



IN THIS ISSUE

p4 ARRIVAL OF ONE MILLION FMD VACCINE DOSES TO STRENGTHEN FIGHT AGAINST THE DISEASE

p6 DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE PROVIDES UPDATE ON FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE INITIATIVES

p10 WE ARE INVOLVED: THE BACK-TO-SCHOOL CAMPAIGN AS LED BY DM CAPA



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FROM THE MINISTER'S DESK

The year ahead will demand a great deal from all of us, and there will be times when the pressure feels relentless. That is precisely why rest matters, because what lies ahead will require focus, stamina and a genuine sense of shared purpose.

Let me be frank: 2026 will be a tough year. We are entering it with all hands on deck, facing one of the most complex animal health challenges our country has ever had to manage. The FMD crisis is not something we can wish away, manage on autopilot, or leave to a handful of specialists. It is a national challenge that cuts across provinces, value chains, institutions and communities, and it will test our processes, our coordination and our resolve.

What gives me confidence, however, is the way in which our department has stepped up. Over the past few months, we have shifted decisively away from reactive crisis management toward a structured, technically rigorous and long-term strategy to deal with FMD. This approach is breaking new ground in South Africa. For the first time, we are aligning mass vaccination, scientific strain matching, traceability, industry coordination and legislative reform into a single, coherent national strategy aimed at restoring FMD-free status with vaccination.

This is not a quick fix. It is a 10-year roadmap that demands discipline, collaboration and credibility, and it places South Africa on a path that is consistent with international best practice. The establishment of the FMD Industry Coordination Council, the work of the technical task teams, the re-engagement with global reference laboratories, and the strengthening of vaccine supply and local production capacity all point to a department that is not shying away from complexity but confronting it head-on.

I want to acknowledge the extraordinary effort this requires, and will continue to require, from our officials—from veterinarians and inspectors on the ground to policy, legal, logistics and



As we return to work after the Christmas break, I want to begin by welcoming each of you back and express my sincere hope that you were able to rest, reconnect with your families, and take a moment to recharge. I am also acutely aware that for many of our officials, including those in my office, this was not a true break at all. Some of you remained on duty throughout the festive season, working long hours on the ground and behind the scenes to manage Foot and mouth disease (FMD) outbreaks and to support affected farmers and stakeholders. I want to acknowledge that sacrifice, and to thank you for the professionalism, compassion and commitment you showed under exceptionally difficult circumstances.

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Cont from pg 2.

communications teams who are working under intense scrutiny. This work is often unseen, but it is essential. Our success will depend not on individual heroics, but on sustained teamwork, clear lines of accountability and trust between Government and industry.

While FMD will rightly dominate much of our attention this year, it is important to remember that the department's work does not stop there. Even as we manage risk, we must continue to unlock opportunities, and there is real progress to be encouraged by.

We are pressing ahead with stone fruit market access and are engaging daily with the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC). All technical work is complete, importer-exporter arrangements are in place, and we are now pushing for the final green light. This is painstaking work, but it matters, because each breakthrough opens doors for growers, exporters and jobs.

Within the next three weeks, South Africa will see its first table grape shipment to the Philippines. I will be personally involved in this milestone, working closely with industry and with partners at the South African Table Grape Industry (SATI) to finalise logistics. It is another example of what focused, coordinated effort can achieve.

We are also preparing for the signing of the cherries protocol at the next SATI Ministerial Meeting in China, anticipated to take place around July 2026. We are exploring the opportunity to align this visit with engagements in the Philippines, ensuring that our trade diplomacy is strategic—efficient and outcomes driven. Following this, South Africa's first shipment of cherries to China is expected in the October 2026 season, a moment that will mark years of technical and diplomatic work coming to fruition (excuse the pun).

Looking further ahead, negotiations for a berries protocol with China will commence at the upcoming SATI Ministerial Meeting, with verification processes planned for later in the year. These are not abstract wins; they are tangible outcomes that strengthen confidence in South African agriculture and in the department that supports it.

Colleagues, the year ahead will test us, but it will also define us. We are being called upon to protect our national herd, secure our food system, and open new markets at the same time. That is not easy work. But it is meaningful work.

I thank you for your commitment, your professionalism and your resilience. Let us face the year ahead clear-eyed, united and determined to deliver.



The Foot and Mouth Disease Task Team shared crucial updates on vaccination strategies, biosecurity measures, and efforts to safeguard South Africa's livestock industry.



ARRIVAL OF ONE MILLION FMD VACCINE DOSES TO STRENGTHEN FIGHT AGAINST THE DISEASE

Rony Moremi

permits, and biosecurity measures exist to protect every farmer in the country. Those who deliberately move animals illegally, conceal infections, or ignore restrictions threaten the recovery of the entire sector," he said. Where there is wilful non-compliance, we will work with law-enforcement authorities and the full might of the law will be applied," emphasised the minister.

The vaccines will be distributed to provinces as follows: Gauteng will receive 70,000; KwaZulu-Natal 200,000, Free State 200,000; Eastern Cape 150,000; Mpumalanga 100,000; North West 100,000; Limpopo 100,000; Northern Cape 50,000; and Western Cape 30,000.

The minister confirmed that the vaccination of dairy cattle will start on Friday, 27 February 2026 in Mooi River, KwaZulu-Natal.

Farmers are encouraged to contact the toll-free support line on 0860 246 640 for expert guidance on FMD such as:

- information about FMD symptoms;
- advice on movement controls and permits;
- updates on vaccine availability and vaccinations;
- practical tips on how to keep your farm biosecure.



Minister Steenhuisen received the one million doses of Biogénesis Bagó FMD vaccine from Argentina.



From left: Director-General Mooketsa Ramasodi; Mr Daniel Helou from Biogénesis Bagó; Mr Facundo Grimberg, Commercial Attaché in the Embassy of Argentina; Minister John Steenhuisen; and Mr Raul Ailan, Ambassador of Argentina in SA.

The livestock industry can breathe a sigh of relief with the arrival of the most important cargo, the Foot and mouth disease (FMD) vaccine. The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, received a million doses of the Biogénesis Bagó vaccine from Argentina on 21 February 2026 at the KLM Warehouse in Kempton Park, Gauteng.

These million doses arrived at a crucial time when the country is battling the worst FMD outbreak it has ever had. The department has confirmed that outbreaks have now been reported across all provinces, with quarantine measures, movement restrictions and surveillance continuing nationwide.

This shipment from Biogénesis Bagó in Argentina, forms part of a sustained supply pipeline, with further consignments scheduled to arrive over the coming weeks, including vaccines sourced from BVI in Botswana and Dollvet in Turkey. By the end of March, South Africa will have received a total of over five million vaccines.

Locally, the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) has committed to produce 20,000 vaccines per week and scaling up to 200,000 per week in 2027.

To the South African farmers, the minister said, "Help is on the way, we know that many of you have suffered tremendously over the last weeks and months, but we now have the tools that we need to make sure that our strategy of turning South Africa into a country that can regain its status as an FMD free country."

The minister said that it will take both the industry and the department working together to get FMD under control. He said that the vaccine does not replace biosecurity measures that farmers must still observe. "Quarantine rules, movement



DOA AND ARC RESPOND POSITIVELY WITH LOCALLY PRODUCED FMD VACCINE



From left: Dr Faith Peta from the ARC, Minister John Steenhuisen, Dr Litha Magingxa and Dr Pontsho Mokaila showing media the locally produced FMD vaccine.

“ My department and I will stop at nothing to ensure this disease is completely eradicated from our farms and communities. Please do not lose faith because we are building a system that will protect your herds for generations to come ”

The Department of Agriculture (DoA) in collaboration with the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) has given South African farmers renewed hope in the fight against Foot and mouth disease (FMD). The department announced the production of the first locally manufactured FMD vaccine in 20 years, at the ARC's Onderstepoort Veterinary Research on 6 February 2026.

The Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen, alongside members of the Ministerial Task Team and ARC leadership hosted industry stakeholders and members of the media to witness the finalisation of the inaugural batch of the locally produced vaccine.

The vaccine, developed by the ARC, is intended to help contain the spread of the highly contagious disease, which has taken a heavy toll on farmers across the country. This achievement strengthens South Africa's biosecurity and boosts local vaccine production. It also marks a major step forward in protecting livestock in the fight against FMD in the country.

Samuel Kgatla

The ARC has produced an initial 12,900 doses, with weekly production expected to increase to 20,000 doses by March. These doses will complement imported vaccines already secured by the government, including more than two million doses procured last year. The initial distribution of this batch is as follows: Free State (2,300 doses), Eastern Cape (2,600 doses), North West (2,000 doses), Gauteng (2,000 doses), Limpopo (2,000 doses), and Mpumalanga (2,000 doses). KwaZulu-Natal remains the epicentre of the outbreak, with the primary focus being containment within the province to prevent transmission to other provinces.

On behalf of the FMD vaccine team, Dr Faith Peta said that the release of the vaccine was the result of sustained, long-term investment in local science and infrastructure. She mentioned that while production is currently on a small scale, the first batch represents many years of research and commitment. “It demonstrates that South Africa has the capacity to develop safe and effective vaccines that meet regulatory standards and address local disease challenges,” she said.

Dr Litha Magingxa, ARC President and Chief Executive Officer, described the vaccine release as a milestone for South African agriculture. Magingxa said that the vaccine was developed by South African scientists in local facilities, specifically to address the strains affecting the country. “Our scientists have produced a vaccine of high quality that meets all the required technical standards and regulatory requirements. It gives South Africa a powerful tool in controlling outbreaks now and in the future,” he said.

Mr Dewald Olivier, Chief Executive Officer of Red Meat Industry Services, said that South Africa should be proud of its



Cont from pg 4.

ability to produce its own vaccine, even at smaller volumes. He said, "Local production is a critical step forward, and we look forward to scaling up capacity." Olivier added that, together with imported vaccines, the locally produced doses play a vital role in combating the disease, ensuring that markets remain open, and keeping farmers productive and on their farms.

Minister Steenhuisen called for unity and responsible reporting in addressing the FMD outbreak, highlighting the launch of a locally produced vaccine as a major step in restoring South Africa's biosecurity capacity. He also acknowledged the heavy emotional and financial strain on farmers, assuring them that support is already in place and reaffirming the department's commitment to fully eradicating the disease and safeguarding livestock for future generations. "My department and I will stop at nothing to ensure this disease is completely eradicated from our farms and communities. Please do not lose faith because we are building a system that will protect your herds for generations to come," he said.



Minister of Agriculture Mr John Steenhuisen, Director-General Mooketsa Ramasodi and scientists proudly displaying the locally produced FMD vaccine.



Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen, showing the media the locally produced FMD vaccine.



The locally produced FMD vaccine.



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE PROVIDES UPDATE ON FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE INITIATIVES

A nation that works for all



A nation that works for all



Matsepo Malatswane

Minister John Steenhuisen outlines the Department of Agriculture's phased National Vaccination Strategy aimed at achieving FMD-free status through vaccination, in line with World Organisation for Animal Health.

regions, disease trends and ongoing surveillance measures. She emphasised the importance of early detection, rapid reporting and strict biosecurity measures to prevent the spread of FMD. Dr Modisane discussed initiatives to strengthen animal health systems, support vaccinated herds and maintain continuity in livestock production.

Minister Steenhuisen stressed that biosecurity on farms remains crucial, advising farmers to maintain strict controls on animal movements, quarantine affected herds and report suspected cases immediately to local veterinary services. He reinforced that early detection and rapid reporting are essential to prevent further outbreaks and limit economic losses.

To support farmers impacted by the outbreak, the department introduced assistance programmes, including guidance on herd management, vaccination schedules and containment measures. Farmers were encouraged to engage with provincial veterinary offices for advice and to participate in upcoming vaccination campaigns. The department also outlined plans to strengthen traceability systems, improving the monitoring of livestock movements and response times in the event of new infections.

Minister Steenhuisen highlighted the importance of stakeholder collaboration in combating FMD, including partnerships with the National Red Meat Producers Organisation (NRMPO), provincial authorities and private veterinarians. He reassured farmers that the government remains committed to protecting livelihoods, safeguarding the livestock sector, and maintaining confidence in South Africa's red meat exports.

The briefing provided farmers with clear timelines for the vaccination campaign, practical advice on biosecurity and information on accessing veterinary support. Farmers were urged to stay vigilant, follow official guidelines, and report any unusual signs of disease in their herds.

The department continues to lead a proactive, coordinated and transparent response to FMD, demonstrating its commitment to disease control, food security, and the long-term sustainability of South Africa's livestock industry.

For further information, farmers and members of the public can visit the department's website at www.nda.gov.za or contact local provincial veterinary offices.

The Department of Agriculture, led by Minister John Steenhuisen, held a national media briefing to update the public and farmers on the status of Foot and mouth disease (FMD) in South Africa and to outline the government's strategy to protect the national herd. The briefing took place at the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) Imbizo Centre in Parliament, Cape Town, on 14 January 2026 to provide journalists, industry stakeholders and farmers an opportunity to gain detailed information on the outbreak and the department's response.

Minister Steenhuisen explained that the department had implemented a phased National Vaccination Strategy aimed at achieving FMD-free status through vaccination, in line with the standards of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). He highlighted that the strategy focuses on high-risk areas, including regions with dense livestock populations, communal farming areas, feedlots and dairy farms, with vaccination teams deployed to ensure maximum coverage in these crucial zones.

Dr Emily Mogajane, Chief Director: Biosecurity Coordination and Dr Botlhe Modisane, Chief Director: Animal Health and Production were also present at the media briefing. Dr Mogajane provided a detailed overview of the outbreak, including affected

THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE WOMAN FARMER

“ Women are not given land as compared to men. They are often discriminated against and sidelined when it comes to family land and communal land ”



Matome is a young woman farmer from Gemarke in Limpopo.

Rony Moremi

The United Nations has designated 2026 the International Year of the Woman Farmer with the aim of highlighting women’s essential role and to push for global action to tackle the structural barriers they face.

The theme, “Empowered women transforming agricultural food systems”, highlights women’s role in agrifood systems. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in 2021 agrifood systems employed 40% of working women globally—nearly equal to men.

Women farmers are smallholders, peasants, agricultural labourers, fishers, beekeepers, pastoralists, and processors. Despite women’s essential role in agrifood systems, they still face challenges such as access to land, finance, and digital technology, according to the FAO Status of Women in Agrifood Systems report. The report further states that if half of small-scale producers benefited from development interventions that focused on empowering women, it would significantly raise the incomes of an additional 58 million people and increase the resilience of an additional 235 million people.

According to the Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), Census of Commercial Agriculture 2017 report, there were 8,114 women

farmers involved in agriculture, 6,116 employed full-time and 153,017 employed part-time.

Matome Cynthia Mokgobu of Mosibudi Farming Enterprises in Senwabarwana, Limpopo, says that one of the biggest challenges women face in agriculture is land rights. “In 2025, I had a serious land dispute that almost cost me my business. It was the most depressing year of my life. It is sad because most farmers who went through the same thing never recovered. I am glad my issue got the attention it needed and we are working on solving it. Land dispute is a national crisis, and all departments should take it seriously and intervene where possible. We need land to farm,” said Matome.

“Women are not given land as compared to men. They are often discriminated against and sidelined when it comes to family land and communal land,” she continued. Despite all the challenges, Matome says, “The most rewarding part about being a farmer is seeing crops grow. That is peace of mind.” She adds that her family, the Department of Agriculture, and the local stores supported her in all her farming activities.

Another woman farmer, Anthea Naidoo, owner of Phumelela Farm in Gauteng, says, “Finance is a big challenge. Women can do so much but without financial assistance it is not so easy to manage everything that is needed for the farm to be successful. Finding the relevant assistance in the agricultural sector is also a big challenge.”

As the FAO Director-General, Beth Bechdol, indicated in her closing remarks during the launch of The International Year of the Woman Farmer, the needs of women farmers must remain a priority well beyond 2026. With proper support, women farmers can and are able to feed the world.



Anthea Naidoo proudly showing the vegetables she produces on her farm.



THE GAME-CHANGING IMPACT OF THE ECERTIFICATION EXPORT SYSTEM

Mercia Smith



Agricultural Counsellor, Embassy of the Netherlands, Dr Evert Jan Krajenbrink and Ms Kwena Komape, Deputy Director-General: Economic Development Trade and Marketing, celebrating the conclusion event of eCert.

“Today, we celebrate a journey undertaken by two countries, South Africa and the Netherlands, on developing the electronic certification system for the import and export of agricultural products,” Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi, Director-General of the Department of Agriculture, said. He was speaking at the eCertification (eCert) conclusion event held in Pretoria.

Ms Kwena Komape, Deputy Director-General: Economic Development, Trade and Marketing, welcomed the Vice Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature, HE Roald Lapperre, and Agricultural Counsellor at the Embassy of the Netherlands, Dr Evert Jan Krajenbrink. She expressed her gratitude and heartfelt thanks for the Netherlands' willingness and commitment to the eCert process.

eCert is an advanced digital platform designed to receive, verify, process and deliver certification documentation to trading partners in the agricultural sector. By replacing manual paper-based systems, eCert plays a crucial role in ensuring that exporters remain compliant with international standards, avoid delays at foreign ports, and provide buyers with trustworthy digital verification.

For South Africa's trading partners, this means greater transparency and traceability across the entire supply chain, a vital component in today's risk-sensitive global trade environment. This transition was more than an administrative shift—it represents a structural upgrade to South Africa's export ecosystem. Through this integration, South Africa established a new global benchmark in paperless, fraud-protected verification for agricultural exports.

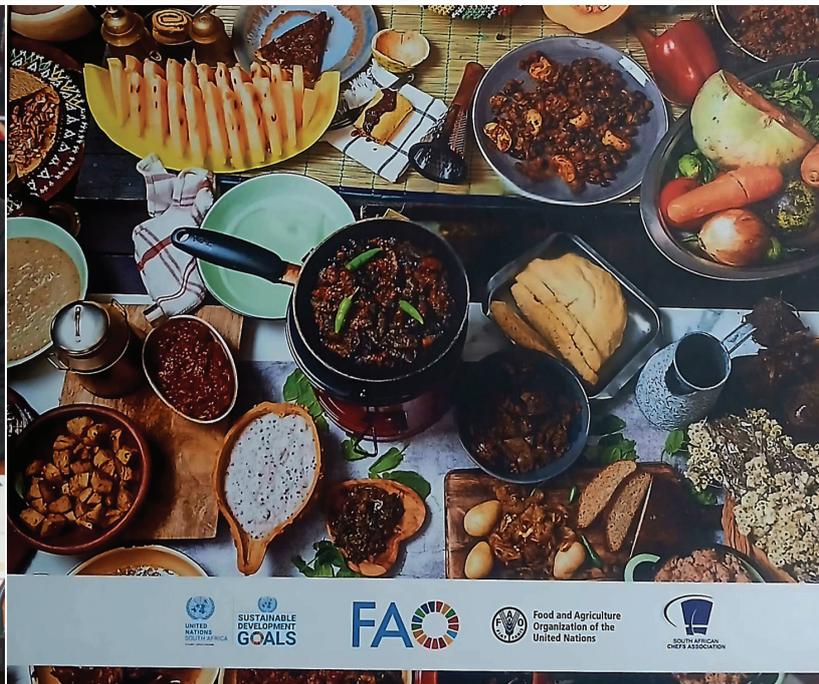
South Africa and the Netherlands enjoy excellent diplomatic and trade relations. South Africa and the Netherlands have signed a Letter of Intent, which provides for collaboration between the parties on areas of mutual concern. Post-signing of this letter, the Committee of Agriculture (CoA) was established, which identified priority areas between the parties, and one of the important areas identified was the need to facilitate trade flow through migrating from paper to the electronic certification system.



On the left is Vice Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature, H.E. Roald Lapperre shaking hands with Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi, Director-General of the National Department of Agriculture at the conclusion event of eCert.



CELEBRATING INDIGENOUS CROPS: A COOKBOOK MARKS A POLICY MILESTONE



Director-General Mooketsa Ramasodi and Dr Lewis Hove, Acting FAO Representative in South Africa, page through the *Roots and Recipes* cookbook, reflecting on the role of indigenous crops in food security, economic growth, and cultural heritage.

Matsepo Malatswane

On 19 January 2026, Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi, Director-General of the Department of Agriculture, received the *Roots and Recipes* cookbook from Dr Lewis Hove, Acting Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Representative in South Africa.

This moment symbolised more than a culinary celebration; it coincided with a significant policy achievement for South Africa's agricultural sector, i.e., the declaration of indigenous crops and medicinal plants as agricultural products under the Agricultural Product Standards Act, 1990 (Act No. 119 of 1990). The department has officially approved the inclusion of indigenous crops and medicinal plants in the list of declared agricultural products, formally recognising a high-potential sector estimated to contribute R12 billion per year to the national economy. This milestone reflects the government's commitment to diversifying agriculture, promoting local knowledge, and creating opportunities for rural communities.

The *Roots and Recipes* cookbook showcases the rich cultural heritage and culinary potential of South Africa's indigenous crops, demonstrating how traditional knowledge, food heritage and agriculture can drive food security, inclusive economic growth and

rural livelihoods. By highlighting locally grown ingredients and traditional recipes, this publication aims to connect communities, celebrate diversity and inspire innovation in the agri-food sector.

"This cookbook is a celebration of our roots," said Dr Hove. "It recognises that indigenous crops are not just cultural treasures, they are economic assets and essential contributors to food security in South Africa."

The department views this initiative as part of a broader strategy to support smallholder farmers, preserve indigenous knowledge, and promote sustainable agricultural development. By officially declaring indigenous crops and medicinal plants as agricultural products, the government hopes to unlock investment, strengthen value chains, and position South Africa as a leader in the cultivation and utilisation of indigenous foods.

The collaboration with the FAO and the launch of *Roots and Recipes* highlights the power of partnerships between the government, international agencies and local communities in advancing food security, economic development and cultural heritage preservation.



WE ARE INVOLVED: THE BACK-TO-SCHOOL CAMPAIGN AS LED BY DM CAPA



Young minds at the heart of the Back-To-School Campaign hosted by the department.



Sow skills today, harvest security tomorrow, Farm Manager Mokgetle demonstrates.

Ramokone Teffo

Taking part in something or being connected and engaged in it—that is one of the definitions of what it means to be involved.

The Department of Agriculture arguably embodied every aspect of that definition when it rolled out a three-day leg of Back-To-School Campaign in Eastern Cape; visiting three deserving high schools: Bodweni Senior Secondary, Mount Hargreaves Senior Secondary and concluding with Moshesh Senior Secondary School all based within the Alfred Nzo District Municipality.

With its sleeves rolled up, the department entrusted directorates Food Security, Stakeholder and Intergovernmental Relations, Sector Education and Training, Vetting Screening and Special Investigations, as well as External Media and Communication to each dedicate its mandate aligned with key messages of the 2026 campaign, which are promoting learner attendance, instilling a culture of teaching and learning, identifying challenges on ground and offering learner support materials and reaffirming the government's commitment to building a strong and responsive education system.

The learners from the three visited high schools during the campaign as it kicked off from 2 to 4 February 2026 all received donations from sponsors such as the Onderstepoort Biological Products and Macadamias South Africa (SAMAC). Although cheer and gratitude were on full display as they received school shoes, bags and some agricultural inputs, the former courtesy of the department, Deputy Minister Nokuzola Capa, had her key priorities set on agriculture as a career prospect for them and the revival and maintenance of subsistent farming. Suffice to say it was befitting that she therefore beamed with hope when Mount Hargreaves presented their two top achievers in the subjects of Agriculture Science and Physical Sciences, learners Avela

Mdolomba and Nkabeleng Sabasaba. "I was once a learner here at this school, conditions were obviously different from what we are experiencing today but we persevered," the deputy minister addressed the crowd. "We have immense admiration for all learners who chose education and take even greater pride in you, the top achievers; what we are hoping to see out of your success in the future is improving the conditions of your villages while promoting the indigenous way of farming and living."

A cause very close to her heart is the practice of self-reliance farming and recovering indigenous way of living and farming. While conducting a site inspection on the Bodweni Secondary School garden, the deputy minister advised the extension officers to properly look after schools gardens as key priorities for government are ensuring that learners, especially ones from disadvantaged backgrounds access nutritious diet to avoid school attendance disruptions due to food insecurity.

It was at Moshesh Senior Secondary School, an agricultural school and the last of the three schools visited, that it became fairly evident that agriculture is the lifeline of survival and sustenance. At display was a lush green garden, a properly operated piggery, and a chicken coup that, "Only feeds on organic food such as farm grown earth worms," per Farm Manager, Mr Hendrick Mokgetle.

"We tend to undermine not only our indigenous way of life but our farming style too, yet our soil produces one of the highly nutritious foods anywhere in the world, amadumbe for instance, is served on one of the finest tables in the world! We need to change our perspective because there is life in our way of living, and certainly, there is life in agriculture," said the deputy minister.

Sentiments echoed by Principal Motsapi as he wrapped up the third day session at Moshesh Senior Secondary: "Agriculture is gold!"



DOA AND ARC SHOWCASE THE BENEFITS OF BIOSLURRY LIVING LAB



Farmers are adapting to biogas like this one.



Farmers enjoyed listening to experts explaining the importance of biogas in farming.

Sammuel Kgatla

The Department of Agriculture (DoA), in collaboration with the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), showcased the benefits of a bioslurry living lab to farmers and researchers. Both the department and ARC demonstrated current research on the benefits of bioslurry at CySoCy Piggery and Agricultural Enterprises in Rooiwaal, Gauteng on 15 December 2025. CySoCy farm is owned by Ms Cynthia Moloto and it farms with pigs alongside mixed farming.

Farmers witnessed first-hand on how waste can be transformed into clean energy while simultaneously enriching the soil with essential nutrients. The impactful event proved to be a win-win for both the researchers and the farmers, demonstrating sustainable solutions that benefit agricultural productivity and environmental stewardship.

Bioslurry living labs and farmer field days in South Africa promote sustainable agriculture by demonstrating how biogas byproducts (bioslurry) can be used as an effective organic fertiliser. These initiatives highlight cost reduction, improved soil health, and increased productivity for crops such as vegetables and moringa, while supporting a range of rural development projects linked to biogas systems. Through hands-on learning, farmers receive practical training on applying bioslurry in crop production, fishpond management, composting, and animal feed, effectively bridging research and on-farm implementation to enhance yields and long-term sustainability.

The ARC has established living laboratories in South Africa as an end-user-oriented approach to research, where communities and stakeholders collaborate to co-create and test solutions to challenges within their natural environment. Currently, there

are 37 bioslurry living laboratories across the country. The composition of bioslurry makes it a suitable source of organic fertiliser due to the presence of significant amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Bioslurry is suggested for effective soil health and fertility restoration, reduction of salt build-up in soil, facilitation of soil recovery systems, and assisting with the re-establishment and enhancement of microbial activity in the soil.

Dr Lerato Matsaunyane from the ARC mentioned that they are working closely with farmers on the bioslurry living labs. "Farmers are central to the living labs, and all activities are conducted in close collaboration with them. We have dedicated staff working directly with farmers on the bioslurry living labs. This work forms part of the ARC research, and we collaborate with all farmers participating in the living labs," she said.

Mr Sibongiseni Ndimande, Director: Research and Policy Analysis said that they were very happy as a department to be at the farm for the demonstration of bioslurry living lab. "We are here to turn research into action, and farmers are at the core of our work as a department. We are facing several challenges, and living labs will play a crucial role in helping farmers to thrive. I am encouraged to see the ARC contributing to a better future for agriculture in our country. Bioslurry living labs will support farmers by reducing the high costs associated with getting their products to market. We are confident that the resources invested in the ARC will yield positive and tangible results for farmers," he said.

