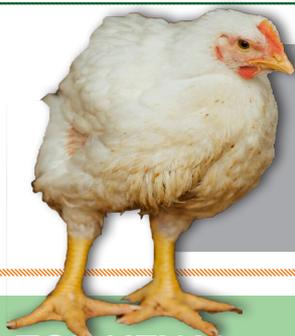




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Department: Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## FARMERS URGED TO IMPLEMENT BIOSECURITY MEASURES AMID AVIAN INFLUENZA OUTBREAK, AS GOVERNMENT ASSESSES INTERVENTIONS AND CONTAINMENT

Mphahlela M Rammutla



Outbreak of AI has led to shortage of eggs

**T**he Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) is working to find response measures, including possible vaccinations to curb the spread of the avian influenza (AI) outbreak.

The severe strain of the new avian flu outbreak has negatively impacted the poultry industry, leaving South Africa facing possible chicken and egg shortages. Currently, there are two main AI subtypes of concern, namely H5N1 and H7N6.

AI viruses of both strains exist in low pathogenic (LPAI) and highly pathogenic (HPAI) forms. LPAI subtypes mostly lead to a local infection of the respiratory and digestive tracts, and causes

low-grade diseases, while HPAI viruses typically cause a more severe systemic infection that mostly leads to fatal outcomes. LPAI viruses of subtypes H5 and H7 may spontaneously mutate into HPAI forms, especially in chickens.

Dr Prudence Monareng from the Directorate: Animal Health explained that, "Current HPAI outbreaks in the country include the HPAI H5N1 virus, which was detected in November 2022 and has affected the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, and the HPAI H7N6 virus, which was first discovered in a chicken flock in Gauteng in September 2023. The H7N6 virus is currently affecting Gauteng severely with only a few outbreaks in Mpumalanga, Free State, Limpopo and North West".

According to Dr Monareng, the AI viruses naturally occur among wild birds such as the waterfowl, and migrating birds are the source of introduction. Once the virus finds its way into commercial poultry operations, it can spread rapidly through movements of birds.

Trudy Matlala is one of the poultry farmers who were reported to have been adversely affected by AI. Matlala described the outbreak as the final nail in the coffin for her business, as she had just recovered from the four months quarantine of Newcastle disease in chickens. "The outbreak has affected us badly, we used to have 10 000 chicks, now we have dropped to 1 000. Our only hope is that the department finds a vaccination," said Matlala.

Though she has been in the poultry industry for more than 17 years, she is concerned that the farming business is becoming unprofitable due to challenges like loadshedding, price of feeds, and prices of day-old chicks.

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### EDITORIAL TEAM

#### Chief Director

Linda Page : 083 460 4482 • LPage@dalrrd.gov.za

#### Director

Moses Rannitsheni : 063 623 3012 • Moses.Rannitsheni@dalrrd.gov.za

#### Editors

Lutamo Ramuedzisi : 071 878 9618 • Lutamo.Ramuedzisi@dalrrd.gov.za

Lerato Mofokeng : 012 312 8303 • LeratoMOF@dalrrd.gov.za

Eben Rademeyer : 012 312 8310 • EbenR@dalrrd.gov.za

Princy Ramaite : 012 312 8309 • PrincyR@dalrrd.gov.za

Ramokone Teffo : 012 312 8308 • RamokoneT@dalrrd.gov.za

#### Designer

Sibongile Ngcezu-Lingwazadzela: 082 640 2051 • SibongileN@dalrrd.gov.za

#### Production Manager

Dorethea Samaai : 083 441 9946 • Dorethea.Samaai@dalrrd.gov.za

#### Coodinator

Rony Moremi : 066 084 6192 • RincertM@dalrrd.gov.za

#### Reporters

Keitumetse Moticoe : 060 583 5288 • keitumetse.moticoe@dalrrd.gov.za

Mercia Smith : 060 973 3816 • MerciaS@dalrrd.gov.za

Samuel Kgatla : 066 084 6653 • SamuelK@dalrrd.gov.za

Mphahlela Rammutla : 067 278 2052 • Mphahlela.Rammutla@dalrrd.gov.za

Rony Moremi : 066 084 6192 • RincertM@dalrrd.gov.za

Rankepile Khomo : 071 351 4350 • Rankepile.Khomo@dalrrd.gov.za

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*Chickens from farms that have HPAI outbreaks may not be slaughtered for human consumption*

**T**he Directorate: Animal Health indicates that there are no HPAI vaccines registered in the country yet. “We have, however, consulted with both South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) and Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947 (Act No. 36 of 1947) regarding the registration of vaccines.

Currently, there are consultations with the industry about vaccination as a possible option to decrease the effects of the outbreak,” explained Dr Monareng.

In South Africa, AI of any subtype is a controlled animal disease in terms of the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No. 35 of 1984). Any suspected or confirmed case of AI of any subtype must be reported immediately to the responsible state veterinarian in terms of the Animal Diseases Act.

DALRRD Directorate: Animal Health confirms that consumers of poultry meat have no reason to be concerned because the HPAI virus that is currently causing outbreaks in the country does not affect humans. Chickens from farms that have HPAI outbreaks may, however, not be slaughtered for human consumption. All poultry meat on the shelves has undergone meat inspections at abattoirs and passed fit for human consumption. Therefore, there is no risk in consuming chicken meat that has been passed fit for human consumption.

Regarding eggs, the directorate adds that infected farms are placed under quarantine and eggs cannot be moved off the premises for human consumption, unless they are pasteurised to inactivate the virus.

#### **How can farmers prevent the spread of AI onto their farms?**

All poultry farmers are encouraged to implement the following biosecurity measures:

- Prevent contact with wild birds by keeping chickens away from areas that are visited by wild birds;

- Do not provide water and food in a way that may attract wild birds, rather feed your own birds under cover or inside a confined structure;
- Control the access of people and equipment to poultry houses;
- Maintain proper disinfection of the property, poultry houses and equipment;
- Avoid the introduction of birds of unknown disease status into your flock(s). Everyone is urged to purchase poultry and other birds only from trustworthy sources and to insist on a health declaration from the farm of origin;
- Keep the stocking density as low as possible. Do not keep high numbers of chickens in small areas;
- Report illness and deaths of birds to your responsible state or private veterinarian;
- Dispose of manure and dead birds in a safe manner, do not feed these to livestock, lions or crocodiles.



*Infected farms are placed under quarantine and eggs cannot be moved off the premises for human consumption, unless pasteurised to inactivate the virus*

## DALRRD PROVIDES ONGOING SUPPORT TO WORLD FOOD DAY LEGACY PROJECTS

Rony Moremi



Incubators in production, even during loadshedding



Day-old indigenous chicks

**W**hen the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) officials arrived at the Kayikayi Enterprise in Meyerton there was loadshedding in the area, but incubators and hatchers were in operation—thanks to the solar panel donated by the DALRRD.

Kayikayi Enterprise is one of the World Food Day legacy projects that were selected for continued and sustained support by the department. The concept of legacy projects was adopted by Minister Thoko Didiza in 2019 with the aim of supporting projects in the province that hosts World Food Day for three consecutive years. The adoption of legacy projects was a move from spending on consumables to providing support in the form of agricultural inputs, infrastructure and equipment required by the projects.

As one of the World Food Day legacy projects in Gauteng, the Kayikayi enterprise received two 1 000 piece-hatchers and an incubator, 10 infrared brooder kits, 100 carton chick transporters, two 1 500 W inverters with 24 V batteries and a fence from the department. The department also installed four Seraphim PV 72 Cell 330 W solar panels for the enterprise. Before the department provided support, Kayikayi had indigenous chicken

houses, an incubator and hatcher with a capacity of 50 eggs per week. There was no fence around the farm.

Inspired by his parents who are both farmers, Yamkelwa Dlayedwa started farming with indigenous chickens in 2021. Yamkelwa's parents are farming with livestock and maize in the Eastern Cape. "Farming has always been a part of my life, I always helped my parents at their farms," commented Yamkelwa. He co-manages the farm with Mbuyiselo Mendela. Yamkelwa is more involved with the marketing side of the business while Mbuyiselo is more hands-on, on the farm. They buy indigenous eggs and incubate them to produce indigenous chickens such as Sussex, Lohmann Brown and Potch koekkoek. The enterprise then sells the chickens at flea markets and townships such as Sicelo and Palm Ridge.

Mbuyiselo said that although they had solar panels, they experienced challenges during long hours of loadshedding because incubators did not work optimally, which consequently lead to deformities in some chicks. He said stock theft was also giving them sleepless nights as thieves once broke in and stole 50 sheep. However, this did not break their spirits, "I believe that anything you do with love does not become a challenge," proclaimed Yamkelwa.

## SITHANDAZILE IS PROUD TO CONTRIBUTE TO FOOD SECURITY—WORLD FOOD DAY LEGACY PROJECT

Mercia Smith



*She plants three different cultivars of spinach. All of her produce is sold to different branches of Spar*

“I am living my dream, my green dream, to see green plants grow, to feel that I can make a contribution to food security,” says Ms Sithandazile Mpofu, who produces vegetables.

Farming on a 2 ha farm in the De Deur District, Sedibeng Municipality, Sithandazile produces mainly spinach, kale, parsley, coriander, tomatoes and cabbage, which she sells to the local retail outlets. Originally a statistician by profession, she always dreamt of pursuing her passion for farming. She spends her days applying mathematical and statistical theories, collecting and organising data to provide usable information.

In 2012, she finally got the courage to pack up her home in the city and, together with her husband and their four children, moved to Mpofu Farm.

However, it was only in 2015 that she started to farm with vegetables. Prior to 2015, she had tried her hand at chicken and goat farming, however, theft became a serious challenge in the area. The situation became so dire that 320 chickens were stolen in just one night, and in May this year, 24 goats were stolen, she says.

When Sithandazile started farming, there were two tunnels that were dilapidated owing to poor workmanship, there was also



*Another hectare being prepared to get a shade net. Sithandazile is financing this with her own money.*

a good sprinkler and drip irrigation system and four water tanks, each containing 5 000 l of water from a borehole.

Through the World Food Day Legacy Projects Scheme, two high greenhouse tunnels were built, and a four-way drip irrigation system was installed. Mulching plastic flooring was also supplied for each tunnel.

A mainline pipe was installed from the water tanks to two new 5 000 l water tanks next to the tunnels, with two pumps in a galvanised steel case.

*Cont.*

Several bags of fertilisers, planting bags and trellising hooks for each tunnel were also given to Sithandazile.

Currently, there are four permanent workers employed at the farm, and when harvesting takes place, seasonal workers are employed. All the produce is sold to several Spar shops in the area.

“Farming always has challenges, and the last cold fronts were a good example of that. The vegetables should have shown vigorous growth by this time of the year, but I can see that they are struggling,” Sithandazile said.

“If only I had transport to take my produce to Spar, my profit margin would be so much higher. But to wake up every day and have the joy of seeing a new crop emerge is what I dreamt of,” she concluded.



*The new 4 metre high greenhouse tunnels. Here she has planted spinach.*



*Tomatoes have been planted in this greenhouse tunnel*



*Sithandazile in one of the new 4 m high greenhouse tunnels.*

## INJABULO THWALA SERVICES—WHERE VEGETABLE PRODUCTION CONTINUES THROUGH ALL SEASONS

Rony Moremi

**N**ot even harsh cold winter days could stop vegetable production at Injabulo Thwala Services in the Sedibeng District Municipality, Gauteng. With five greenhouse tunnels, Faith Ncube continues to supply fresh vegetables to her clients all year round owing to the two greenhouse tunnels with a drip irrigation system. These were donated by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD).

“There is never a time when I am not producing anything on the farm, I am able to produce vegetables and herbs in the greenhouse tunnels, even during winter. Without the greenhouse tunnels, vegetables would not be able to survive the cold,” said Faith. She produces spinach, lettuce, mustard spinach, green peppers, spring onions, tomatoes, celery and herbs such as parsley and coriander. She, however, says she is not limited to producing only these vegetables but also produces according to her clients’ needs. Her clients are the Johannesburg Fresh Produce Market and two local Pick n Pay stores.

Injabulo Thwala Services is one of the World Food Day legacy projects in Sedibeng District Municipality, Gauteng. The World Food Day legacy projects concept was adopted by the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Thoko Didiya, in 2019 as a way of providing support to the hosting district as part of the District Development Model for three consecutive years.



The two 5 000 ℓ tanks with pumps were donated by DALRRD



Faith Ncube in the greenhouse tunnel that ensures continuous production of fresh vegetables, even in winter

Before support from the department, Injabulo Thwala Services had a 45 000 ℓ reservoir, two boreholes and a sprinkler irrigation system. The department donated two greenhouses with a low-pressure drip irrigation system, two 5 000 ℓ tanks with pumps, seedlings, fertilisers and planting bags.

After being in the corporate space for 13 years, Faith decided that it was time to spend time at the farm she bought while she was still working. She always had a dream of working on her own farm. Njabulo Jali, agricultural advisor at the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development who has been working with Faith since 2019, describes her as one of the most persistent farmers she has ever worked with. “Sometimes when I arrive on her farm, I find she has already tried other methods on her own and they work out,” says Njabulo.

Since implementation of the initiative in 2019, there have been World Food Day legacy projects in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng, and this year, they will also be implemented in KwaZulu-Natal during the World Food Day commemoration on 16 October.

## LAND REFORM CONTINUES TO SUPPORT FARMERS IN MOGALE CITY

Rankepile Khomo



*Mr Sikhosana's cattle dotting the field that was recently harvested*

**F**rom an early age, Mr Wandile Sikhosana was captivated by how his father, a subsistence farmer, used to experiment with farming. Today, as a budding farmer, Mr Sikhosana's willingness to learn and get down to hard work has paid off handsomely.

Black farmers have mostly been associated with subsistence farming: however, the entity of Mr Sikhosana, director and founder of Malusi Farms (PTY) Ltd, is focused strictly on penetrating and participating in the whole agriculture value chain, which was previously and is still dominated by white farmers.

Thanks to the government's commitment to implement the Land Redistribution Programme that seeks to address historical exclusion, and insufficient participation in the agrarian economy, most black farmers like Mr Sikhosana have been encouraged by these interventions. This gave him the confidence to apply for a farm from the department.

In 2011, through the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS), the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) acquired and allocated a farm to him through a 30-year lease agreement to utilise the remaining ex-

tent of portions 15, 59 and 63 of Kaalfontein Farm, which make up a combined 546,9842 hectares, at a cost of more than R5 million.

The farm is situated in the Mogale City Local Municipality and since receiving it, he has been striving to get it to the top of the agricultural business. Mr Sikhosana's core commodity is live-stock, and he has also ventured into crop farming. Currently, he has 143 cattle on the farm, and has already harvested 210 hectares of yellow and white maize, grains and soya.

The next planting season is expected to be between November and January, and the 58-year-old already has plans lined up to never miss the opportunity.

"I sell my livestock and grain crop production in the formal market, and I also supply 100 tons of maize to NWK and Ingrained. However, some of it I use to produce animal feed for my cattle," he said.

Mr Sikhosana advised that because many farmers were facing challenges, they should learn to diversify, and have other businesses to sustain the farm.

*Cont.*

“My first few months on the farm were difficult, but I was glad that I was not alone. The department supported our entity with land, inputs, seeds, fertilisers, state veterinary services and a tractor, that is why I want to thank them for being there for us,” he said.

Furthermore, Mr Sikhosana said that he was glad that he had a very good working relationship with other neighbouring land reform beneficiaries in the area, and together with other white farmers, they had formed a business partnership to also deal with stock theft and veld fires.

He cites three factors that helped him to scale up in the business: consistency in providing products for buyers, even if it requires sourcing from fellow farmers; saving profits from every harvest; and learning about which crops to grow and who to sell them to.

Malusi Farms currently employs two permanent staff on the farm, and 10 seasonal workers.

Since its inception, land reform has been impactful in breaking down the patterns of land ownership and, to date, government has managed to acquire five million hectares of land and the acquisition of this land, and many in other districts, will go a long way to ensure that agriculture contributes significantly to economic growth and food security.



*Mr Sikhosana standing at the maize that he planted*



*The tractor that was allocated to Mr Sikhosana by DALRRD*

## ROLLOUT OF "KNOW THE STATUS OF YOUR LAND CLAIM" IN THABO MOFUTSANYANA

Keitumetse Moticoe



Roadshow at Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality

The Office of the Regional Land Claims Commission in the Free State has commenced the roll-out of the "Know the Status of Your Land Claim" Campaign, which aims to update and inform claimants about the status of their land claims that were lodged across the country during the initial opening of the process which closed in 1998 and re-opened in 2014.

The roll-out forms part of the national campaign of the commission to inform and engage beneficiaries on the progress it has made in the processing of land claims. The roll-out is underway in all nine provinces and those who lodged their claims are encouraged to submit enquiries on their status, in particular those that were lodged during the initial process as the commission is aiming to finalise the outstanding claims first. Land claims lodged during the second phase in 2014 cannot be processed until the old order claims are finalised, this is according to a Constitutional Court judgment known as the Lamosa Judgement.

The first leg of the roadshow for the Free State commenced in Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality and will soon be rolled out across the remaining four districts in the province.

During the roadshow in Phumelela Local Municipality, Mr Joseph Skhosana said that the roadshow restored his hope of their claims being processed someday. "We are happy that the information came to us because we have been hungry to get clarity on the claims, and that those lodged from 2014 are still on hold because of the court. So, this initiative has given us hope and now we know why the commission has been quiet," he said.

Meanwhile, the Acting Chief Director for the Regional Land Claims Commission in the Free State, Mr Lengane Bogatsu in his engagement with the community of QwaQwa within the Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality, gave a status update on the claims in the province. He said, "The province had received 3 083 claims lodged between 1994 and 1998 by the deadline of

31 December 1998, referred to as the old order claims. To date, 3 075 claims have been settled, and there are currently eight outstanding claims."

The roadshow clarified that in 2014 the president signed into law legislation that brought about the re-opening of the process to lodge new land claims for those who missed the deadline of 31 December 1998, with the deadline of 30 June 2019. The process was, however, suspended following a Constitutional Court judgement.

The Constitutional Court in March 2019 confirmed that the commission could not process the new order claims, lodged between 2014 and 2016 until Parliament has introduced new legislation, or the commission has settled all the outstanding old order claims that were lodged before the cut-off date of December 1998. The new order claims lodged between 1 July 2014 and 27 July 2016 are validly lodged, however, they cannot be processed currently.

Bogatsu cautioned that: "We further want to inform communities that the land claim process is a free government service, you do not pay anyone, including officials of the state or Commission on Restitution of Land Rights."



Community members receiving their Lamosa Judgement letters at the roadshow.

## DEPUTY MINISTER SKWATSHA REPRESENTS SA AT SARA EXHIBITION IN ABIDJAN

Samuel Kgatla



Deputy Minister Mcebisi Skwatsha with farmers and DALRRD officials who went to Ivory Coast for SARA

The Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Mr Mcebisi Skwatsha, represented South Africa during the high-level panel discussion of the sixth International Exhibition of Agriculture and Animal Resources (SARA) held at the Abidjan Exhibition Centre in the Ivory Coast on 29 September 2023. The exhibition was attended by more than 300 000 delegates from all over the world. The theme of the exhibition was: “African agriculture facing the challenges of internal and external shocks: Structural innovations to improve the agricultural sectors and guarantee the food sovereignty of our countries?”

The exhibition brought together national, regional, and international stakeholders in agriculture and all its sub-sectors for 10 days, from 29 September to 8 October. The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD)

took farmers from almost all the provinces to the mega exhibition to promote local products. SARA 2023 focused on agritech, sovereignty and food security in Africa. The gathering was also aimed at providing a platform for promoting livestock breeding, fishing, forestry, the agri-food industry and raising awareness of the agricultural production capacities and trade of the sub-region with the rest of the world.

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development in Ivory Coast, Mr Kobenan Kouassi Adjoumani, told delegates that SARA was positioning itself as a true agricultural showcase of the sub-region, which essentially aims to promote agricultural production.

Under the sub-theme: “Major Agricultural Policies Facing Global Shocks: Challenges and Successes”, the deputy minister told delegates that South Africa is happy to be part of the

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Deputy Minister Mcebisi Skwatsha during the SARA Exhibition in Ivory Coast

SARA 2023, adding that South African policies and programmes dealing with global shocks affecting food production and food security are inspired by Climate Smart Agriculture technologies and approaches. “South Africa would like to implore all of us to adopt equivalent or similar Climate Smart Agriculture approaches and technologies to transform the agricultural sector. Climate Smart Agriculture has the potential to help reduce food loss and wastage, enhance the resilience of people, food, and agricultural production systems, and reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions,” he concluded.



Mr Winston Makabanyane interacting with entrepreneurs from African countries during the B2B session at SARA

## SA FARMERS BENEFIT FROM B2B AT SARA EXHIBITION

Samuel Kgatla



*Ms Alimatou Diagne one of the farmers from Senegal showing off her biltong products*



*Farmers who participated in SARA 2023*

South African farmers have benefited substantially from business-to-business (B2B) sessions at the SARA Exhibition that were organised by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) with the support of South Africa's embassy in the Ivory Coast. These B2B sessions served to strengthen business relationships between farmers and allowed for networking opportunities with their counterparts from other parts of the continent.

The local farmers indicated that they were interested in finding market opportunities in West Africa, and the session presented them with a platform to share knowledge and to learn from others in the industry.

Ms Laley Juanita, a farmer from Benin, said that she is looking forward to continuous engagements with South African farmers now that they have exchanged contact details. "The session was very interesting, and we are enthusiastic to collaborate with them in the future. We have learnt that there are so many products and opportunities in South Africa, and we can benefit from that," she said.

Ms Nolundi Msengana, a maize and livestock farmer from the Vaal Triangle in Gauteng said that they met with potential business people who are willing to trade with them. "We have discovered that they do not produce pork in the Ivory Coast. There is also an opportunity to partner with them through the Development Bank of Africa because they have funds that are put aside for that. They also have approximately 176 000 ha of land that are available for farming. We need to do things accordingly through our embassy," she said.

Mr Winston Makabanyane, DALRRD Director: Africa Trade Promotions assured farmers that he would look into ways to assist them to sell their products. "There are a lot of opportunities in Africa, and farmers must not shy away from investing in the western regions of Africa. We need to do business and trade with other African countries on the continent. We must have diversification in business in Africa. I am happy that these farmers heeded a call to come to Abidjan on our first mission. There is a possibility for investment in West Africa and we must grab it," he said.

He also encouraged farmers to ensure that they are registered on the DALRRD database for farmers in South Africa.