights

Context

South Africa has a population of roughly 59.3 million,^[1] with nearly 67%^[2] of the population living in urban areas. The agricultural sector makes up less than 2%^[3] of the country's GDP and employs 5%^[4] of the labour force. In South Africa there are nearly 2 million smallholders and roughly 35,000 commercial growers.^[5] However, the number of smallholders in South Africa has declined substantially over the last two decades with over half a million households having left the agricultural sector between 2011 and 2016.^[6]

Food insecurity and hunger are prevalent in South Africa. The transition away from smallholder and subsistence agriculture has created greater dependence on food purchasing, making citizens vulnerable to price hikes and nutritional insecurity. The reasoning behind the transitions away from agriculture are multifaceted and can be attributed to climate, economic, and socio-cultural transitions.^{[7] [8]}

The top five produced commodities in South Africa are sugar cane, maize, cow milk, potatoes and grapes.^[9] When arranged by export value the top commodities are oranges, wine, grapes, and maize, respectively.^[10]

Wages

Minimum wage

The general minimum wage in South Africa is 21.69 (1.2 EUR) South African rand per hour or 4,229 South African rand (235 EUR) per month, assuming 195 workhours per month.^[11] Regarding the agricultural sector, underpayment of wages is prevalent, with many owners of small farms not keeping track of worker hours, nor providing overtime benefits.^[12]

Living wage

The Global Living Wage Coalition has developed a **living wage benchmark** for Western Cape Province, in rural South Africa. The living wage is estimated to be 4,596 South African rand (255 EUR) per month based on a family of 4.5 with 1.64 workers.^[13] The area of Western Cape Province is a wine grape growing region, and this report identifies a living wage specifically for workers in the region.

What's happening

RESOURCE

Updated living wage benchmark, rural South Africa ↗

Updated living wage estimate for rural South Africa focussing on the wine grape growing sector. Global Living Wage Coalition, 2021.

RESOURCE

Living wage benchmark, rural South Africa ↗

Living wage estimate for rural South Africa focussing on the wine grape growing sector. Global Living Wage Coalition, 2016.

RESOURCE

Decent Standard of Living Index for South Africa ↗

This report introduces a new socially-derived definition for a decent standard of living and elaborates upon its application to the South African context.

INITIATIVE

Living wage calculator for domestic workers ↗

A tool that reveals whether the wages of domestic workers are sufficient to cover their basic expenses.

Footnotes

1. World Bank. (2020). <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=ZA>
2. World Bank. (2020). <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=ZA>
3. World Bank. (2020). <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS?locations=ZA>
4. World Bank. (2019). <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS?locations=ZA>
5. World Wide Fund for Nature. (2018). https://www.wwf.org.za/our_work/initiatives/climate_smart_smallholder_farming.cfm#:~:text=In%20South%20Africa%2C%20there%20are,to%2035%20000%20commercial%20growers.&text=Globally%2C%20smallholder%20farmers%20produce%2070,which%20results%20in%20increased%20poverty.
6. Shackleton, C. (2019). Smallholder crop farming is on the decline in South Africa. Why it matters. <https://theconversation.com/smallholder-crop-farming-is-on-the-decline-in-south-africa-why-it-matters-119333>
7. Shackleton, C. (2019). Smallholder crop farming is on the decline in South Africa. Why it matters. (2019). <https://theconversation.com/smallholder-crop-farming-is-on-the-decline-in-south-africa-why-it-matters-119333>

8. African Centre for Biodiversity. (2017). Typology of Smallholder Farming in South Africa's Former Homelands: Towards an Appropriate Classification System. <http://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/1192720/>
9. FAOSTAT. (2019). http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#rankings/commodities_by_country
10. FAOSTAT. (2019). http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#rankings/commodities_by_country_exports
11. WageIndicator, Foundation. (2020). <https://wageindicator.org/salary/minimum-wage/south-africa/6226-national-minimum-wage>
12. U.S. Department of State. (2019). <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/south-africa/>
13. Global Living Wage Coalition. (2019). <https://www.globallivingwage.org/living-wage-benchmarks/rural-south-africa/>