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Media Statement **03 August 2025**

Minister Steenhuisen takes action on irregularities in SAVC election process

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, has taken firm steps to address governance concerns arising from the recent election process of the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC), acting within his oversight mandate and guided by the principles of the King IV Report on Good Governance.

Serious concerns have been raised about the transparency and procedural integrity of the election process. These include inconsistent and conflicting communications to registered veterinary professionals regarding voting deadlines that created confusion and may have resulted in the exclusion of some eligible participants. In addition, questions have emerged about the eligibility of certain candidates, the fairness and independence of the verification process, and the overall credibility of the selection panel tasked with overseeing the elections.

Stakeholders have also alleged that the process lacked sufficient clarity and accessibility, potentially undermining the representativity and legitimacy of the council. The Minister has emphasised that where there is credible concern about the legitimacy or procedural fairness of a statutory body's governance processes, it is the duty of the Executive to intervene decisively to uphold public trust and institutional integrity.

In this context, it is important to highlight the obligations under Regulation 5 of the SAVC Election Regulations, which state that the Registrar shall only accept the nomination of a person as a candidate for an election if satisfied that:

- the nomination complies with the requirements of Regulation 4;
- the persons nominating the candidate are enfranchised voters; and
- the nominated individual qualifies in terms of Section 6 of the Act.

The onus was therefore on the Registrar to ensure compliance with these provisions. Where this was not done, and in light of the irregularities raised, the Minister has called for further scrutiny of the Registrar's role. The matter warrants consideration of whether an inquiry into the Registrar's conduct should be instituted, including whether costs arising from flawed processes should be borne personally by the officeholder responsible.

As part of his oversight responsibilities, Minister Steenhuisen has:

- requested a full report from the Department of Agriculture, including legal advice on the validity and procedural soundness of the SAVC election;
- informed the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture in Parliament of the concerns raised, in the interest of full transparency and to enable appropriate legislative oversight; and
- formally requested the Director-General of the Department of Agriculture to initiate a process to restart the SAVC election, should legal advice not conclusively endorse the validity of the current process.

"Good governance is not optional; it is foundational," said Minister Steenhuisen. "Public confidence in statutory regulatory bodies such as the SAVC rests on transparent, credible and procedurally fair processes. My actions are intended to ensure that these standards are upheld without compromise."

The Minister reiterated his commitment to collaborating with stakeholders in the veterinary profession to restore trust in the SAVC and ensure that future elections reflect the highest standards of accountability and independence, as set out in the King IV Code.

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