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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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MEDIA STATEMENT

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MINISTER STEENHUISEN COMMITS TO URGENT ACTION ON VETERINARIANS WORKING CONDITIONS

Note to Editors: A voice note from the Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, is attached here.

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, has made a firm commitment to ensuring that the working conditions of animal health practitioners are improved in South Africa. This comes as the country grapples with a critical shortage of professionals in this essential field, which has far-reaching implications for animal health, biosecurity, and food security. The challenges veterinarians face includes insufficient resources and medicines, inadequate remuneration, and mounting mental health concerns.

Minister Steenhuisen emphasised the gravity of these issues, acknowledging the indispensable role veterinarians play in safeguarding the country's agricultural sector.
"Veterinarians are a cornerstone of South Africa's agricultural success, and without addressing the systemic issues they face, we risk jeopardising not only their well-being but the nation's food security," said Steenhuisen.

The Minister said, South Africa must become a place where animal health practitioners can thrive and feel valued. South Africa currently has 4000 registered veterinarians, far below the international benchmark which is between 200 and 400 veterinarians per million people. At least a hundred veterinarians emigrate annually in search of better opportunities abroad.

In his efforts to ensure comprehensive input from all relevant parties, Minister Steenhuisen will meet with the nine provincial agriculture MECs, senior officials from the department, the South African Veterinary Association, and key industry experts to address these concerns and avert a potential crisis in the profession and the agricultural sector.

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