



CAASA Newsletter



The Commercial Aviation
Association of Southern Africa

May 2026

Content Guide

Discover our latest insights and updates on the **aviation industry**. This edition features important articles, news, and the continuous efforts of CAASA to enhance aviation standards.

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Get involved with our monthly newsletter



FROM OUR CEO

The People Behind Aviation: The Quiet Force That Keeps Us Flying

When we think of aviation, our minds instinctively turn to aircraft slicing through the sky, pilots in command, and the marvel of flight itself. Yet, the true strength of aviation, particularly here in South Africa and across Sub-Saharan Africa, lies not only in the machines or even those at the controls, but in the vast, interconnected community of professionals working tirelessly behind the scenes.

The enablers of aviation, the connector of high-value goods and people, and the soul of any nation.

This is a story about those people to whom, this month, I would like to draw attention.

It is about the Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (AMEs) who ensure every bolt, system, and surface is airworthy before a single passenger boards. It is about the flight attendants who balance safety, service, and human care at 35,000 feet. It is about the associations that advocate, guide, and sustain the industry. It is about the regulators who shape the framework within which we operate, the meteorological teams who read the skies before we enter them, and the airport personnel who orchestrate the seamless flow of movement on the ground.

Together, they form the backbone of aviation.



The Workforce at a Glance

Aviation in South Africa is not a niche sector; it is a sizable, skilled workforce with growing global relevance. Even within a continent that accounts for just 2.2% of global aviation activity, the depth of expertise is striking.

Consider this:

- Early-career flight attendants earn an average base salary of around R110,800 per year, with total compensation ranging widely from approximately R8,000 to R216,000, depending on experience, allowances, and incentives.
- The number of licensed AMEs continues to grow steadily, reflecting both resilience and sustained demand, although many leave our shores, and our loss of aircraft and declining operations in GA need urgent attention.
- South Africa is home to more than 10 active aviation associations, each playing a vital role in shaping the industry, some with paid professionals and others with passionate volunteer experts whom I believe the regulator does not actively interact with enough or utilise sufficiently in their decision-making.

These are more than just numbers—they reflect a living, breathing ecosystem of professionals whose skills are increasingly sought after across borders.



AMEs: The Backbone of Safety

Let us begin with the AMEs, the quiet custodians of safety.

In South Africa, the aviation maintenance profession continues to grow, even as the regulatory environment becomes more complex. Additional compliance layers and oversight have become part of daily operations, yet the number of licensed engineers continues to rise.

That alone speaks volumes about the strength and appeal of the profession, but also to the international demand and growth still not seen here in South Africa. We should ask why, and the regulator should listen to the answers provided.

South African-trained AMEs are widely respected on the global stage. From the Middle East to Europe and across Africa, their qualifications and experience are in high demand. This global recognition is something we should be proud of, but it comes with a challenge.

It is, quite frankly, a double-edged sword.

The same international demand that validates our training standards also places pressure on local retention. Skilled engineers are increasingly mobile, and global salary competition is real. For CEOs and industry leaders, this is no longer an operational issue; it is a boardroom priority.

Retention strategies, career development pathways, and competitive positioning must be actively addressed if we are to sustain this critical skills base.

Allowing unique volumes of aircraft into our country for cost-effective maintenance allows this growth, which is in stark contrast to the DOT limiting access and actively creating the perception that RSA does not wish for foreign aircraft to visit our shores. Just look at the latest international golf tournament debacle.

At the same time, we must continue to work closely with the regulator to ensure that compliance frameworks, while essential for safety, do not unintentionally constrain growth or discourage new entrants into the profession.

This remains a challenge as often the regulator, complying with their limitations of BBBEE, does not have the pick of the most experienced workforce steeped in institutional knowledge that is valued in other regulators and pays dividends in complex regulatory matters.

Flight Attendants: Safety Professionals Beyond Service

Equally vital, though often underappreciated, are our flight attendants.

Too often, their role is reduced to service. In reality, they are highly trained safety professionals: first responders in emergencies, communicators in times of uncertainty, and the human face of aviation.

In South Africa, early-career earnings may begin modestly, but the wide compensation range reflects a profession with growth potential and complexity. More importantly, it reflects a role that demands resilience, adaptability, and emotional intelligence, particularly in recent years, where operational pressures have been significant.



As we approach International Flight Attendant Day on 31 May, it is worth reflecting on what truly defines this profession. It is not just about delivering comfort; it is about ensuring safety, maintaining calm under pressure, and representing the industry with professionalism.

For leadership, the message is clear: compensation transparency and structured career progression are essential. Retention in this space is not just about pay; it is about recognising the full scope and value of the role.



The Associations: Aviation's Collective Voice

No industry operates in isolation, and aviation is no exception.

South Africa is fortunate to have a robust network of aviation associations that serve as the bridge between industry and regulators. These include organisations representing maintenance, airlines, non-scheduled operators, rotorcraft, unmanned aviation, and labour interests.

From AMOs to airlines, from helicopters to drones, these associations provide a unified voice on issues that matter, whether it is reducing unnecessary red tape, shaping workable regulations, or advocating for sustainable growth.

Their role is not theoretical. It is practical, strategic, and essential. It should be valued and not fragmented by the regulator, which is often the case in South Africa.

For CEOs, engagement with these bodies is not optional, it is a necessity. In an increasingly complex regulatory environment, collective advocacy is the most effective way to ensure that policies remain grounded in operational reality.

The regulator's current policies seem to be targeting greater fragmentation, which is not good and is ultimately costly and ineffective at many levels, from time and messaging to assistance in finding solutions.



The Broader Ecosystem: What Keeps Aviation Moving

Beyond these key roles lies an even broader ecosystem, one that is often invisible when things go right, but critical when they do not.

Meteorological teams provide the data that informs every flight plan, particularly vital in a region as climatically diverse as Sub-Saharan Africa. From coastal fog to highveld thunderstorms, their insights shape safety decisions long before an aircraft leaves the ground.

Airport personnel, from ground handlers and air traffic controllers to security and operations staff, form the operational heartbeat of aviation. Every departure, every arrival, and every turnaround is a coordinated effort requiring precision and teamwork.

And then there are the regulators. Their mandate is clear, ensure safety, compliance, and growth of the industry. But equally, a modern regulator must serve and enable the industry it oversees. This enabling function, creating an environment where aviation can grow safely and sustainably, is not a “nice to have”, it is a core responsibility. Having the right people qualified and experienced for their areas of oversight is critical.

At present, there is a growing perception within the industry that this enabling role is not receiving the priority it deserves within the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA).

While safety oversight remains robust and essential, the balance between control and enablement must be carefully managed if the industry is to realise its full potential.

This is directly aligned to job creation and meaningful global market share and should be a core driver if we are to make a dent in our ever-increasing youth unemployment tsunami that we face as a country that has had poor leadership for the past 30 years and is backward-looking rather than forward-focused.

Constructive engagement between industry and regulator is therefore more important than ever. The goal is not to dilute standards, but to ensure that simplified regulation that can be implemented easily and cost-effectively supports growth, encourages participation, and keeps South Africa competitive in a global market.

The reality is simple, the system only works when every part is resourced, respected, and aligned.

A Moment of Recognition, and Responsibility

May 2026 gives us a valuable opportunity to pause and recognise.

On 24 May, we mark Aviation Maintenance Technician Day. On 31 May, we recognise International Flight Attendant Day.

These are not just calendar events, they are reminders of the people who make aviation possible.

But recognition alone is not enough.

As leaders, there are clear priorities:

- **Retention:** Develop competitive compensation and meaningful career pathways, particularly for AMEs and flight attendants facing global demand.
- **Advocacy:** Strengthen engagement with associations to shape practical, effective regulatory outcomes.
- **Visibility:** Publicly acknowledge these professions, not just in May, but consistently.
- **Recruitment:** Align talent pipelines with the steady growth in licensed professionals, particularly in maintenance.



Closing Thoughts

Aviation is often described as a network of aircraft, routes, and infrastructure. But that description misses the point.

At its core, aviation is a community of professionals, from the AME inspecting a landing gear assembly late at night, to the flight attendant managing an in-flight emergency with calm authority, from the meteorologist interpreting shifting weather patterns, to the association representative advocating for the industry's future.

They are the quiet force behind every safe departure and successful arrival.

As we move through May, let us carry both the data and the stories with us. The AME numbers tell us that globally, aviation is skilled, growing, and globally relevant, and here in RSA it should mimic that trend, which is not the case if we look at various metrics. It is the people who give those numbers meaning, and it is these numbers that the Government and the regulator should be paying critical attention to.

Because in the end, the strength of our industry is not just in the fleet we operate,

it is in the people who keep us flying.



– Kevin Storie, CEO



CAASA & AAD 2026 Open Day

**Join us for an exclusive Open Day at
Lanseria International Airport.**

Whether you want to exhibit at AAD 2026, explore partnership opportunities, or become part of South Africa's leading aviation community through CAASA membership, this is your opportunity to connect directly with the team.

 11 June 2026
 10am – 3pm
 CAASA House, Gate 9,
Lanseria International Airport

What to Expect

- AAD 2026 bookings and exhibitor information
- Guidance on maximising your presence at Africa's premier aerospace and defence expo
- Information on CAASA membership and industry benefits

**RSVP by
9 June 2026**

Email Melissa to book
melissa@caasa.co.za

[Book your slot](#)

Bookings are essential
Everyone in the aviation community is welcome

CAASA Aviation Activity Index

South Africa: 1st quarter of 2026

The CAAI retreated during the first quarter of 2026 as it recorded a reading of 192.7 index points, from 198.3 during 2025Q4 (that is a decrease of -2.8% q:q). The trend (4-quarter moving average) also decreased slightly from 189.4 in the fourth quarter of 2025, to 189.3 in 2026Q1 (-0.1% q:q).

Despite the pullback, historically the CAAI remains close to record high levels indicating continued strong activity levels within the sector.

Items that supported the CAAI during the last quarter include imports of spares as well as imports and exports of helicopters and drones, and air traffic movements (ATMs) at the larger ACSA airports.

Imports of spares (undercarriages, propellers and other general spares) have been performing very strongly recently and are on new record levels, also in real (inflation adjusted) terms. Activity related to import and export of helicopters have generally been performing well throughout 2025, with imports of smaller helis (less than 2 ton) doing very well against its longer-term average performance.

Air traffic movements (ATMs) of aircraft at the larger ACSA airports continued their general strong recovery. Cape Town International Airport surpassed its pre-Covid levels, while OR Tambo and King Shaka (Durban) are still lagging somewhat.

Amongst the smaller ACSA airports, Chief Dawid Stuurman (PE) and George Airport recorded slight uptick compared to the previous quarter, however both remain below their pre-Covid levels. King Phalo (East London), Bram Fischer International Airport (Bloemfontein) and Kimberley Airport also recorded below-average movements compared to their long-term averages.

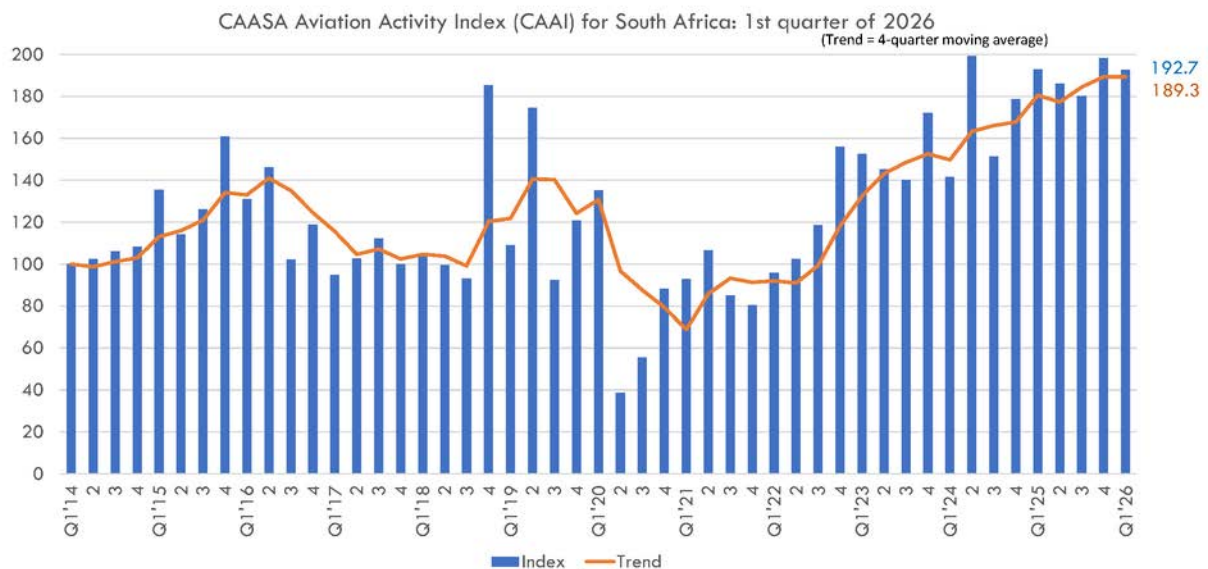
Data for drones are obtained from SARS in different weight categories (e.g. take-off mass less than 7kg or between 7 to 25kg, etc) and is available from 2022. The CAAI allocates a weight of 5% to this item.

Drone imports consistently outperformed exports in terms of both value and volume since 2022. This was driven by strong imports of small drones (less than 7kg). However, during 2026Q1, it was the large drone (take-off mass between 7 to 25kg) category that outperformed by recording an import value of R40.2 million. It will be interesting to see if this trend continues over the next few quarters.

During 2025, global economic and trade sentiment was dampened by the trade wars and tension it created. Similarly, the start of 2026 brought further uncertainty as the United States-Iran war intensified. Despite various peace talk initiatives it remains unclear how long this will drag on.

South Africa's real GDP increased by 1,1% in 2025, following an increase of 0,5% in 2024. Inflation trended downwards during the first half of 2025, and the SA Reserve Bank was able to cut the Repo interest rate from 7.5% in January to 6.75% during its November 2025 MPC meeting.

Unfortunately, the recent global developments are already hampering this as the rise in the oil price (sparked by the US-Iran war) are starting to filter through to domestic inflation. Annual consumer price inflation (CPI) was 4,0% in April 2026, up from 3,1% in March 2026, while the SARB is starting to talk about possible interest rate hikes. These developments will put pressure on households' disposable income, which will dampen general economic activity.



CAASA AVIATION ACTIVITY INDEX (CAAI) FOR SOUTH AFRICA: 1ST QUARTER OF 2026

			Q/Q (previous quarter)		Q/Q (same quarter of previous year)	
			Index	Trend	Index	Trend
Q1'24	Index	Trend	Index	Trend	Index	Trend
	141.6	149.8	-17.8%	-1.8%	-7.3%	13.1%
2	199.4	163.3	40.8%	9.0%	37.2%	14.1%
3	151.4	166.1	-24.0%	1.7%	8.1%	11.9%
4	178.7	167.8	18.0%	1.0%	3.8%	10.0%
Q1'25	192.8	180.6	7.9%	7.6%	36.2%	20.6%
2	186.1	177.3	-3.5%	-1.8%	-6.7%	8.6%
3	180.3	184.5	-3.1%	4.1%	19.1%	11.0%
4	198.3	189.4	10.0%	2.7%	11.0%	12.9%
Q1'26	192.7	189.3	-2.8%	0.0%	-0.1%	4.9%

Background:

The CAAI is based on a composite indexation technique, whereby a group of indicators representing different units is forged into a single value.

Changes over time in the different indicators are measured and then also expressed as changes to the weighted index.

A total of 25 different indicators comprises the CAAI, emanating from six broad categories including import and export values of aircraft, helicopters, spares and drones; air traffic movements (ATMs) of aircraft at all major ACSA airports as well as aviation fuel sales volumes.

Combined in an appropriately weighted index, these indicators provide an objective & balanced measure of economic activity in various spheres of the commercial aviation industry.

Visit our website for the full CAAI 2026 Q1 Report.

[Read the full report](#)

CAASA will be at AERO South Africa 2026!

Join us from 10–12 June at Lanseria International Airport.

Register for AERO South Africa and gain automatic access to the exclusive Business Matchmaking programme – connecting you with key industry buyers and decision-makers.

[Register](#)



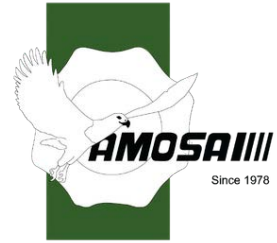
10 - 12 JUNE

LANSERIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



WE ARE EXHIBITING AT AERO SOUTH AFRICA 2026 - MEET US THERE!





Aircraft Maintenance Organisation of South Africa

Championing the aircraft maintenance industry in South Africa

The Aircraft Maintenance Organisation of South Africa (AMOSA) serves as the representative body for Aircraft Maintenance Organisations (AMOs) across South Africa, advocating for their interests and needs to the regulatory authorities.

AMOSA's membership encompasses small, single-person AMOs to larger organisations operating within the fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and accessories sectors.

As the sole aviation maintenance association officially recognised by the South African Government under the Commercial Aviation Association of Southern Africa (CAASA),

AMOSA represents AMOs on various regulatory committees at the Civil Aviation Authority. AMOSA uses these platforms to amplify the voices of AMOs and prioritise the industry's sustainability.

Committed to protecting the diverse interests of AMOs serving both commercial and private aircraft owners, AMOSA actively engages in regulatory processes. It ensures that organisations' unique challenges and requirements, regardless of size, are considered during the formulation and implementation of regulations.

Additionally, AMOSA liaises with the Civil Aviation Authority to address common issues across the industry during routine interactions between the Authority and AMOs. By approaching these challenges collectively, AMOSA facilitates resolution and promotes operational efficiency.

For CAASA membership details, contact our General Manager.

Melissa Sewgolam
melissa@caasa.co.za

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AFRICA MONTH



THIS IS OUR SKY

25 years ago, we opened the gates at Air Force Base Waterkloof for the first time. This Africa Month, we look back at the century of flight that made us possible and forward to September, when we do it again.

When AAD first opened in 2000, it landed in a country with ninety years of aviation history already behind it. South Africa had built aircraft, broken world records, trained pilots and staged air shows that drew crowds in their tens of thousands. We were, from the beginning, the inheritors of something. This Africa Month, our 25th anniversary year - it is worth pausing to understand exactly what that something is.

The Sky Was ALWAYS OURS

In 1891, James Price descended by parachute from a hot air balloon over Pietermaritzburg. The crowd had never seen anything like it. He would do it over a hundred times across southern Africa in the years that followed - not aviation as we know it, but something more important in that moment: a declaration, made on African soil, that the sky was not out of reach. Powered flight arrived here in December 1909.

A Voisin biplane over East London. Bristol Boxkites at Turffontein. By 1920, 17 years after Kitty Hawk - South African aviators had founded the Aero Club of South Africa. Long before AAD existed, this continent was already, quietly and purposefully, building its relationship with the air.

"From those grass roots is where we sow the seeds of passion for flight in our youth that go on to greater flying careers."
Rob Jonkers, Aero Club of South Africa, 2020



Built Here LONG BEFORE WE ARRIVED

In 1975, a teacher named Tienie Jonker started building a glider in his Bloemhof garage. His sons grew up beside it. Decades later, Attie and Uys channelled everything their father had taught them into the JS1 Revelation - a high-performance racing sailplane now exported across the globe and described by a three-time British world champion as genuinely world-class. When it first appeared on the international competitive circuit, it carried something South African in every rivet.

Peter Celliers designed the Celstar aerobatic glider in six months, took gold and silver at the 1989 World Glider Aerobatics Championships, then shipped it to Switzerland and the United States. The Rooivalk tells the same story at a different scale. Conceived, designed and manufactured on this continent by Denel Aviation, it remains one of the most sophisticated attack helicopters ever produced. The manufacturers and operators who exhibit at AAD are not a new story. They are the continuation of one that started in garages and drawing offices.



25 Years. ONE STORY.

In October 1929, Johannesburg held its first major air show at Baragwanath airfield. SAAF bombers flew formation overhead. Hundreds of cars lined the perimeter fence. The crowd pressed five deep against the roping, necks craned upward. What was being demonstrated that day went beyond aircraft. It was the idea — asserted in front of thousands — that this was our sky too.

Through the decades that followed, South Africa built an air show culture, a world-class safety certification framework, precision display teams recognised internationally, and an institutional confidence in the air that belongs entirely to us. That confidence is what AAD was built on in 2000. It is what we carry, intact, into our 25th year.

Africa Aerospace and Defence is not simply an exhibition. It is the living proof of everything this history represents. The people who will watch the flying display from the Waterkloof flight line in September are the descendants of the crowds who pressed against the roping at Baragwanath in 1929. The exhibitors showcasing African-manufactured systems are the institutional successors of Tienie Jonker in his Bloemhof garage. The young people attending through the AAD Youth Development Programme carry the same potential that once turned a Drakensberg boy into a World Championships paraglider pilot.



Important dates TO KEEP IN MIND!

To make it easier for our exhibitors to plan their participation at AAD 2026, please see below for an easy breakdown of important dates.

16 - 18 SEPT 2026

TRADE DAYS & CONFERENCING

19 - 20 SEPT 2026

PUBLIC AIRSHOW DAYS

**STAY TUNED TO OUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS
FOR UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS!**



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LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Stay informed.
Stay connected.
Stay represented.



A stronger aviation industry starts with a unified voice

From regulatory engagement to industry advocacy, CAASA represents the businesses that keep aviation moving.

Join the organisations shaping aviation

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COME FLY WITH US

Get involved with our monthly newsletter

With 80+ years of legacy and reputation, your contribution can only help us foster growth in your business and across our critically important aviation sector.

Get involved and reap the benefits of getting your business in front of curated, aviation-focused peers pro bono!

All we need from you

01

Your company logo
(JPG / PNG / PDF)

02

Company overview, products & services
(Long or short-form)

03

Significant milestones & supporting images
(JPG / PNG / PDF)

04

Contact details
(Including website address & social media)

Reach out to our General Manager,
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