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**Competitiveness and the Sustainability of South African Agriculture**

**By**

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Sustainable agriculture is the intersection of economically sound, ecologically viable, and socially responsible approaches. The South African agricultural sector has gone through the full circle from a very regulated and subsidised environment up until the early nineties, to the current liberalised, open and very competitive environment.

The long-term competitiveness and therefore the economic sustainability of an industry is affected by a number of factors such as the productivity with which resources are deployed, relating and supporting industries, demand and supply conditions, government policies, local and international rivalry, etc. The duality of the sector, the unpredictability of the political environment, climate change, sluggish economic growth, a lack in investment, etc. are all factors that inhibit the long-term competitiveness of the South African agricultural sector. Although agriculture's direct contribution to the economy is only around 4%, the sector remains very important, especially when the up and downstream effects (bringing the economic contribution to over 20%) of agriculture is considered.

For the country to grow it must also invest in the future of the agricultural sector. In this presentation, an overview is presented of the competitiveness and sustainability of the South African agricultural sector. The presentation is concluded with issues that needs to be addressed in order to improve this vital industry.