



Agri Trends

16 March 2018

Weaner cattle producers do well.

The production of weaner cattle are a lucrative business. This is due to excellent weaner calf prices brought about by a depleted national herd, recovery in rainfall, low maize prices and supportive retail carcass prices. Slaughter house should do excellent in the nearby future. Producers compete with feedlots and offer carcasses at a discount to slaughterhouses. However, beef producers need to take care that they take account of their total feedlot costs and not to price their beef carcasses too cheap. In the long run, it may have a detrimental impact on the profitability of the domestic beef industry. The export market is important but more so it is important to maintain a strong off takers in the domestic market.

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Maize market trends

International

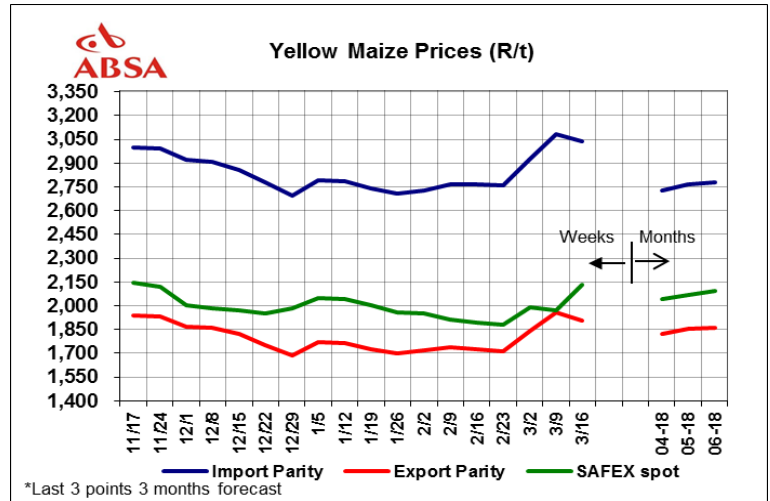
Week-on-week yellow maize No 2 gulf price increased from US\$175.29/ton to US\$178.34/ton. Price support stemmed from rapid US exports and continuous dry weather concerns in Argentina.

Bullish factors

- US maize prices traded higher on the back of severe drought conditions in Argentina that steered forecasters into cutting soybean and maize estimates for the upcoming Argentinian harvest. Rains are expected in Argentina; however it is too late to make any prominent changes to the yields.
- Brisk US exports for the past week supported prices. South Korea purchased over 1 million tons of maize this week of which primarily came from the US.

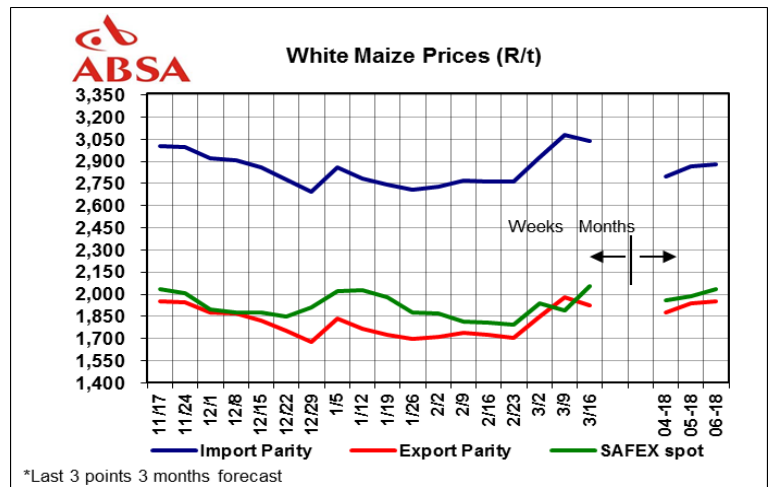
Bearish factors

- US maize prices declined from a 7 month high amid market fears of increased US protectionism with the dismissal of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and possibly more import tariffs against China.



Domestic

On the 15th March local maize market traded higher week on week. New season white maize prices for delivery in May2018 increased marginally from R1954/ton up by 1.8% (R35/ton) to R1989/ton, Jul2018 contracts increased week-on-week by 1.5% (R31/ton) from R2001/ton to R2032/ton. Week-on-week new season yellow maize prices for delivery in May2018 increased marginally by 1.7% (R35/ton difference) from R2031/ton to R2066/ton. Prices for delivery in Jul2018 for yellow maize were recorded at R2094/ton a 1.3% increase from R2067/ton.



Bullish factors

- Due to late plantings of some maize crops in the central and western areas, some crops are still in the early development stages. Moisture levels remain critical. The rainfall expected for this week did not materialize.
- The CEC's 1st production forecast for total maize is 12.2 million tons, a 27.3% reduction from the previous season's record crop of 16.8 million tons.
- Below expected rains were received in Mpumalanga for the Feb/Mar2018 months. Crops incurred some drought damage, kernel mass may suffer from the stress at this last stages of development.

Bearish factors

- Possible rainfall showers over the central and western parts of the country remains positive until mid-April.

Outlook

Local

Due to late plantings of some maize crops in the central and western areas, some crops are still in the early development stages. Moisture levels remain critical. The rainfall expected for this week did not materialize.

Below expected rains were received in Mpumalanga for the Feb/Mar2018 months. Crops incurred some drought damage, kernel mass may suffer from the stress at this last stages of development.

International

US maize prices traded higher on the back of severe drought conditions in Argentina and brisk US export demand.

Yellow Maize Futures: 15 March 2018	May-18	Jul-18	Sep-18	Dec-18
CBOT (\$/t)	153.04	156.19	158.36	160.52
SAFEX (R/t)	2066	2094	2146	2200
SAFEX (R/t) Change week on week (w/w)	35	27	31	21

Table 2: Weekly average white maize futures and estimated option prices

White Maize Futures 15 March 2018	May-18	Jul-18	Sep-18	Dec-18
SAFEX (R/t)	1989	2032	2087	2147
SAFEX (R/t) Change w/w	35	31	43	31

Wheat market trends

International

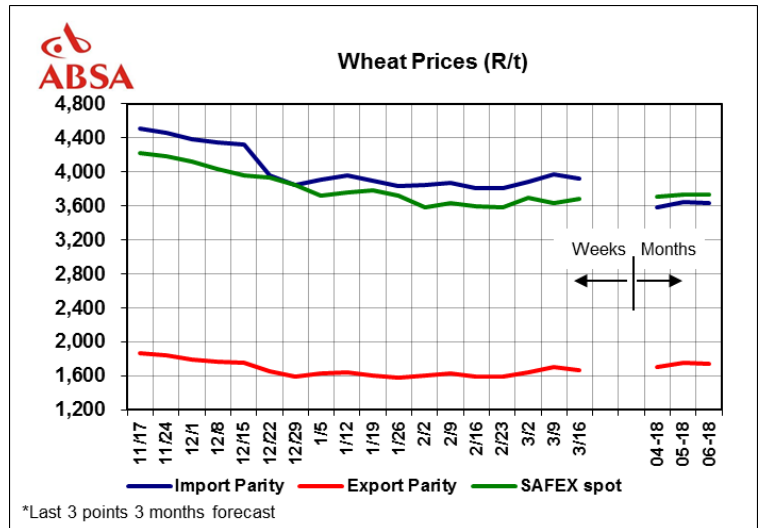
The weekly average old season HRW wheat Gulf price declined from US\$188.59/ton to US\$187.42/ton week on week. Weekly average SRW wheat price also declined from US\$207.07/ton to US\$203.17/ton week on week.

Bullish factors

- EU wheat farmers held on to their crops. Limited supplies in the market and a depreciation of the euro against the dollar supported price increases for EU wheat despite a drop in prices for US wheat.

Bearish factors

- The world's 4th largest wheat exporter, Australia, is expected to produce a larger wheat crop of 23.7 million tons. This crop will be higher than the previous season's 21.1 million tons. The increased production was supported by La Nina weather conditions that brought about much needed rainfall.
- The drought-stricken US Plains are expected to receive some good rains in the next week to relief moisture deficit.
- Favourable weather prospects ahead of planting time in Russia and Ukraine, anticipated to lead to another good harvest from these areas.



Domestic

On 15th March 2018, wheat prices for delivery in May2018 increased marginally by 0.9% (R32/ton) from R3708/ton to R3740/ton. Jul2018 prices decreased marginally by 0.3% (R13/ton) from R3756/ton to R3743/ton, week on week.

Bullish factors

- South Africa imported 1.14 million tons of wheat this season to supplement the local demand, after the Western Cape drought reduced the national wheat harvest to 1.52 million tons.
- Weather forecasts indicate a potential late start of the rainy season. Possibly delayed until May or even later.

Bearish factors

- Local farmers expect more wheat to be produced for the new season because weather patterns are expected to become favourable.
- The lower tariff of R394.90/ton still pending publication, which will have a negative effect on the producers during their optimal planting time.

Outlook

Local

The stronger Rand will enable more wheat imports to supplement the local needs after SA's very poor wheat season. Weather patterns indicate possible rainfall in the next few weeks. Prices currently following international prices. Weather will remain a factor to look at as the industry is moving closer to planting season.

International

Favourable weather prospects ahead of planting time in Russia and Ukraine, anticipated to lead to another good harvest from these areas. Buyers are therefore not too concerned about the US drought. Coupled with heavy global supplies, prices are expected to trade sideways for the medium term, after rallying for weeks.

Wheat Futures 15 March 2018	May-18	Jul-18	Sep-18	Dec-18
CME (\$/t)	186.01	192.08	199.70	205.40
SAFEX (R/t)	3740	3743	3720	3690
SAFEX (R/t) Change w/w	32	-13	-10	-25

Oilseeds market trends

International

The weekly average USA soybean price declined week-on-week from US\$405.83/ton to US\$393.06/ton. US soya oil prices marginally declined from US\$31.99/ton to US\$31.79/ton and soymeal prices traded lower from US\$381.26/ton to US\$369.68/ton.

Bullish factors

- The global dependence on US soybeans will increase immensely in the following months to make up for the insufficient supplies from Argentina. Global soybean exports were seasonally low in February, due to relatively small shipments from Brazil and Paraguay.
- Soybean crop stress continued for the week that ended 9 March 2018. Dry weather persisted in the central parts of Argentina; most rainfall was limited to the northern parts of the country.
- Another great soybean crop is in the making in Brazil, however excessive wet conditions (in some parts of the central regions) and ongoing drought in parts of Rio Grande do Sul, may impede the crop and reduce the crop below current expectations.

Bearish factors

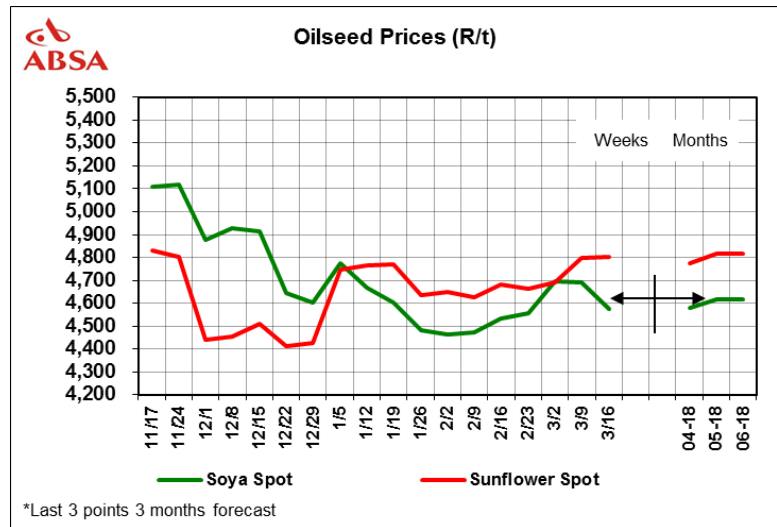
- Spring crop planting in the Northern Hemisphere will soon move into centre stage, getting all the market attention. Market players anticipate that most of the hectares will plant soybeans due to price competitiveness.
- Another very large Brazilian soybean crop is in production due to higher than expected yields in Mato Grosso.
- Russian sunflower seed harvesting for Jan-Feb 2018 was above expectations.

Domestic

On March 15th, new season sunflower seed prices (May 2018) increased marginally week on week by 1.2% (R59/ton) from R4756/ton to R4815/ton while soybean (May 2018) prices decreased by 2.16% (R122/ton) from R4740/ton to R4618/ton. Palm oil and soy oil prices are expected to trade sideways or somewhat lower in the next 2 weeks.

Bullish factors

- Due to very late plantings of some sunflower crops in the central and western areas. Plants remain vulnerable and susceptible to frost damage should it occur before mid-April, however the probability is low. Should frost occur, this could have crucial impact on the size of the sunflower crop.



Bearish factors

- Weather forecasts for the next weeks are raising the soybean crop production prospects.
- Anticipation for higher global soybean exports to materialize in 2018/19 MY, suppressed soybean and sunflower prices.
- Sunflower seed prices weighed down by international lower soybean prices and lower sunflower seed crushing demand.
- Anticipation for South Africa to produce another bumper crop in 2018 of 1.3 million tons, 4.46% higher than the previous season's harvest.

Outlook

Local

Plants remain vulnerable and susceptible to frost damage should it occur before mid-April; however the probability is low. Soybean crushing margins remain relatively high, pushing demand for soybeans over sunflowerseed crushing. This is anticipated to keep sunflower seed prices.

International

Spring crop planting in the Northern Hemisphere will soon move into centre stage, getting all the market attention. Market players anticipate that most of the hectares will plant soybeans due to price competitiveness. The price decline in soybean complex in this week, may recover soon should the Argentinian soybean crop conditions deteriorate even further.

Oilseeds Futures 15 March 2018	May-18	Jul-18	Sep-18	Dec-18
CBOT Soybeans (US\$/t)**	379.29	383.24	379.93	379.01
CBOT Soy oil (US c/lb)	32.18	32.28	34.82	33.12
CBOT Soy cake meal (US\$/t)*	407.58	409.34	403.63	399.23
SAFEX Soybean seed (R/t)	4618	4724	4830	4900
<i>SAFEX Soybean seed (R/t) change w/w</i>	-122	-122	-121	-140
<i>SAFEX Sunflower seed (R/t)</i>	4815	4852	4943	5072
<i>SAFEX Sunflower seed (R/t) change w/w</i>	59	46	5	32

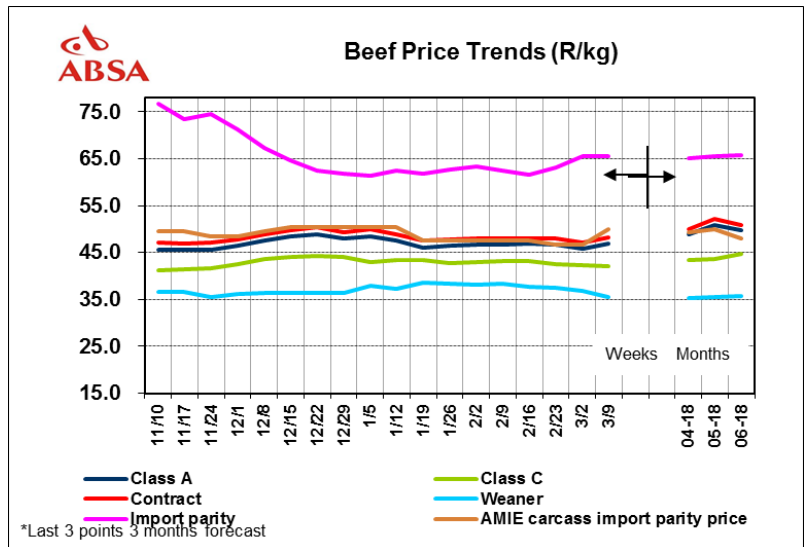
*short ton

** Dec 2018 = Jan 2019

Beef market trends

International

New Zealand steers traded sideways over the past week at 5.59NZ\$/kg and cows traded sideways at 4.37NZ\$/kg compared to a week ago. In the US, beef prices for the week were mixed as follows: Topside traded 0.55% lower at \$226.76/cwt. Rump was 0.38% lower at \$346.29/cwt and strip loin was 3.68% higher at \$645.39/cwt. Chuck traded 3.42% lower at \$218.63/cwt. Brisket traded 3.13% higher at \$296.55/cwt. The carcass equivalent price was 1.37% higher at \$332.64/cwt.



Bullish factors

- The latest US Department of Agriculture's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates ¹(Wasde) report shows that for 2018, beef imports have been increased as early-year demand remains robust.
- But US beef exports remain strong.
- In New Zealand, despite lower volumes, the share of New Zealand beef going to China continues to strengthen. Year to date, beef shipments to China have increased by 25% on last season. This growth in Chinese demand is expected to hold in the medium to long term.

Bearish factors

- In New Zealand, the declines in cattle slaughter through January and February is weighing on exports. Total beef shipments for February are down 5% for the same month last year.
- Dry conditions in many regions of Australia may trigger increased slaughter.
- Higher US beef production this year could create more competition in Australia's export markets.
- The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is due for signing later this month. This trade deal will benefit Australia and New Zealand as beef exporters. The CCTPP free trade agreement includes New Zealand, Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Singapore and Viet Nam.

Domestic

Week on week, beef prices were mixed across the different classes. The average Class A price increased this week and is 2.17% higher at R46.91/kg. Class C prices were 0.53% lower at R41.99/kg. The average weaner calf price over the past week lost some ground and was 3.4% lower at R35.54/kg. There is an increase in weaner calves numbers, weighing on calve prices. The average hide price over the past week lost some ground. The market remains soft across all the board due relatively strong ZAR strength. The gap between the low-end commercial type hides and the feedlot hides is opening significantly. The commercial hides were lower last week and significant risk exists for further downward movement. The average hide prices traded 0.47% lower w/w at R9.62/kg green. NB* Hide prices are determined by the average of the RMAA (Red Meat Abattoir Association) and independent companies.

Bullish factors

- Weather forecasts show that the probability for rain over the central to western parts of the country remains positive until the middle of April 2018. Favourable rains are welcome to improve soil moisture levels, veldt conditions and dam levels ahead of winter.
- Increased uptake towards Easter.

¹ USDA Wasde- US Department of Agriculture's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates

Bearish factors

- Rand strength and seasonality may be weighing on the market.
- Increased number of weaners in the market.

Outlook

Internationally, the expanding global beef production remains a threat to global beef prices, but there is strong demand in the market.

Locally, beef prices may strengthen moving forward on the back of expected increases in demand towards Easter.

Sheep meat market trends

International

New Zealand lamb prices traded mostly higher this week compared to last week. Lamb prices closed 0.4% higher at NZ\$105.8/head for 15kg lamb. Lamb prices were 0.4% higher at NZ\$148.1/head for 21kg lamb. Ewe prices traded 0.5% higher at NZ\$101.3/head for a 21kg ewe. The import parity price for lamb was 0.3% higher at R66.83/kg, while the import parity price for mutton was 0.4% higher at R49.14/kg.

Bullish factors

- Market conditions do continue to support prices, with tight global supplies still giving some support to New Zealand export returns. Agri HQ has reported that the average export value of New Zealand lamb in Jan was up 25% on both last year and 5 year averages.
- Low supplies in New Zealand will support prices in the short term.
- China is now the largest importer of sheep meat in the world, with volume in 2017 being forecast to exceed the 245 000 tons imported in 2016. New Zealand accounts for about 60% of these imports with Australia the next important supplier. Overall China meat import data showed great increases in value and volume of mutton imports in 2017.

Bearish factors

- In New Zealand, once supply increase, prices will ultimately decline.

Domestic

This week, lamb and mutton prices were mostly lower when compared to the previous week with the exception of class C. Lamb and mutton prices were as follows: The national average Class A lamb prices decreased by 1.5% to R70.69/kg and the average Class C prices increased by 1.6% to R56.90/kg. The average price for feeder lambs traded 0.7% higher at R40.50/kg. The average price for dorper skin is 4.7% higher at R33.75/skin and merinos were 1.0% higher at R90.50/skin.

Bullish factors

- According to weather forecasts, the probability for rain over the central to western parts of the country remains positive until the middle of April 2018. Favourable rains are welcome to improve soil moisture levels, veldt conditions and dam levels ahead of winter.
- Improved uptake towards Easter

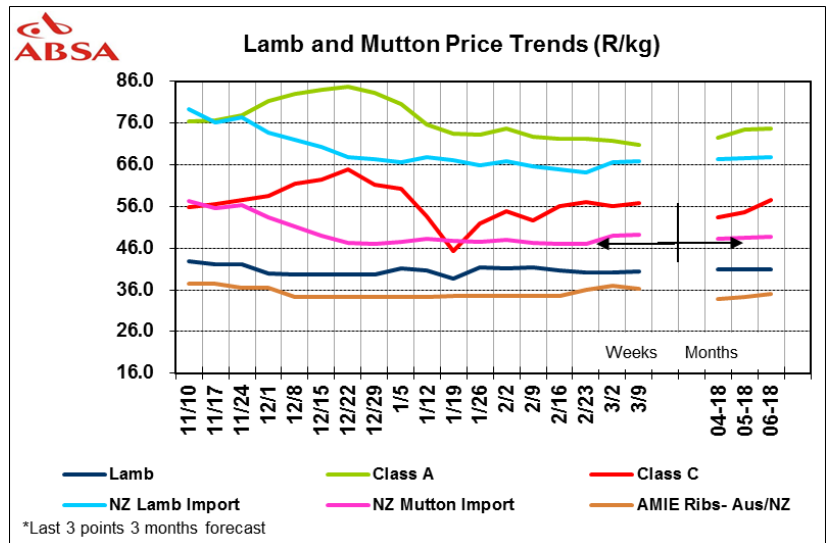
Bearish factors

- Subdued demand during mid-month.

Outlook

Internationally, Market conditions do continue to support prices, with tight global supplies still giving some support to prices.

Locally, in the short term, prices may trade sideways and follow an upward movement towards Easter. Lamb and mutton prices remain the expensive meat in the market.



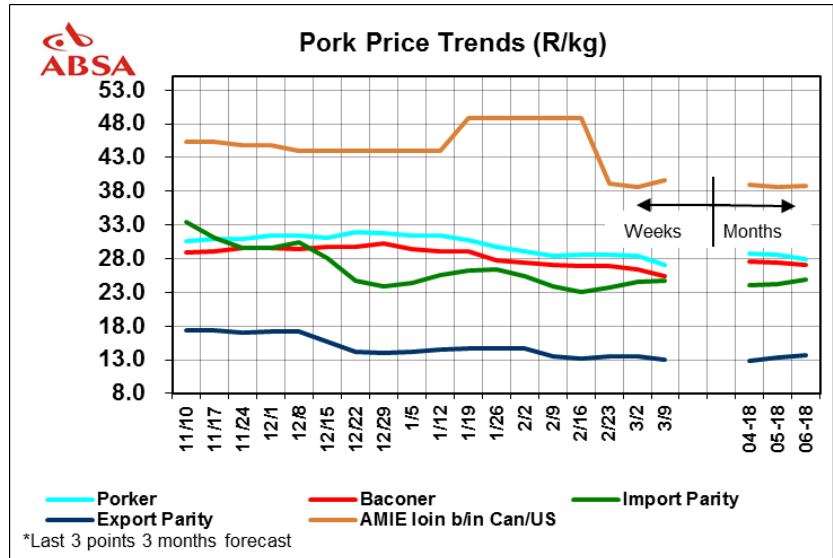
Pork market trends

International

The average weekly US pork prices were mixed over the past week. Carcass prices were 3.2% lower at US\$75.07cwt, loin prices were 0.7% higher at US\$74.13/cwt, rib prices were 0.7% higher at US\$132.388cwt and ham was 1.4% lower at US\$60.13/cwt.

Bullish factors

- The pork import forecast is raised on expected demand strength. (Wasde report)
- Pork production is lowered for the first half of the year on a slower pace of slaughter, but higher carcass weights are expected and second-half production is increased. (Wasde report)
- Strong US exports at the beginning of the year gave support to prices.



Bearish factors

- Reuters has reported that Chinese pig prices have hit their lowest in four years this week. This is due to concerns that a rapid expansion of large pig farms in China has outpaced slowing demand growth. This may slow imports of Pork into China. A restriction on pollution has meant that small farms were forced to shut down while larger farms which have been able to keep up with the new regulations have expanded.
- Large feed production and lower feed costs are to benefit production.

Domestic

Average pork prices have shown a declining trend over the past two months. Seasonality, less demand, plentiful supplies, the buying power of consumers and the rand strength may have been some of the factors that have contributed.

This week, pork prices lost some ground. The latest average pork prices are as follows: The average porker prices are 5.0% lower at R27.01/kg, while the average baconer prices are 3.7% lower at R25.46/kg. The average cutters prices were 8.9% lower at R24.1/kg and the average heavy baconer price was 5.2% lower at R23.99. The SAU price was 0.2% higher at R18.44/kg.

Bullish factors

- Pork remains a cheaper protein

Bearish factors

- During January 2018, the average porker price increased by 6.43%, whilst the average Baconer price increased by 6.36% year on year. These higher prices may have created resistance from consumers.
- Seasonality, less demand, plentiful supplies, the buying power of consumers and the rand strength may have been some of the factors that have contributed.
- The recent strength in the South African Rand may weigh on pork prices. This strength in currency lowers import prices.
- Lower feed costs continue to support the intensive pork industry, improving profitability. The lower feed costs are encouraging to the fattening of pigs.

Outlook

Internationally, Large feed production and lower feed costs are to benefit production

Locally, there are plentiful supplies of pork in the market, which may weigh on prices.

Poultry market trends

International

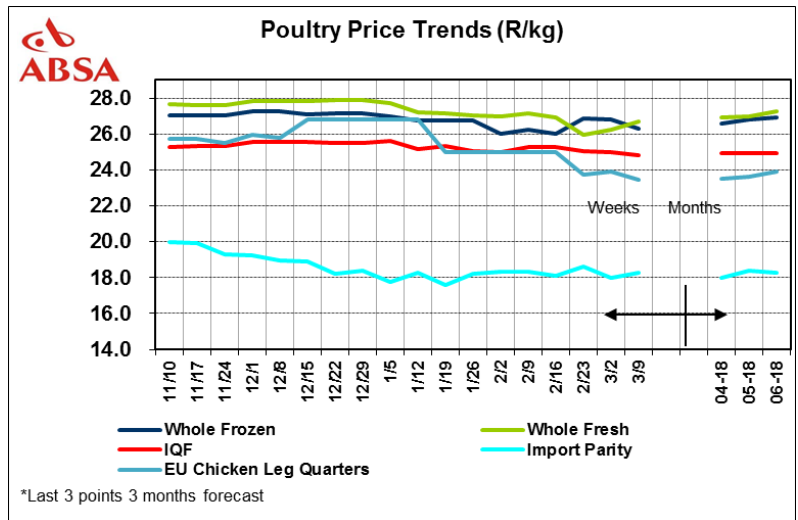
Poultry prices in the US were mostly higher over the past week. Whole bird prices were 2.78% higher at 93.96USc/lb. Breast traded 6.67% higher at 112.00USc/lb, while leg quarters traded 1.32% lower at 38.50USc/lb.

Bullish factors

- On the US Department of Agriculture's supply and demand report, the second-quarter broiler price forecast is raised from last month on stronger expected demand.
- Possible return of avian influenza in the northern hemisphere this winter may impact global trade.

Bearish factors

- Large feed production and lower feed costs are to benefit production.
- Higher expected global poultry supplies.



Domestic

The average poultry prices over the past week were mixed. The average prices for frozen birds were 1.98% lower at R26.29/kg during the week. Whole fresh medium bird prices were 1.83% higher at R26.71/kg, while IQF prices were 0.68% higher at R24.83kg. Week on week, import parity prices strengthened following slight weakness in the currency as well as weekly gains in the international price. A weakening Rand usually assist the protection of the industry against competing less expensive imports.

Bullish factors

- Improvement in demand towards of Easter
- The bird flu outbreak negatively impacted production trend and number of laying hens. Significant declines in the average laying flock from July 2017 to October 2017. Since July 2017, the average laying flock declined by 12% for the four months ending October 2017.
- Egg prices are following an upward trend, following recent bird flu outbreaks in some regions, leading to shortages of eggs.

Bearish factors

- Confirmation that the origin of the listeriosis outbreak has been linked to processed meats like polony may bring some uncertainty and limit some of the demand.
- Low feed cost environment.
- Maize prices are expected to remain subdued for the rest of 2018 because of the huge maize surplus in storage

Outlook

Internationally, larger broiler supplies are expected to keep prices subdued.

Locally, poultry prices may gain support from improvement in demand towards of Easter.

Livestock prices (R/kg) week 15 Mar 2018	Beef			Mutton			Pork			Poultry		
	%	Current week	Prior week	%	Current week	Prior week	%	Current week	Prior week	%	Current week	Prior week
Class A/ Porker/ Fresh birds	2.17	46.91	45.91	-1.5	70.69	71.78	-5.0	27.01	28.44	1.83	26.71	26.23
Class C/ Baconer/ Frozen birds	-0.53	41.99	42.21	1.6	56.90	55.98	-3.7	25.46	26.43	-1.98	26.29	26.82
Contract/Baconer/ IQF	2.06	48.10	47.13	-1.2	71.77	72.66	-4.4	26.23	27.44	-0.68	24.83	25.00
Import parity price	-0.01	65.49	65.50	0.4	49.14	48.94	-1.2	29.6	29.9	1.6	18.3	18.0
Weaner calves/ Feeder lambs	-3.4	35.54	36.78	0.7	40.50	40.22		-	-			
Specific imports: Beef trimmings 80vl/b/ Mutton shoulders/Loin b/in/ chicken leg 1/4	6.85	49.90	46.70	1.8	57.70	56.70	2.6	39.70	38.70	-1.92	23.45	23.91

Wool market trends

International

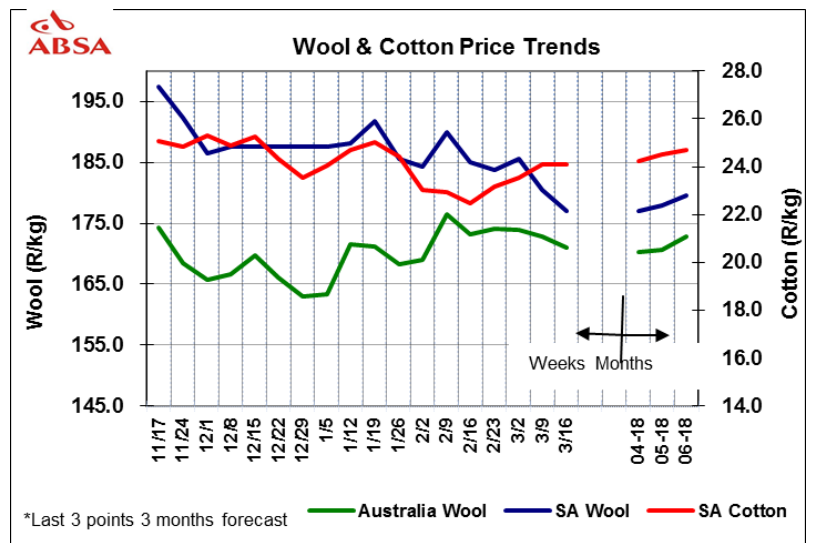
The Australian wool market lost some ground this week. The Australian wool market prices averaged lower this week and closed 1.52% lower at Au1751c/kg at the recent auction.

Bullish factors

- Drier seasonal conditions in some regions may lower average wool cut to some extent, notably in Western Australia.

Bearish factors

- The Australian Wool Production Forecasting Committee forecasts that shorn wool production will increase in 2017/18 to 345 mkg greasy, which is an increase of 1,4% compared with 2016/17.
- The increase in shorn wool production in 2017/18 reflects an increase in the number of sheep shorn as producers respond to the high wool prices. The high and rising wool prices have encouraged producers to shear their sheep and deliver as quickly as possible into the market. In some cases, producers are reported to be shearing earlier than usual to take advantage of these high prices



Domestic

The last auction was on the 14th of March 2018. Domestic wool market prices decreased and the merino indicator was 1.89% lower to close at R177.02 (clean) at the sale.

Bullish factors

- Demand for wool remains strong.
- Wool supplies are low.
- The market is driven by the growth in demand, notably from China, but also from Europe.
- The drought has affected South Africa's production and according to Cape Wools' accumulative report, wool receipts up to 9 February were down 9,5 per cent on the corresponding period last season.

Bearish factors

- Analysts do caution that some degree of a downward correction is to be expected.

Outlook

Internationally, a firming tendency in prices on the better wools and increases in buying intent from exporters witnessed at the close this week may be a sign of recovery.

Locally, the South African wool market is positive, driven by strong demand and low supplies.

Cotton market trends

International

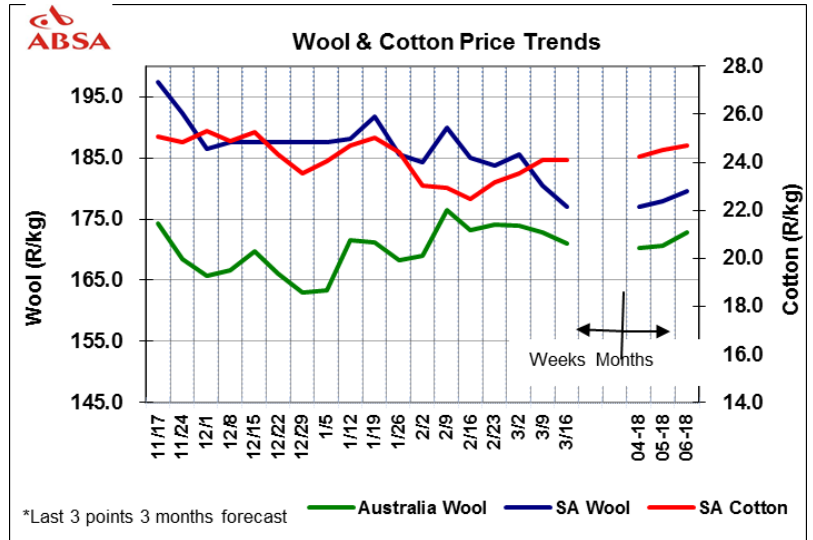
Cotton prices traded 2.39% higher over the past week and closed at US80.48c/lb.

Bullish factors

- The latest US Department of Agriculture's estimates shows world consumption is raised slightly, while world trade is forecast 600,000 bales higher, as higher expected imports by Turkey, Bangladesh, China, and Vietnam more than offset a decline for Taiwan.

Bearish factors

- The latest US Department of Agriculture's estimates shows the forecast for 2017/18 global production is raised nearly 600,000 bales this month due to revisions in Sudan's estimates back to 2013/14 and higher area in Australia, partially offset by smaller crops in the United States and Uzbekistan.



Domestic

The derived SA cotton prices traded 2.42% higher to close at R24.10/kg. The increases in prices were due to increases in international prices, and the weakness in the South African rand. The 2nd estimate for the 2017/18 production year indicates a cotton crop of 195 530 lint bales for the RSA, an increase of 152% over the previous season and 3% up from last month's estimate. Renewed interest in cotton production and favourable prices are reasons the industry deem to have supported the production growth.

Outlook

Internationally, higher world production estimates may weigh on the cotton market.

Locally, the world market and exchange rate movement may continue to affect the domestic market prices.

Fibres market trends
Week ended 15 March 2018

Wool prices	%	SA prices (c/kg)	%	Australian prices (SA c/kg)	%	Australian future Mar 2018 (AU\$/kg)	%	Australian future May 2018 (AU\$/kg)
Wool market indicator	-1.89	17702	-1.20	16251		-		-
19µ micron	-0.90	19244	-2.03	18668	-3.93	19.55	-4.00	19.20
21µ micron	-1.87	17337	-1.06	17251	-4.32	17.70	-4.44	17.20
Cotton prices 09 March 2018		SA derived cotton (R/kg)		New York A Index (US\$/kg)		New York future May 2018 (US\$/kg)		New York future Jul 2018 (US\$/kg)
Cotton prices	2.42	24.10	1.10	2.03	3.7	1.88	2.7	1.86

Vegetables market trends

Tomatoes, cabbages and peppers performed better than the other top traded vegetables at the FPM for the week ending 16 March 2018.

Potato prices & volumes lower week on week.

Week on week deliveries were lower (28% decline week on week) at the Top 5 FPM, however prices declined week on week irregardless of the lower stocks. Lower mid-month demand did not support prices. Prices are expected to remain trading at R25/bag-R27/bag for the next 2 weeks.

Pepper prices up as volumes decline

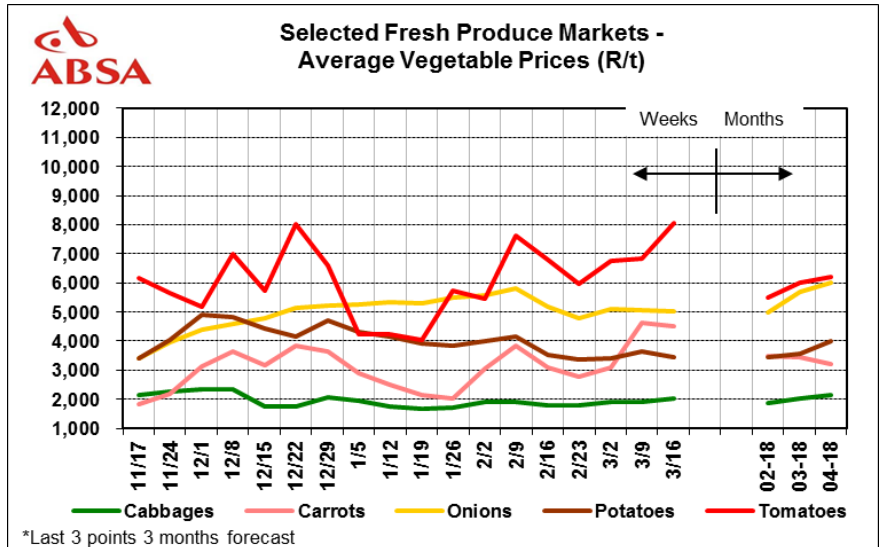
Pepper prices increased by 7% week on week. This follows a 23% reduction in volumes delivered to the FPMs

Tomato prices up as volumes

Carrot prices increased 18% from R6.8/kg to R8.1/kg week on week. Declines in volumes delivered attributed to the trend.

Onions

Prices were marginally lower (-1%) week on week as produce delivered was of an inferior quality, and demand sluggish. Volumes delivered were lower (32%) following the drought conditions that lead to fewer hectares planted under onions in the Western Cape. The Western Cape farmers are now delivering to the markets, hence the reduced volumes; unfortunately this did not translate into higher prices.



Week ending 16 March 2018	Difference in weekly prices (R/t)	This week's Average Price (R/t)	Previous week's Average Price (R/t)	Difference in weekly volumes	This week's Total Volumes (t)	Previous week's Total Volumes (t)
Cabbages	4%	2010	1926	-20%	1662	2068
Carrots	-2%	4528	4610	-27%	1914	2634
Onions	-1%	5008	5062	-32%	5600	8202
Potatoes	-6%	3438	3642	-28%	13587	18819
Tomatoes	18%	8068	6839	-5%	3708	3902
Peppers	7%	8340	7776	-23%	813	1060

Disclaimer: Although everything has been done to ensure the accuracy of the information, Absa Bank takes no responsibility for actions or losses that might occur due to the use of this information.