MINISTER
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Regionalisation of chicken imports from Brazil explored

At the directive of the Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen, the Department of Agriculture is assessing whether the regionalisation of imports of chicken from Brazil can be put in place to ensure local demand for the product is met.
On 15 May 2025, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Brazil reported an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1 – clade 2.3.4.4b) in chickens, in a breeding establishment (parents), located in the municipality of Montenegro, state of Rio Grande do Sul. This necessitated South Africa to suspended trade of live poultry, eggs and fresh (including frozen) poultry meat and the issuing of new import permits.

The South African poultry industry has subsequently indicated that although there are enough slaughter chickens available in the country, they are concerned about the impact the suspension of the import of Brazilian poultry will have on South Africa's food supply chain, particularly in the affordability and accessibility of processed meats and pet foods.

ENGAGEMENTS WITH BRAZILIAN AUTHORITIES

The department is in constant engagement with the Brazilian Authorities to determine if the outbreak has not spread to other States and a confirmation that there are no other outbreaks on other farms. "This is a necessary procedure of ensuring that we don't introduce the virus to South African and infect the poultry industry. We need to balance food security realities with biosecurity imperatives," Minister Steenhuisen explained.

The department has established that the reason for the delay in Brazil responding to South Africa's enquiries is due to the number of similar enquiries Brazil is receiving and responding to, since Brazil exports poultry products to many other countries.

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