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MEDIA STATEMENT **02 October 2026**

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE PAYS A WORKING VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA, OMAN AND UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the South African Consulate-General in Dubai and the South African Embassy in the United Arab Emirates, has successfully concluded its working visit. The working visit aimed to strengthen agricultural trade, market access, and other possible collaborations.

This market access mission began on Sunday, 27 September 2026. Deputy Minister Capa, MP, who could not travel with the team, has delegated Ms Kwena Komape (Deputy Director General: Economic Development, Trade and Marketing) to lead the mission on her behalf.

“The decision to engage our mission in the Middle East countries to assist with these engagements is a response to the pain I see in the eyes of the livestock farmers who can no longer export their livestock and their products owing to the Foot and Mouth disease outbreak disaster,” said Deputy Minister Capa.

The team was accompanied by the members of the South African livestock industry who are interested in the Middle East market. On the first day of the working visit, activities were characterised by high-level and technical engagements with officials from the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA), Saudi Agricultural and Livestock Investment Company (SALIC) and the General Authority for Foreign Trade (GAFT) with the rationale to unearth opportunities for the South African agricultural industry and also to look at what Saudi Arabia would want to export to South Africa.

The engagement continued 28 September 2026 with the Embassy of South Africa in Saudi Arabia, the Department of Agriculture delegation and members of the South African livestock industry. The day was characterised by robust engagements on what parties could do to improve relations. The South African delegation interacted with various buyers on technology innovation.

Among the buyers were stakeholders such as the South African Business Council, the Federation of Saudi Business, and many others. The session closed on a high note, and parties are looking forward to mutual collaboration.

After concluding the first leg in Saudi Arabia, the delegation proceeded to Oman for an engagement with the Ministry of Environment, Water, Fisheries and Agriculture, as well as the Omani Chamber of Business, to strengthen bilateral relations and explore untapped opportunities in the food and agricultural sector. Both parties assured each other of their willingness to trade and observe sanitary and phytosanitary measures. The working visit culminated in the last leg in Dubai on 30 September 2026, where the parties met with the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment and discussed a range of issues, agreeing to continue engagement to resolve any pending matters.

The reception in all the countries (Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates) was heartfelt and forward-looking. What appeared common across all missions was parties looking forward to working together to maximise agricultural trade by, among other things, generating a list of expressions of interest, hosting B2B sessions, and inviting each other to trade missions for exhibition and participation in trade discussion panels. The discussion also covered a broader picture, including collaboration on research matters, training, and knowledge exchange to leverage agricultural trade and market access.

The parties will continue to work together on any pending matters through the exchange of information and follow-up meetings. For Oman and the UAE, parties look forward to finalising the Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs), whose effective implementation will serve as a catalyst to strengthen relations, maximise agricultural trade, and help grow the economies of both countries. All parties underscored a need to make things work.

The parties agreed to exchange disease-control information to enable South Africa to assess its foot-and-mouth disease control in the context of imports so it can align accordingly and, where possible, seek equivalence.

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Issued by: The Department of Agriculture