



MINISTER
AGRICULTURE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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MEDIA STATEMENT

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MINISTER STEENHUISEN DEEPENS SOUTH AFRICA-ARGENTINA BIOSECURITY ALLIANCE IN WAR AGAINST FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, has concluded a high-level working visit to Argentina, securing pivotal agreements to strengthen South Africa's fight against Foot and mouth disease (FMD) and to safeguard the future of the livestock sector.

At the centre of the visit was a ministerial engagement with Argentina's Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Sergio Iraeta. The meeting culminated in a firm commitment to a structured cooperation framework that will intensify joint efforts to combat FMD, while deepening bilateral ties in agricultural trade, food security, and animal health resilience.

This cooperation is anchored in the 2026–2028 FMD Work Plan, a results-driven and time-bound programme that translates existing bilateral agreements into coordinated action. It provides for enhanced technical cooperation, targeted capacity building, and strengthened scientific collaboration, with a clear focus on improving prevention, preparedness, and rapid response capabilities.

Minister Steenhuisen led a delegation comprising senior officials and key stakeholders, including the Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP), the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), and organised agriculture. The mission was explicitly geared towards aligning international expertise with domestic operational needs at a crucial moment for South Africa's animal health system.

South Africa has already secured and distributed 2,5 million doses of FMD vaccines from Biogénesis Bagó, comprising one million doses of bivalent SAT-1 and SAT-2 vaccines and 1,5 million doses of trivalent SAT-1, SAT-2, and SAT-3 vaccines. During the visit, the delegation inspected production facilities where a further five million doses are ready for export, pending approval by the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) under Section 21.

Recognising that sustained vaccine availability is central to achieving FMD-free with vaccination status, OBP and Biogénesis Bagó concluded a distribution agreement to ensure continuity and reliability of supply.

“Our immediate priority is to secure a stable and sufficient vaccine pipeline so that we can scale up vaccinations rapidly across the country,” said Minister Steenhuisen. “Speed is non-negotiable. We must get ahead of this disease to protect our national herd, our farmers, and the broader agricultural economy.”

The minister emphasised that South Africa’s response carries regional significance. “Our livestock sector is deeply interconnected with the economies and food systems of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). This partnership is about integrating science, production, and implementation to build a resilient animal health system capable not only of managing the current outbreak, but of preventing future crises,” he continued.

He further underscored the importance of coordinated industry participation. “We are expanding distribution mechanisms to include the private sector, under the strategic coordination of government, to ensure that vaccines reach farms efficiently and at scale. This is about closing the gap between policy and practice and delivering real outcomes on the ground,” the minister stated.

Looking ahead, the visit also explored positioning South Africa as a regional vaccine distribution hub for the SADC region, leveraging the expertise, systems, and partnerships developed through this collaboration.

In parallel, the ARC renewed and extended its cooperation agreement with Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (INTA), Argentina's leading agricultural research institution. Building on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2021, the renewed partnership will deepen collaboration across research, technology transfer, and skills development, particularly in the fields of animal health and vaccine innovation.

This strengthened alliance reflects a shared commitment to harnessing scientific excellence and practical cooperation in support of more resilient, competitive, and sustainable agricultural sectors in both countries.

The visit marks a decisive escalation in South Africa's war against FMD and reinforces the country's determination to protect its national herd, secure rural livelihoods, and restore confidence in its biosecurity systems.

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