



PEO

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FROM THE MINISTER'S DESK

yield results. The vaccination rollout is now gaining momentum across multiple provinces, with increasing coverage and improved coordination on the ground. What was not long ago a system under severe strain, is steadily becoming more structured, more responsive, and more effective.

This progress is not accidental. It is the result of sustained effort from officials across the department; from those managing vaccine logistics and deployment to those strengthening surveillance, coordinating with provinces, engaging stakeholders, and supporting farmers under pressure. It is also a reflection of the growing alignment between Government and industry, which remains essential if we are to succeed.

Importantly, the strategy we are implementing is not simply about managing the current outbreak. It is about fundamentally changing how South Africa approaches animal health and biosecurity. We are moving away from a reactive model towards one that actively manages risk through vaccination, traceability, surveillance and coordination. This is not business as usual. It is a new foundation for the sector, one that is aligned with international standards and designed to restore confidence in our livestock system over the long term.

A significant step in this regard was the signing of a Declaration of Intent between South Africa and Germany. This agreement provides a framework for deeper cooperation in areas such as FMD prevention, vaccination technologies, surveillance systems and diagnostic tools. It reflects a shared commitment to strengthening biosecurity and advancing science-based approaches to animal health. Partnerships of this nature are crucial as we position South Africa within a global network of cooperation and expertise.



Colleagues,
As we move further into the year, we find ourselves in a position that is both demanding and encouraging. We remain firmly in the midst of the Foot and mouth disease crisis, and I want to be clear that the work ahead is far from over. At the same time, there are growing signs that our collective efforts are beginning to gain traction.

Over the past few months, the department, together with provinces, industry partners and farming communities, has continued to intensify our national response. What is becoming increasingly evident is that the shift in our approach is starting to

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Cont from pg 2.



From left: Kingson Chan, Diana Ang, Bartinah Ntomizodwa Radebe Netshitendzhe, Mecia Petersen and Johannes Mashaba

While FMD rightly commands much of our attention, it is equally important that we recognise and celebrate the progress being made across other areas of the department's work.

One such milestone is the successful opening of new export corridors. The arrival of South Africa's first official shipment of table grapes to the Philippines marks a significant achievement in our market diversification strategy. This milestone is the result of intensive and sustained technical engagement and cooperation, and it demonstrates what can be achieved through persistence, coordination and a clear strategic focus.

At the same time, the broader performance of the sector continues to provide encouragement. South African agriculture has recorded its strongest export performance since the COVID-19 period, with total agricultural exports reaching R268,7 billion in the fourth quarter of 2025. This growth – achieved despite global headwinds, tariff pressures and logistical constraints – speaks to the resilience and competitiveness of our producers, as well as the effectiveness of our efforts to diversify markets and reduce reliance on traditional trading partners.

These developments are not separate from our biosecurity efforts, they are directly linked. Market access depends on credibility. Trade depends on trust. And trust depends on our

ability to manage risk in a way that is consistent, transparent, and aligned with international standards. The work being done on FMD is therefore not only about containment, it is about safeguarding and expanding the opportunities that underpin the sector's growth.

Colleagues, the months ahead will continue to demand focus, resilience and teamwork. There will be setbacks, and there will be pressure. But there is also clear evidence that the work we are doing is beginning to make a difference.

We should draw strength from that progress, even as we remain fully aware of the rocky road still ahead.

I want to thank each of you for the commitment and determination you continue to show under challenging circumstances. Your work is not only helping to manage a national crisis, but also shaping a stronger, more resilient agricultural system for the future.

Together, we will see this through.

John Steenhuisen

Minister of Agriculture



Celebrating arrival of the first shipment of South African grapes to the Philippines in Manila



SWARTKOPFONTEIN VILLAGE FARMERS BRING CATTLE FOR FMD VACCINATION

Samuel Kgatla

Farmers in Swartkopfontein responded to a call to present their livestock for a mass vaccination campaign against Foot and mouth disease (FMD). Mr Wakile Nikani, a livestock farmer in Swartkopfontein who owns 17 cattle, expressed his appreciation for the department's visit to his area to vaccinate livestock. He said he was fortunate that his cattle have not been affected by FMD, but he still brought them for vaccination. "Prevention is better than cure, and I am pleased that the department is taking action to address the disease. We must unite as farmers and work together with Government," he said.

The vaccination drive was led by the Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen, alongside the MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Madoda Sambatha, on 7 April 2026 in the Ramotshere Moiloa Local Municipality.

They were joined by Botswana's Acting Minister of Agriculture, Mr Onneetse Ramogapi, highlighting the importance of cross-border collaboration. Swartkopfontein's location along the South Africa–Botswana border makes joint efforts essential as livestock movement between the two countries increases the risk of disease transmission.

The hardest-hit areas include the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality and the Bojanala Platinum District Municipality, prompting intensified vaccination efforts across the province.

The province has significantly accelerated its vaccination campaign as part of Minister Steenhuisen's

nationwide roll-out initiative. Hundreds of communal livestock were vaccinated during the recent drive in Swartkopfontein. Nationally, DoA has vaccinated more than 2,6 million cattle since February 2026, marking significant progress in efforts to contain the spread of the disease.

MEC Sambatha reiterated the department's commitment to working closely with farmers to curb the spread of FMD and safeguard the livestock industry. He further urged farmers to promptly report any challenges they encounter to the department, enabling timely support and appropriate interventions to be implemented.

Acting Minister Ramogapi pointed out that FMD does not only affect South Africa, but both countries. "An animal is an animal and does not need a passport to cross the border. It will just cross whenever it wants to. It is crucial for both countries to work together to combat FMD," he said.

Minister Steenhuisen stated that the department is collaborating closely with its regional counterparts in the Southern African region to develop a unified approach to the FMD outbreak. "We continue to work with Botswana and must foster regional cooperation by sharing knowledge and experiences with our neighbouring country. We are committed to combating FMD, and North West is a province that gets things done. I want to thank all state and private veterinarians who are conducting vaccinations on the ground. We are going to prioritise the issue of border fencing and tighten controls," he said.



Minister John Steenhuisen checking the cattle during the FMD vaccination drive in Swartkopfontein



State vets from North West Department of Agriculture and Rural Development getting ready to vaccinate cattle during the FMD vaccination drive



State veterinarian from NWDARD, Dan Tshabalala, vaccinating cattle during the vaccination campaign at Swartkopfontein



MINISTER AND MEC ENGAGE WITH NORTH WEST LIVESTOCK FARMERS

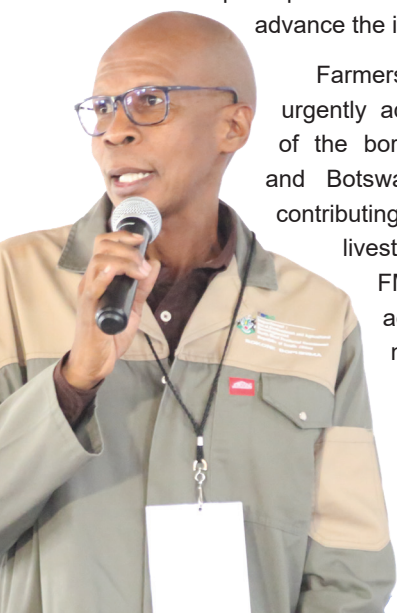
Samuel Kgatla



Livestock farmers of Ramotshere Moiloa Local Municipality during the FMD engagement in North West

The Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen, together with the North West MEC of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Madoda Sambatha, engaged livestock farmers in Swartkopfontein Village during the Foot and mouth disease (FMD) vaccination drive and stakeholder engagement session in North West. This engagement formed part of the programme of activities linked to the FMD vaccination rollout held in the village on 7 April 2026. Key industry stakeholders, including Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS) and the African Farmers' Association of South Africa (AFASA), also participated in these discussions to represent and advance the interests of their members.

Farmers appealed to the department to urgently address the deteriorating condition of the border fence between South Africa and Botswana, citing it as a key factor contributing to the uncontrolled movement of livestock and the continued spread of FMD. They also raised a range of additional concerns, including poor management of farming areas, the lack of enforcement and penalties for FMD transgressors and a shortage of breeding bulls. These livestock farmers further highlighted challenges such as water scarcity, limited grazing



Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi responding to the questions raised by livestock farmers of Swartkopfontein area

land, inadequate movement control measures and the lack of dams. Issues related to LandCare and broader agricultural support were also cited as ongoing constraints affecting productivity and sustainability.

In response to the concerns raised, MEC Sambatha told farmers that the provincial department has taken note of their issues and will work towards providing the necessary support. He emphasised that the department remains open to engagement and is committed to listening to farmers to ensure their challenges are effectively addressed.

Minister Steenhuisen assured farmers that the department will prioritise addressing the challenges surrounding the border fence, while acknowledging that resolving the issue will take time. "I understand the concerns raised by farmers, particularly those living close to the borders, regarding the condition of the fence. We need to strengthen control measures to safeguard our livestock," he said.

He emphasised the crucial role livestock plays in communities such as Swartkopfontein, noting that animals hold both cultural and economic value. "Livestock is the backbone of communities like Swartkopfontein. The trading of animals sustains many households, putting food on the table and helping families pay school fees," he added.

Both AFASA and RMIS have pledged to work closely with the department to support farmers and curb the spread of FMD across the country.



Swartkopfontein farmers pledged to work with DoA to curb the FMD



MINISTER STEENHUISEN WITNESSES VACCINATION OF CATTLE IN LIMPOPO

Samuel Kgatla

The campaign to free South Africa from the FMD crisis currently affecting all provinces intensified with mass vaccination in Limpopo following similar initiatives in KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and Gauteng.

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, witnessed the mass vaccination of 67 cattle at ZZ2 Kareebosch Farm outside Polokwane. This marked the fourth nationwide vaccination rollout led by the minister as the department intensifies its campaign to curb the spread of Foot and mouth disease (FMD) and protect farmers. He was accompanied by the Limpopo MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Ms Nakedi Kekana. Government continues to scale up efforts to contain the disease, with vaccination campaigns gaining momentum across the country. DoA is funding all the FMD vaccines to protect the agricultural sector and ensure all livestock herds are safeguarded.

Thousands of cattle have already been vaccinated in the fight against FMD across the provinces. The 67 cattle at ZZ2 Kareebosch Farm tested positive in February and the farmer immediately alerted the department. Following this, provincial veterinary services worked closely with the farmer to contain the outbreak and prevent further spread. All the animals remain



Minister John Steenhuisen observing the vaccination of cattle at ZZ2 Kareebosch Farm in Limpopo

alive, demonstrating that prioritising animal healthcare is crucial and reinforcing the message that the fight against FMD can be won if farmers act swiftly and responsibly.

Dr Tommie Van Zyl, Chief Executive Officer of ZZ2 Farms, emphasised the importance of collaboration between stakeholders and Government to curb the spread of FMD. "We are very pleased to see the experts coming together to fight FMD. Everyone is being mobilised to find solutions, and while we have limited experience with FMD, it is encouraging to see veterinarians actively working on our farms. We understand that vaccination is essential and that collaboration is key to solving this challenge. Even the largest operations do not have the resources to tackle this disease alone," he said.

Minister Steenhuisen noted that the lack of a proper border fence between South Africa and Zimbabwe as well as damaged redline fences are contributing to the spread of FMD in Limpopo. "We are waiting for the arrival of the next shipment of millions of vaccines from Biogénesis Bagó and Dollvet. This will help us reach our target of vaccinating 80% of the national herd by December this year. I would like to thank all our veterinarians on the frontline in the fight against FMD. Let us continue working together to overcome this challenge," he said.



Minister John Steenhuisen witnessed the vaccination of cattle in Limpopo



GAUTENG VACCINATES AGAINST FMD TO PROTECT RED MEAT AND MILK SECTORS



From the left: Mr Khume Ramulifho, HOD for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Gauteng, Minister John Steenhuisen and MEC Vuyiswa Ramokgopa for the Gauteng Economic Development, Agriculture, and Rural Development

Mercia Smith

“The Foot and mouth disease vaccine will not be charged to farmers; therefore, please, farmers present, don't pay for the vaccine. To enable us to administer vaccinations as soon as possible, kindly open your farms,” Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen said.

He was speaking at FMD vaccination campaign in Ekurhuleni, Gauteng, where 200 cows were vaccinated as part of the nationwide mass vaccination campaign. The campaign was led by the Gauteng MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Ms Vuyiswa Ramokgopa, and Minister Steenhuisen.

Provincial and national agriculture authorities were supporting this vaccination campaign and collaborating closely with local communities to guarantee a seamless rollout. The day began at Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve with a meeting with stakeholders and local farmers, where Minister Steenhuisen urged them not to believe misinformation about farmers having to pay up to R300 for the vaccine.

According to MEC Ramokgopa, the vaccination rollout in the Magagula Heights communal area was significant as this was the location where Gauteng recorded its first FMD outbreak in April last year. As of early March 2026, the FMD outbreak in Gauteng has reached a critical stage. More than 297 000 animals are affected across communal, dairy and commercial operations. Dr Wynton Rabolao, chief director for Veterinary Services in Gauteng, said outbreaks are concentrated in Germiston, Randfontein and the City of Tshwane.

FMD in communal areas presents major challenges due to shared grazing and watering points, lack of fencing and high animal mobility. Limited knowledge among farmers regarding disease risk is another challenge. These factors facilitate the rapid spread of the disease and complicate movement control. “In Gauteng, containment measures for Foot and mouth disease are now fully implemented with law enforcement agencies, involving the South African Police Service, deployed to help curb any further spread of the illness. They are providing support by setting up road checkpoints and overseeing vehicle disinfection,” MEC Ramokgopa said.

Minister Steenhuisen said Biogénesis Bagó, an FMD vaccine from Argentina was used in the Magagula Heights vaccination drive. “It is a powerful vaccine showing good results in KwaZulu-Natal and is part of the batch of one million vaccines that arrived in South Africa on 21 February 2026,” he said.

The aim is to vaccinate 80% of the national herd by December and reduce the outbreaks by 70%.



Foot and mouth disease spread in communal kraals is a major driver of the recent outbreaks



PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE ENGAGES WITH FMD AFFECTED FARMERS



The Portfolio Committee Members on Agriculture conducted an FMD oversight visit to Free State



Farmers of Ngwathe Local Municipality during their FMD engagement with Portfolio Committee on Agriculture in Parys

Samuel Kgatla

The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture recently engaged with farmers affected by Foot and mouth disease (FMD) to assess the impact of the outbreak, evaluate government response measures, and identify urgent interventions needed to support the agricultural sector.

Farmers from Metsimaholo, Moqhaka and Ngwathe local municipalities in Free State raised their concerns with the committee members from 17 to 19 March 2026 during their oversight visit to the province. The committee members wanted to find out whether farmers had received FMD vaccines and better understand the challenges they are facing during this difficult period.

Free State has been identified as the epicentre of the FMD outbreak due to the high number of recorded cases in this province. During the engagement with the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, farmers raised several crucial concerns affecting their operations and livelihoods. These included delays in vaccine distribution, misinformation about FMD, limited access to veterinary support, insufficient grazing land, and inadequate assistance from local municipalities. Farmers also highlighted the severe economic strain caused by livestock movement restrictions, which have disrupted their ability to trade and sustain their businesses.

In response to some of the questions, Dr Mpho Maja, Director: Animal Health from DoA said the department is busy with the nationwide FMD vaccine rollout and they are prioritising dairy farms while waiting for more supply. She stressed that controlling the disease is possible, but it requires cooperation from all stakeholders and mentioned that State Veterinarians are available nationwide to support affected farmers.

Many farmers are pleading with Government to provide compensation to those who have lost cattle because of the FMD outbreak. They emphasised that the loss of livestock has had a devastating impact on their livelihoods, particularly for small-scale and emerging farmers who depend heavily on cattle for both income and food security. Without urgent financial relief and targeted support, farmers warned that their ability to recover and continue farming operations remains under serious threat.

The committee chairperson, Ms Dina Pule, praised farmers for sharing their experiences and said the committee will compile a report with recommendations to Parliament. She called for greater awareness of FMD, noted concerns about compensation to farmers affected by FMD and insufficient grazing land, and acknowledged that both national and provincial departments are making efforts to manage the outbreak. "The department must increase awareness about the FMD. We will talk with the department regarding the issue of insufficient grazing land. The Department of Agriculture (DoA) has done their best to manage the FMD and the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is trying by all means," she said.

Mr Wynn Dedwith from Wynn-With Milk Farm said the spread of FMD is worsened by people not understanding the protocols, leading to excessive livestock movement, and urged the government to ensure these rules are properly implemented. The farm is in the Parys/Vrededorf region where new confirmed outbreaks have been reported. They produce fresh Holstein milk and a range of dairy products including milk, drinking yoghurt, cream, buttermilk and Amasi.



STATUTORY LEVIES SUPPORT INDUSTRY TRANSFORMATION AND SUSTAINABILITY



Minister John Steenhuisen met with leaders of organisations representing the horticulture sector

Mercia Smith

Transformation advancements, the effective use of statutory levies, and efforts towards inclusivity in agriculture were the key points in an engagement held with Minister Steenhuisen with the focus on the horticultural sector. This interactive session took place in Paarl, Western Cape.

The meeting provided a strategic platform for industry leaders, government representatives and other key players to share insights, address challenges and align on future priorities that will benefit the sector.

“It is important for me to hear directly from the sectors that drive our agricultural economy, particularly at a time when growth opportunities are significant, but the challenges we face are real,” Minister Steenhuisen said.

Because of the labour intensiveness of the horticultural sector, it is one of the largest employers in agriculture. Growth in agriculture translates directly into jobs, on farms and along the entire value chain. A typical horticulture value chain offers not only low-skill job opportunities in most segments, but also occupations requiring medium to high skills; from the packhouse and logistics to research, processing and export services. “In

many rural towns, horticulture is the economic heartbeat of the economy,” he said.

The National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) occupies a unique and strategically important position within the agricultural policy landscape. Through the NAMC, the statutory levy system is one of the most effective tools available for supporting industry development.

According to Minister Steenhuisen, these levies provide a stable funding mechanism that enables industries to invest in research and market development.

“One example that illustrates the practical impact of these levies comes from the deciduous fruit industry,” he said. Through the fruit fly levy, FruitFly Africa (FFA) has been able to implement comprehensive area-wide pest management programmes. It includes continuing pest monitoring, sterile insect releases and targeted aerial baiting programmes.

The result is strengthening South Africa’s phytosanitary credibility in export markets. “International buyers have the confidence that our fruit meets the highest standards,” Minister Steenhuisen said.



MaU SAUCES ADD FLAVOUR TO KIMBERLEY'S FAVOURITE MEALS

Rony Moremi



"Through agro-processing, women can create sustainable income for their families"

Eunice Motsamai from Ipopeng in Kimberley has turned her passion for cooking into a growing agro-processing enterprise. Her business, MaU Sauces, is a local favourite known for its distinctive flavours.

"The sauces are made with love and are free from preservatives," said Eunice proudly. MaU Sauces offers a range that includes hot chilli, sweet chilli and the popular slap chips sauce, popularly known as Bumbum sauce around the Ipopeng Township. The Bumbum sauce is particularly popular with slap chips lovers and has earned a loyal following among customers who enjoy it as a dip and a topping for snacks.

Eunice has a strong foundation in food safety and hygiene. She has received training in food handling and infection control, skills that are essential in maintaining high standards within a food-processing environment.

To develop her business, Eunice applied for funding through the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) to acquire agro-processing equipment such as a gas stove, blender and packaging materials. According to her Extension Officer, Tsholofelo Tongwane from the Northern Cape Department of

Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform, Eunice will also participate in agro-processing workshops organised by the department.

"Eunice initially sold her sauces to neighbours and members of her church," said Tongwane. "After attending farmers' market days, her customer base grew significantly, with other farmers also purchasing her products."

She also receives support from her daughter, who helps with branding and presentation. She sells her sauces at local markets, hospitals and a nearby shopping complex. Her business has a loyal customer base who place orders in advance.

Onicca Koena Cholo from the Department of Agriculture's Directorate: Gender Mainstreaming informed Eunice about food labelling so that she can follow the Agricultural Product Standards Act, 1990 (Act No. 119 of 1990) in terms of food safety.

"I want to train other women to make sauces so they can generate income for their households," she says. What began as a means to provide for her family has become a source of inspiration for others. Eunice now encourages unemployed women to explore agro-processing as a sustainable income generating opportunity.



CAPA'S MPUMALANGA VISIT GIVES RURAL WOMEN FARMERS A POWERFUL VOICE

Matsepo Malatswane



Deputy Minister Capa encouraging girls at Maqhawe Secondary School to explore agriculture



A poultry farmer at Lungile Poultry Farmer showcasing her operation, demonstrating how small-scale farming supports local economies

Deputy Minister Nokuzola Capa brought more than just a message of support to Ga-Morwe in the Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality: she brought visibility, recognition and renewed energy to women shaping the future of agriculture in Mpumalanga. Marking International Women's Day, the outreach programme became a dynamic exchange between Government and community, with rural women farmers taking centre stage.

Across dusty fields and small farming plots, women shared stories of resilience, juggling crop production, livestock care and poultry farming while supporting their families and supplying local markets. These are not just small operations; they are the backbone of local food systems. The deputy minister listened closely as farmers described daily challenges, from limited resources to difficulties accessing larger markets, while government officials outlined opportunities for training, funding and technical support to help these businesses thrive.

The visit also inspired the next generation. At Ikgangeng Secondary School and Maqhawe Secondary School, classrooms became spaces of possibility. Young learners, especially girls, were encouraged to see agriculture not just as a tradition, but as a dynamic career filled with innovation, entrepreneurship and impact. One student shared, "I didn't know agriculture had so many career opportunities. I always thought it was just farming, but now I see I can study and become an agricultural scientist or even run my own business."

Real-life success stories underscored this message. Visits to Lungile Poultry Farm and Remmogo Primary Cooperative showcased how determination, combined with the right support, can turn modest beginnings into sustainable enterprises. One farmer explained, "With more training and equipment, I know I can produce more and supply bigger markets." Members of the cooperative added, "Working together has helped us grow, but we still need support to scale up. If we can access better infrastructure and funding, we can take this business to another level."

For many farmers, the visit was also a rare opportunity to speak directly to leadership. "Our biggest challenge is funding and access to bigger markets. If we can get support with that, our farms can expand, and we can employ more people from the community," said one farmer.

Being more than just an event, the Ga-Morwe outreach highlighted that meaningful change begins with listening, supporting and investing in communities. Women remain at the heart of South Africa's agricultural landscape, and initiatives like this reaffirm a simple but powerful truth: when women in rural areas succeed, entire communities rise with them. The visit ultimately became a platform for real voices of farmers, learners and community members, each sharing their experiences, challenges and aspirations. Their message was clear: with the right support, rural women and young people can transform agriculture and build stronger, more sustainable communities.

