



RESEARCH AGENDA

2020 – 2025

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AgriSETA	Agriculture Sector Education Training Authority
APP	Annual Performance Plan
ATR	Annual training report
NSDP	National Skills Development Plan
PIVOTAL	Professional, Vocational, Technical and Academic learning programmes that result in occupational qualifications or part
SSP	Sector Skills Plan
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SSC	Sector Skills Committee
SP	Strategic Plan
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WSP	Workplace Skills Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

The Agriculture Sector Education Training Authority (AgriSETA) has been in existence for the past 14 years, after the merge between Primary Agriculture Education and Training Authority (PAETA) and the Sector Education Training Authority for Secondary Agriculture (SETASA) in 2005. The AgriSETA forms part of the existing 21 Sector Education and training Authority.

The mandate of the AgriSETA is to provide for training and development in the primary and secondary Agricultural sectors aligned to the objectives of the National Skills Development Plan (2030).

Research plays a major role in the agricultural sector, as it is imperative for food security and broadens economic growth. New skills and knowledge is generated from research. One of the important functions of the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) is to develop and implement a Sector Skills Plan (SSP) within the framework of the National Skills Development Plan (2030).

The NSDP is the overarching strategic guide for skills development and provides direction to sector skills planning and implementation in the SETAs. Furthermore, research also assists with the latest developments nationally and internationally in the agricultural sector.

Moreover, the Skills Development Act (SDA) provides an institutional framework to devise and implement national, sector and workplace strategies and to develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce. Critical issues are also highlighted in the research agenda.

The Research Agenda is utilised as a guidance tool for research information which in encompasses the following:

- Designing and development of methods specific to qualitative and quantitative including mixed research methods, informed by sound epistemological approach to survey/interview design, sampling and the analysis of quantitative dataset;
- Analysing and interpretation of data flowing from the annual submissions of WSPs and Annual Training Report (ATRs) for the inclusion in the Sector Skills Plan;

- High levels of proficiency in preparing written, oral and graphical reports and presentations for diverse audiences to disseminate research findings;
- Identification of the critical and scarce skills list which forms part of the Sector Skills Plan;
- Development of research outputs leading to the development of the Sector Skills Plan and the compilation of a Sectoral Priority Occupations (PIVOTAL) List.

The agriculture sector comprises primarily of growing crops, breeding of animals and some primary processing of food, aquaculture, rangeland and forestry as a secondary activity. The need to consider the impact of AgriSETA’s interventions; (The Agricultural Education & Training Authority has 11 Sector Skills Committees and all these should aspire to craft a research topic enabling the SETA to have multi-disciplinary research topics; relevant in the Agricultural sector, therefore a multi-disciplinary understanding and application of diverse research methods remains imperative.

The sector on the bases of skills development is divided into 41 subsectors that are classified according to agricultural and economic focus. The sector encompasses both primary (resource production) and secondary (primary processing) activities. AgriSETA subdivided the 41 sub-sectors into 11 sub-sector groups which form part of the 11 Sector Skills Committees (SSCs) that are shown in table 1.

Table 1: SECTOR SKILLS COMMITTEE LIST

No	Sector-Skills Committee
1	Tobacco
2	Pest Control
3	Seed
4	Red Meat
5	Grain and Cereals
6	Horticulture
7	Sugar
8	Milling, pet food and animal feed
9	Aquaculture
10	Poultry
11	Fibre

2. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH AGENDA

The main goal of the research agenda is to plan and execute research of AgriSETA for the period 2020 to 2025. The research agenda was drafted within the approved AgriSETA research policy framework designed to guide the organisation in relation to research that is linked to the AgriSETA's mandate and support of the NSDP objectives.

This research agenda will also form a central theme in achieving Objective 2.1 of our Strategic Plan (SP) and Annual Performance Plan (APP); 'Establish a credible mechanism for skills planning and delivery in agricultural sector', it further enables AgriSETA to have an informed analysis of labour market intelligence relevant for Sectoral Priority Occupations (PIVOTAL) list intervention, support and continuous improvement. Moreover, it has been developed to inform planning processes within AgriSETA.

Culmination of inputs received from Sector Skills Committees will be updated annually in the research agenda to reflect current and relevant research activities.

The Research Agenda will also help to optimise the use of research resources by avoiding unnecessary duplication in terms of the same areas being researched many times.

Other important aspects of the research agenda are as follows:

- ⇒ In-depth understanding of labour market issues in the sector, in order to add value to stakeholders and remain relevant to skills development issues.
- ⇒ Develop a credible and authoritative voice on skills (both demand-side and supply-side) in the sector.
- ⇒ Align mechanisms to understand the demand side of skills (Employers) and supply side of skills (Education and Training Providers).
- ⇒ Developing a sector skills plan within the framework of the National Skills Development Plan and to guide the implementation.
- ⇒ Maintaining the established credible mechanism for skills planning, to ensure AgriSETA's focus on research that makes it an authoritative voice on skills in the agricultural sector.

- ⇒ Support evidence-based decision making for skills development in the sector by providing information and insights that drive the work of the AgriSETA.
- ⇒ Motivating changes to stakeholders that AgriSETA introduces regarding skills development interventions and supporting continuous improvement.
- ⇒ Provide research-based leadership in AgriSETA areas of responsibility.

The research agenda is reviewed annually by the Skills Planning & Research Department, recommended by Governance and Strategy Committee and approved by board. (This is normally achieved through a well-crafted research agenda, priority areas and themes are researched and identified; commissioned for research and dissemination and approval.

3. THE CRITICAL NATURE OF THE RESEARCH AGENDA:

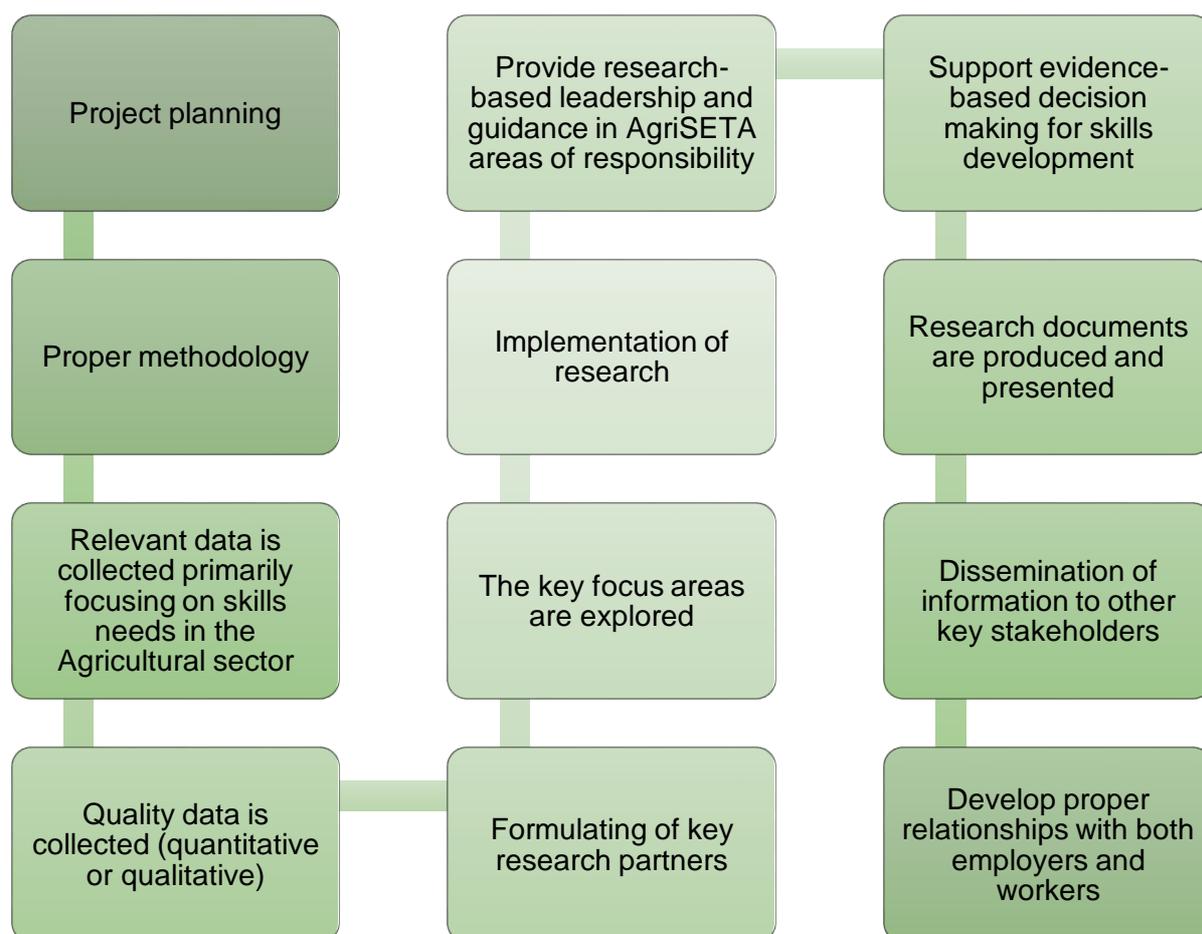


Figure 1: Critical nature of the research agenda

4. CRITERIA TO ESTABLISH RESEARCH PRIORITIES

To determine research priorities, AgriSETA will be guided by, inter alia the following criteria:

- ⇒ Compliance to relevant skills development legislation and regulations;
- ⇒ The need to identify skills gaps and relevant interventions;
- ⇒ Relevance - Relevant to AgriSETA's mandate, strategic goals and reflection of its strategic priorities within Sector Skills Plan;
- ⇒ Importance - Research 'problem statement' is substantial and opportunities for impact and involvement are great; (Feasibility - It is likely that the research will produce new useful knowledge or understanding with a specified time);
- ⇒ The need to investigate problems which impact on skills development; (This area of research should enhance and develop research leadership within AgriSETA and contribute towards harnessing research skills in the area of skills development. These values should naturally extend to research partners such as Universities and other research practitioners and institutions);
- ⇒ The need to explore ways that could strengthen or alter AgriSETA's practices; (AgriSETA's research is managed by the Skills Planning Department and inputs are always made by its stakeholder community through SSCs; (The Governance and Strategy Sub-Committee, under the auspices of the Board's Sub Committee, provides strategic advice and oversight).

5. RESEARCH-POLICY NEXUS

AgriSETA functions within a framework of stakeholders that guide skills priorities within the Agricultural sector. It is important that research not only informs AgriSETA of efficiencies in the implementation of current strategies and policies but that decision makers and polices in future benefit from information obtained through research.

The broad representation of stakeholders across the industry will ensure that information obtained through research is implemented in such a way that the Agricultural sector as a whole can benefit from it.

SSCs that were established will ensure that employers currently registered with the AgriSETA play a leading role in effecting change in current policy implementation and future policy formation. Table 2 illustrates the stakeholders in the agricultural sector.

Table 2: AGRICULTURAL SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS

Sector Department	Impact on Agricultural sector
Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries [changed to Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development in June 2019]	Agricultural policy and support
Department of Rural Development and Land Reform [was merged into the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development in June 2019]	Land Reform and land claims settlements
Department of Economic Development	Economic planning
National Treasury and SARS	Macro-economic policy
National Planning Commission	Planning
Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (and municipalities)	Municipal capacity development and coordination
Department of Environmental Affairs	Environmental planning and natural resource management
Department of Trade and Industry (and provincial departments of economic development)	Industrial strategy
Department of Water Affairs	The management of water supply

Department of Energy	Energy supply
Department of Transport	Transport policy and planning
Department of Labour	Labour market policy
Department of Basic Education	General Education
Department of Higher Education and Training [changed to of Higher Education and Science and Technology in June 2019]	TVET, HET, agricultural colleges and skills development
South African Police Services	Safety and Security
Statistics South Africa	Research
Home Affairs	Control of migrant labourers
Health	Education
Universities	Research and Education
Research councils	Research and Training

6. THE AGRISETA AND THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

AgriSETA will ensure that partnerships are established with various stakeholders in the research community. It remains in the best interest of all South African citizens that researchers work collaboratively so that optimal benefit be obtained of research completed and resources available.

Agriculture is a global business with exports contributing significantly to the GDP of South Africa. The use of research done internationally and locally will ensure that South African Agribusiness can compete in a fiercely competitive export market. Globally and internationally organised agriculture spends significant amounts of money on market intelligence it is under this ambit that research is taken as a collaborative effort.

AgriSETA will strengthen and expand on its current relationship with Higher Education and Training Institutions, TVET Colleges, Colleges of Agriculture, private business and organised labour to ensure that information that is obtained is relevant and up to date. Working with other SETAs is imperative due to the cross sectorial nature of skills needs, AgriSETA will ensure that it stays up to date with research in other SETA's and make research findings available to other SETA partners.

AgriSETA will strive to increase its current capacity and knowledge base through continuous interaction with bodies of research both locally and internationally to test the SETA's current policies and understanding and to modify its methodologies if needed.

7. RESEARCH PRIORITIES: SECTOR SKILLS PLAN RESEARCH TOPICS*

The Research Agenda comprises of six focus areas pertaining to the sector skills planning process and strategic plan of the AgriSETA. The topics indicated require extensive research that may differ in complexity and length; the research is totally dependant on the availability of resources, and will be updated through inputs from sector skills committees.

Additional topics may be added under each focus area. Due to limitations of capacity/resources, AgriSETA will embark on establishing research partnerships with higher institutions of learning and research councils to assist with research capacity.

The following broad focus areas are particularly important to AgriSETA. The focus areas are inter-related and they are not in any order of importance, the topics are not limited to the research agenda and other topics may evolve as research commences.

7.1 AGRICULTURAL SECTOR PROFILE*

The Agricultural sector remains the sector that can provide significant opportunities to ensure food security, employment and restoration of imbalances in our economy and rural communities. Information of the sector is important to fully comprehend the impact on current and future skills needed.

Key Themes/Topics on the Sector Skills Plan

Agricultural Sector profile

- Employment trends in the Agriculture sector.
- What are the key drivers in the Agricultural economy? What are the economic projections in all the subsectors and the projected impact on skills required?
- Determination of number of farms in various sizes large, medium and small farming units (in addition to those captured in WSPs)
- The contribution of Agriculture to the GDP.
- The effects of rising imports and decreasing exports on agricultural production/output.
- The impact of mechanisation on Agriculture with respect to the retention of labour and the skills sets required.

- Educational level of agricultural employees using WSP data.

7.2 KEY SKILLS CHANGE DRIVERS*

The establishment of credible information generating mechanisms to analyse, plan and forecast the skills demand in the sector is very important to ensure that implementation is responding to key factors like the economic performance of the sector, employment trends and newly required skills sets. The agricultural sector is crucial for food production and economic development, yet there are many drivers of change/challenges that hinder maximum production for both primary and secondary agriculture.

Key Themes/Topics on the Sector Skills Plan

Key skills change drivers

- Situation analyses of all primary and secondary agricultural sector activities and the implications for skills development.
- Evaluate AgriSETAs' critical and scarce skills list and provide an overview of the skills gap.
- Identify drivers of change for the Agricultural Sector.

7.3 OCCUPATIONAL SHORTAGE AND SKILLS GAP*

AgriSETA research reflects on skills demand and supply in the agricultural sector. The outcome is the result of an analysis of WSP data, as well as engagement with AgriSETA stakeholders. Engagements included interviews, surveys and limited focus groups with external partners, stakeholders and AgriSETA employer data, as well as consultation with internal stakeholders. Sectoral inputs are obtained by reaching out to large levy payers, industry bodies, government departments as well as emerging small-scale entrants into the sector. Furthermore, it is important to critically assess the availability and capacity of Universities, Universities of Technology, TVET colleges, and Colleges of Agriculture and Agricultural schools to provide the required skills training.

Key Themes/Topics on the Sector Skills Plan

Occupational shortage and skills gap

- Identify agricultural high schools and ordinary schools offering agricultural sciences in South Africa.
- Analyse the supply of Agricultural skills from Universities, TVET and colleges of agriculture.

7.4 SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Sector partnerships are important to ensure that all cross cutting sector needs are addressed and that available resources are used in an effective way to benefit the sector as a whole.

Key Themes/Topics on the Sector Skills Plan

Sector Partnership

- Critically evaluate the current partnerships of AgriSETA with a key focus on the planned deliverables.
- Evaluate possible re-focus and strengthening of the partnerships.
- Assessment of existing strategic links between AgriSETA and public education and training institutions, particularly universities, TVET colleges and colleges of agriculture.

7.5 SETA MONITORING AND EVALUATION*

AgriSETA Monitoring and Evaluation will measure organisational efficiency through tracking organisational performance and impact assessment, furthermore assess quality, value, productivity and impact of skills development intervention and research.

Key Themes/Topics on the Sector Skills Plan

SETA Monitoring and Evaluation

- There is a need to develop the SETA's M&E framework and policy.
- Measure achievement in implementing the SSP, APP and SP.
- What are the indicators and measures for outcomes and impact in the sector?

*These research topics will remain in the research agenda for as long as the SSP framework from DHET stipulates

7.6 SKILLS PRIORITY ACTIONS

AgriSETA is focused on various skills priorities. A continuous assessment of these priorities need to be done to ensure that AgriSETA's response is effective and whether other skills priorities have come to the fore that need to be addressed.

8. GENERAL THEMES AND TOPICS

General themes and topics

- The role of skills development towards job creation in land reform.
- Research the current employee profile and projecting the future agricultural employee profile taking economic performance and growth into consideration.
- An investigation into the characteristics of employability in Agriculture (what kinds of knowledge, skills and attributes are employers looking for?
- What can be learned about job creation in land reform projects? Where have jobs been created or viable business been established? What has been the role of skills development? What has worked?
- The skills demand currently and forecasted for the next 5 years per occupational category and occupation.
- Disease outbreaks affecting the agricultural sector and the skills implications.
- Exploring the skills for sustainability of agricultural produce usage for alternative products with an aim of increasing market access.
- Emerging innovative skills required for sustainable production in the primary and secondary agriculture sector.

9. PLANNED RESEARCH FOR 2020

Planned research themes/topics for 2020*

- What is the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on labour and the resultant skills required?
- The impact of Drought in the South African agricultural sector and the skills implications.
- Contributing factors to the decreased participation to mandatory grants
- What caused the increased levy income for AgriSETA in 2013?
 - Is it companies transferring into the sector?
 - If so which type of companies?
 - Is it increased levy from existing employers or new employers and in which sub-sectors or industries has there been an increase in levies?
 - Is there a link between the recent wage increases and the increased levy income?
 - There are indications that farmers are reducing seasonal farm workers and increasing permanent farm workers which would have implications for the levy income.
- Situational analysis of land reform and cooperatives and the impact of support from AgriSETA and other relevant stakeholders and its impact on food security?
- There has been increased demand for apprenticeships. What is behind that and what does this mean for SETA artisan strategy?
- The role AgriSETA can play in skills development for extension services? How effective is AgriSETA's interventions in building governments capacity to support rural development?
- The impact of the AgriSETA interventions on the sector? Possible tracer studies of learners to determine impact and the return on investment.
- The effectiveness of AgriSETA's skills support on various programmes evaluating the supply of quality education and training to the sector and what can be done to improve the supply of skills?
- To what extent is AgriSETA supporting sustainability in Agriculture and promoting food security through commodity organisations?
- Sustainability through the green economy and what is the impact on the skills required.

*Due to the nature of the sector, topics may emerge and be considered outside the approved research agenda.

10. RESEARCH FUNDING AND PROCUREMENT

AgriSETA has established the 11 Sector-Sector Committees (SSC). A priority output for the SSCs is to support research topics and themes from within the respective sectors. The research agenda will continuously be updated to reflect crucial areas that must be studied. The current research agenda is not comprehensive and further topics will be added.

AgriSETA will not be in a position to fund all identified research but will engage with research partners e.g. Universities and private partners to co-fund some of the research projects.

AgriSETA's procurement practice is governed by the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999) and Treasury Regulations. Therefore, procurement decisions on research provision will combine considerations of cost, functionality and quality.

AgriSETA intends to fund research within the scope of its own financial resources, as follows:

- a) Commissioned research. Research topics, whose terms of reference are specified by AgriSETA as part of this agenda and will contribute to the drafting of strategic documentation, will be commissioned and funded by AgriSETA.
- b) Research topics sponsored through SSCs will be commissioned through AgriSETA if budget permits.

11. CONCLUSION

The AgriSETA has commenced with establishing a permanent research function to ensure that decisions taken in terms of funding especially discretionary funding is based on solid knowledge and information from the Agriculture sector.

The establishment of research capacity will also include collaboration with research partners in the private and public sphere.