



e-Newsletter

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Strengthening the recovery: the need for speed



"The Covid-19 pandemic continues to cast a long shadow over the world's economies but economic prospects have improved with the forthcoming global vaccines roll-out, although divergences are increasing across and within countries," states the *OECD Economic Outlook Interim Report, March 2021*. The top policy priority is to ensure that all resources necessary are used to produce and fully deploy vaccinations as quickly as possible throughout the world, to save lives, preserve incomes and limit the adverse impact of containment measures on well-being. The resources required to provide vaccines to lower-income countries are small compared with the gains from a stronger and faster global economic recovery. This interim report provides updates for G20 country projections made in the December 2020 issue of the *OECD Economic Outlook*. Please [click here](#) to peruse.

Executives still downbeat in the first quarter

Figure 1: RMB/BER Business Confidence Index



Source: BER, SARB (Shaded areas represent economic downturns)

The RMB/BER Business Confidence Index (BCI) declined from 40 to 35 in the first quarter of 2021. This means close to seven out of 10 senior executives expressed their dissatisfaction with prevailing business conditions, up from six previously. Such low confidence levels continue to highlight the fragility of economic recovery. The first-quarter survey covered about 1 300 businesspeople. Also, it was conducted mainly during the second half of February when the peak of the second wave of Covid-19 infections had passed, and certain restrictions (such as the complete ban on alcohol sales

and access to beaches) were already lifted. Loadshedding was also less pronounced during the survey period. That confidence failed to improve further is therefore telling. Read more in the [linked RMB media statement](#).

Vaccine roll-out programme: urgent request for data



Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) has requested businesses for data on available private sector infrastructure that could be used for administering Covid vaccines. BUSA CEO Cas Coovadia pleads with business to cooperate and says “this is a national effort that needs the support of the private sector, if we are to vaccinate up to 200 000 people a day”. BUSA seeks the assistance of businesses in getting information and commitment from appropriate members to provide data on available sites and commitment to make such sites available for vaccination. Information on small, medium

and large sites that are registered with the relevant health authority is requested. These include GP practices, pharmacies, community clinics, employer facilities and OHS facilities. It would be great if members could indicate detail on location of sites, potential capacity of intake and availability. Kindly send the information to theo@agbiz.co.za.

AGRIBUSINESS RESEARCH

Brief reflections on SA’s agricultural economy and women inclusion



South Africa’s agricultural sector has been largely insulated from the Covid-19 shock as it has remained in operation since the onset of the lockdown. The favourable weather conditions in 2020 meant that agriculture would continue registering positive growth in the near term. We currently forecast 10% y/y growth in South Africa’s gross value-added in 2020. Other analysts such as the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy are even more optimistic than us, forecasting a 13% y/y growth. The underpinning drivers of this growth are across the subsectors. Agbiz chief economist Wandile Sihlobo shared his views on South Africa’s agricultural economic conditions and

policy dynamics that women are participating in at a Corteva Agriscience and GIBS Virtual Roundtable event with the theme “Building an Enabling Environment for Women Entrepreneurs in Agriculture Policy and Practice Perspectives”. Please [click here](#) to read more.

African countries' agricultural reforms will ensure free trade deal benefits for SA too



Over the past two decades, South Africa's agricultural output growth and rise in trade surpluses have been inspiring, and these successes are cause for much enthusiasm and optimism. In 2020 alone, amidst a pandemic, South Africa exported US\$10,2 billion worth of agricultural products, the second largest on record. One market that has consistently been important to South Africa is the African continent, which on average, accounts for 40% of South Africa's agricultural exports.

These deepening continental trade relations give me confidence that the African Free Continental Trade Area should be favourable for South Africa's

agriculture. Wandile Sihlobo discusses this subject in the [linked article](#), written for and first published in *Business Day*.

South Africa's tractor sales remain on a positive footing



After a solid start of the year with tractor sales up by 28% year on year (y/y), with 445 units sold in January 2021, this positive momentum continued in February, with tractor sales up again 28% y/y, with 648 units sold. These strong sales continue the 2020 positive activity where the tractor sales amounted to 5 738 units, up by 9% from 2019. The underpinning driver is the slightly improved farmers' finances following higher agricultural output in 2020, coupled with relatively higher commodity prices. Wandile Sihlobo

discusses the latest data in the [linked article](#).

OTHER NEWS

BUSA Covid-19 cargo movement update



The [linked BUSA Covid-19 cargo movement update](#) contains a combined overview of air, sea, and road freight to and from South Africa in the last week. The report is the 28th update. There is welcome news coming from the agricultural industry, as the industry forecasts 3.5 million tonnes of grain movement during the forthcoming season. The initial indications point to the distribution of 50/50 imports versus exports; however, the harvest is guaranteed to be a record. Up to 90% will likely move through Durban. Despite the positive news,

some warning flags should be raised, as the high number of truck movements will likely clash with the citrus season, which commences in April. Early indications also point to a fruitful, if not record, harvest. Although several stakeholders will enjoy the significant benefit of this largesse in freight movements, there will likely be a negative impact on port activity, general cargo business and truck access to terminals.

Asian citrus greening disease: a serious threat to the citrus industry



The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development is alerting citrus farmers regarding Asian citrus greening disease. The disease is caused by the pathogen *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus*, which is insect vector-transmitted by the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP), *Diaphorina citri* and it poses a huge threat to all citrus industries in the world. Symptoms on leaves and shoots include yellow shoots, asymmetric, mottled leaves, small upright chlorotic leaves, out-of-phase flushing and branch dieback. Flower and fruit symptoms include unseasonal and heavy flowering on diseased branches, small, lopsided,

bitter-tasting fruit with small, brown, aborted seeds and uneven colouring at maturity and excessive fruit drop. The sooty mould growth resulting from excess honeydew production can also affect the plants' ability to photosynthesise, which can affect overall plant health. Please [click here](#) for the full media statement.

Invitation to second meeting of B4SA's Business Communicators' Forum



The second meeting of Business for South Africa's (B4SA) Business Communicators' Forum (BCF) for Vaccine/Covid-19 Communications will take place on Friday, 12 March from 11:00 to 12:00. The aim of B4SA's Business Communicators' Forum (BCF) is to offer periodic, short, and focused meetings for senior corporate affairs/communications executives from listed, private or multinational businesses and business associations and mobilise business/business associations to use their communications channels to combat Covid-19 and support the national vaccination programme. Please follow [this link](#) for

the BCF Zoom meeting.

Japan International Award for Young Agricultural Researchers

This annual award is organised and presented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) of Japan and Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS). Its purpose is to increase motivation among young researchers contributing to research and development in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and related industries in developing regions, which is promoted by Japan for the benefit of those countries. Up to three young researchers who have shown outstanding performance in research and development in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, or related industries for a developing region, and who show great promise will be invited to Japan to attend the commendation ceremony and accept their awards and cash gifts (US\$5,000 will be given per awardee). Please [click here](#) for more information and to apply.

MEMBERS' NEWS

Invitation to Cova Advisory's Carbon Credits 101 webinar

Under South African carbon tax regulations, companies are able to use carbon credits either from their own registered projects or from third parties to offset a portion of their carbon tax liability. This creates opportunities to develop carbon projects, as well as prospects on both the buy-side and sell-side, and helping South Africa to manage environmental impact. Join Cova Advisory for a webinar on 16 March 2021 on the South African carbon credits landscape, with expert guest speakers from Climate Legal and WeAct. They'll look at the legal framework, carbon credit project development, contracting for carbon offsets, and how organisations can participate meaningfully in the carbon credits market in South Africa to create shared value. [Click here](#) to register for the webinar to hear from a panel of experts, and to ask all your carbon credit questions.

Get the latest news from the FPEF

Keeping it Fresh, the newsletter of the Fresh Produce Exporters' Forum, contains all the recent relevant news and developments. Please [click here](#) for the latest edition.

Weekly newsletter from CGA

Justin Chadwick, CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern African, shares the latest news in the citrus industry in his weekly update - *From the desk of the CEO*. Please [click here](#) to peruse.

The latest news from the pork industry

Read more about the latest developments and news in the pork industry in the South African Pork Producers' Organisation's (SAPPO) newsletter, [SAPPO Weekly Update](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Cova Advisory Carbon Credits 101 webinar

16 March 2021 | 10:00 | Zoom meeting

[Register](#)

Annual Southern Hemisphere Fresh Fruit Trade Congress

25 March 2021 | Virtual

[More information](#)

International Tropical Agriculture Week

22-26 March 2021

[More information](#)

Sustainable Innovative Producers and Emerging Farmers Agribusiness Conference 2021

30-31 March 2021 | The Capital on the Park, Sandton | Johannesburg

[More information](#)

Second International Congress of Biological Control (ICBC2)

26-30 April 2021 | Virtual

[More information](#)

AGBIZ MEMBERSHIP

Why join Agbiz?

- Agbiz is the only organisation that serves the broader and common over-arching business interests of agribusinesses in South Africa.
- Agbiz addresses the legislative and policy environment on the many fronts that it impacts on the agribusiness environment.
- Agbiz facilitates considerable top-level networking opportunities so that South African agribusinesses can play an active and creative role within the local and international organised business environment.
- Agbiz research provides sector-specific information for informed decision-making.
- Agbiz newsletter publishes members' press releases and member product announcements.

[Please visit the Agbiz website for more information](#)



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