



MINISTER
AGRICULTURE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X250, Pretoria, 0001; 20 Steve Biko Street, Pretoria, 0001
Tel.: 012 319 6000; Email: queries@nda.gov.za; Web: www.nda.gov.za

MEDIA STATEMENT

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A SOUTH-SOUTH FMD ERADICATION STRATEGIC ALLIANCE FORGED IN BRASILIA: SOUTH AFRICA TAPS INTO BRAZILIAN EXPERTISE

In a decisive move to reverse an unprecedented animal health challenge, the Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen has secured a strategic alliance with Brazil with the signing of a Memorandum of Intent and a comprehensive Action Plan that is designed to accelerate South Africa's fight against Foot and mouth disease (FMD).

Meeting with his Brazilian counterpart, Minister Andre Carlos Alves de Paula, Minister Steenhuisen welcomed their willingness to support South Africa in broader technical areas such as technical support with vaccination, post-vaccination monitoring, and field-based evidence generation.

Minister de Paula shared with Minister Steenhuisen how Brazil achieved recognition by the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) as a FMD free country without vaccination on 29 May 2025. This was a historic milestone which took the country 64 years of implementing policies, regulations and programmes to eradicate the disease. This status was achieved through a phased regionalisation and vaccination approach. Minister de Paulo encouraged Minister Steenhuisen to learn from Brazil by ensuring that government do not abdicate its responsibility to be at the centre of the fight against FMD as it is a notifiable disease and needs a regional approach.

Minister Steenhuisen shared with his Brazilian counterpart the ten-year strategy that South Africa is implementing to regain FMD-free status with vaccination. He implored the Brazilian experts on FMD to assess whether the strategy is adequate to control and eradicate the disease in the ten-year period.

“By aligning with a nation that has successfully eliminated the disease, South Africa aims to achieve FMD-free status with vaccination, transforming biosecurity from a trade barrier into a bridge for economic growth,” Minister Steenhuisen said.

The two Ministers have agreed that the adopted Action Plan 2026-2028 must be fully implemented to support the eradication of FMD in South Africa immediately. South Africa is going to dispatch animal health experts during the week of the 19th of May



2026 to visit Brazil. This team will engage in intensive knowledge exchange regarding the prevention and eradication of FMD. Following this visit, South Africa will host a seminar for all stakeholders and experts that will include the Brazilian delegation on animal health, research institute EMBRAPA and Brazilian livestock farmers. The purpose of the seminar is to share experiences, knowledge, strategies, policies, regulations and technologies used by Brazil in their 64 years fight against the disease. This delegation will be led by Minister de Paula.

After the FMD seminar, Brazil will be sending within three months FMD field experts and researchers to visit South Africa to join their counterparts in the field across the country to practically guide the implementation of measures to control and eradicate the disease. These interventions will also include the development of new protocols and regulations that governs public and private partnerships to eradicate the disease.

Both Brazil and South Africa face transboundary animal diseases (FMD and Avian Influenza), pests (fall armyworm and fruit fly), and the growing risk of climate-driven pathogen. “We need to start to be creative in our approach to overcome these barriers by considering establishing a Brazil–South Africa Biosecurity Corridor, with joint early-warning systems, harmonised risk assessment protocols, and mutual recognition of pest-free areas – for instance FMD-free zones with vaccination and compartmentalisation for HPAI,” Minister Steenhuisen said.

The two Ministers agreed to also addresses the current agriculture trade imbalance which is in favour of Brazil. While bilateral agricultural trade reached US\$1.55 billion in 2025. Of this, Brazil exported US\$1,24 billion to South Africa and South Africa in return exported US\$310 million worth of agriculture produce. Brazil agreed to expedite market access of South African apples in the next few weeks and after that citrus fruit before the end of the year.

“We can only be able to improve trade between our countries if we can commit to negotiating a simplified Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) equivalency arrangement for key product categories to reduce duplication of inspections and speed-up negotiations for market access. Given the current emerging threat on multilateralism and trade through protectionism, the above approach is much more needed today than a year ago. As countries of the South, we are stronger working together for economic development of both our nations,” Minister Steenhuisen said.

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For media enquiries, please contact:

Ms Joylene van Wyk

Director: Media Liaison Ministry of Agriculture

Email: joylenev@nda.gov.za or medialiaison@nda.agric.za

Mobile: 083 292 7399 or 063 298 5661

Toll-Free FMD Support Line: 0860 246 640

Email: FMDcommandcent@nda.gov.za

FMD WhatsApp Channel:

<https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Vags5R83gvWWZOhk9946>

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