



## South African Farmers Development Association

### Media Statement

23 January 2026

To: All Editors

### SAFDA Welcomes ITAC Combined Assessment on Sugar and Beverage Applications

The sugar Farmers Development Association (SAFDA) welcomes the International Trade Administration Commission's (ITAC) notice of a combined assessment of applications submitted by the sugar and beverage industries. This process provides an important opportunity for farmers and industry stakeholders to present their views and to demonstrate the deleterious impact that deep-sea sugar imports are having on the local sugar industry.

The industry is currently under severe strain, with the business rescue status and declining viability of several sugar mills posing a serious threat to the sustainability of the sector. These challenges place livelihoods, jobs, and the broader economic stability of the industry at risk, particularly in rural communities that are heavily dependent on sugarcane production. The tariff of US\$680 per ton on imported sugar, gazetted in 2018, has become ineffective over time and no longer provides adequate protection. As a result, the industry has been left vulnerable and exposed to an influx of subsidized sugar imports.

Up to November 2025, approximately 142,000 tons of sugar imports have come into our local market. This represents a 123% increase compared to import levels during the same period in the 2024/2025 season. These imports directly compete with locally produced sugar, forcing South African producers to divert displaced volumes to international markets at a significant loss of approximately R7,700 per ton of exported sugar.

South African Farmers Development Association  
170 Flanders Drive | Kwa-Shukela Building  
Mount Edgecombe

P.O. Box 1769  
Mount Edgecombe Country Club | 4301

 031 508 7283

 [info@sa-fda.org.za](mailto:info@sa-fda.org.za)

 [www.sa-fda.org.za](http://www.sa-fda.org.za)

This loss of revenue has a direct and adverse impact on sugarcane prices paid to farmers, which continue to decline. With three months still remaining in the current season, there is a real risk that farmers may lose their retentions or even end up owing millers when final sugarcane payments are reviewed and adjusted, should further imports enter the local market.

The industry therefore calls on ITAC and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition to review the tariff application decisively and realistically. Such action is necessary to protect an industry that is already fragile and facing multiple challenges, including the Health Promotion Levy (sugar tax), US tariffs, business rescue proceedings, and recent mill closures.

A sustainable sugar industry is critical to retaining jobs, supporting a just transition to clean energy and diversified products, and stabilizing regional economies in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga.

**For Media Enquiries please contact:**

Nondumiso Mlondo

Media and Communications Practitioner

073 296 5570



South African Farmers Development Association  
170 Flanders Drive | Kwa-Shukela Building  
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P.O. Box 1769  
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 **031 508 7283**

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 [www.sa-fda.org.za](http://www.sa-fda.org.za)