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MEDIA STATEMENT **24 November 2025**

Department of Agriculture Drives Modernisation and Efficiency under Act 36

The Department of Agriculture has noted recent misleading public statements by a certain agriculture lobby group around Act 36 applications which governs the registration of pesticides, fertilisers and farm feeds.

Upon assuming office, the Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, indicated that the backlogs and inefficiencies around the process would receive attention.

The Department of Agriculture (DoA) has made significant inroads in modernising the regulatory framework for agricultural inputs under the Fertilisers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947 (Act No. 36 of 1947), moving decisively to enhance efficiency and transparency. This progress is best demonstrated by the successful launch of the new online application system.

While acknowledging that delays occur, the department firmly denies that the regulatory system has a stage of “collapse”. We take note that a narrative is being driven regarding “persistent collapse”, and that nothing is being done to address the situation. We have also noted the Letter of Demand from the attorneys of SAAI, in which various hyperbolic references are made, which are regrettable.

Contrary to the allegations made, the directorate that deals with Act 36, has processed and finalised a total of 6 617 applications in the 2024/25 financial year.

As further testament to the progress made, the department has over the past five years finalised 51 165 applications out of 56 890 received. The current average turnaround time is between two weeks and 24 months, depending on the application type.

The department has worked diligently to implement key recommendations from the 2011 Ministerial Task Team Report, particularly the development of a modern, online system.

The first leg of the online registration system, namely the online application system for pesticides, was launched in December 2023. This system allows applicants to electronically submit applications and register their products online, track the status of applications in real time and receive feedback, as well as generate reports like lists of registered pesticides which are available for public viewing.

Minister Steenhuisen explained that this system will enhance workflow and better serve stakeholders. “Previously, applicants had to travel to DoA offices to file paperwork manually, a lengthy and often frustrating process. By going digital, the department is eliminating unnecessary delays and creating a ‘fast track’ for companies that comply with requirements from the start," the minister said. This was elaborated on in Minister Steenhuisen’s previous statement of 2 October 2025.

He also highlighted that automating the Agricultural Inputs Control System is a crucial step towards efficiency, accountability and transparency. This system will not only improve service delivery, but also ensure that compliant applicants are processed quickly while non-compliant applications are identified upfront

One feature that applicants will appreciate about the system, is that they will have real-time information on the status of their application.

The department has confirmed that it will no longer accept manual applications for pesticides from 1 April 2026. The rollout will expand to other regulated agricultural inputs in due course. The department is confident that the new system will significantly improve turnaround times, strengthen compliance, and build greater trust between industry and Government.

The Office of the Registrar, which is responsible for the administration of the legislation, has boosted its internal capacity, including through the use of consultants, to assist with the review of applications and the reduction of the backlog.

Backlog and Progress

The total outstanding backlog across the four main categories is 5 730 applications. The largest portion, 4 815, are applications waiting for technical evaluation, which underscores why the department has expedited the filling of its two critical scientific posts which are vacant due to resignations. This again highlights that the department is not experiencing

an “administrative breakdown”, but rather an increasing capacity crunch in terms of the scientific and technical evaluation of applications.

Breakdown of Outstanding Applications

- The Agricultural Remedies category has the largest overall outstanding backlog at 2 390 applications, of which 2 205 are awaiting technical evaluation.
- The Animal Feeds category has 1 509 outstanding applications, with 1,059 of these awaiting technical evaluation or approval.
- The Stock Remedies category accounts for 1 151 outstanding applications, with 1 109 awaiting technical evaluation.
- The Fertiliser category has 680 outstanding applications, with 442 awaiting technical evaluation.

Challenges contributing to delays include increasing industry demand, incomplete registration applications, the need for concurrence from other departments, and long response times from applicants.

A time-bound action plan to clear the backlog and stabilise the Registrar's office is currently being finalised and will be put in place to build on the gains already made.

The Department confirms that all critical remedies to address biosecurity and food security are registered. Regarding the two pending Rift Valley Fever (RVF) vaccine applications - one is Design Biologics, currently involved in a court matter, and the other has experienced delays due to applicant responses and concurrence. A review of the second application is underway, with outcomes to be communicated to the applicant within approximately three weeks.

Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) has confirmed that there is vaccine stock available against Rift Valley Fever, contrary to rumors and various WhattsApp messages circulating.

Since the reported start of the RVF outbreak, OBP has distributed the following quantities of the Rift Valley Fever vaccines to its distribution networks:

RVF (live) 465 200 doses

RVF (Inactive) 118 050 doses

There are currently 2,4 million doses of RVF (live) in stock.

OBP indicates that the quantities forecasted to be produced and released during the month of December 2025 are estimated at 2,6 million doses of RVF (live), and 375,000 doses of RVF (inactive). These are currently in production. In response to the demand for RVF (inactive), an estimated 1,5 million doses of Clone 13 are produced as an alternative to the RVF (inactive) segment.

OBP commits to allocating more resources towards the manufacturing of the RVF vaccines, with a total number of 9 million doses planned for production between January and March 2026.

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