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## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

**27 February 2026**

### **MINISTER STEENHUISEN LAUNCHES NATIONWIDE MASS FMD VACCINATION IN KZN FOLLOWING RAPID VACCINE DISPATCH**

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, visited Colbourne Dairy Farm, near Mooi River in KwaZulu-Natal as part of the launch of the Department of Agriculture's national mass vaccination strategy to decisively deal with Foot and mouth disease (FMD) outbreaks in the country.

On Saturday, 21 February 2026 the first large consignment of FMD vaccines, one million doses from Biogénesis Bagó in Argentina, arrived in South Africa.

With no time to waste in this war against FMD, the Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) ensured the rapid disbursement of the Biogénesis Bagó vaccines to all provinces by Wednesday, 25 February 2026.

The million doses of vaccines were distributed as follows: KwaZulu-Natal 200,000 doses; Mpumalanga 100,000 doses; North West 100,000 doses; Free State 200,000 doses; Eastern Cape 150,000 doses; Limpopo 100,000 doses; Gauteng 70,000 doses; Northern Cape 50,000 doses; and Western Cape 30,000 doses.

The country has also secured Dollvet vaccine from Turkey with the first consignment of 1,5 million doses arriving Saturday, 28 February 2026 in South Africa, with millions more to arrive from Argentina shortly after.

Locally, the Agriculture Research Council (ARC) has committed to producing 20 000 vaccines per week and scaling this production up to 200 000 per week by 2027.

Minister Steenhuisen commended the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for its “zero-waste” approach in starting vaccinations just 24 hours after receiving supplies. KwaZulu-Natal is identified as the FMD primary risk epicentre—housing over 1,6 million cattle herd in high-priority zones.

“We are committed to protecting the livelihoods of our farmers, from our communal lands to our commercial operations. This department has ensured that 45 teams will be deployed daily to 45 locations to vaccinate up to 90 000 animals per day to cover the 2,4 million cattle herd in the province,” Minister Steenhuisen said.

### **Commitment to the dairy industry**

Minister Steenhuisen addressed the economic distress within the dairy sector with a clear policy shift indicating that, effective from 24 February 2026, there are no restrictions on milk from vaccinated, uninfected farms or from farms that have not been infected or suspected of being infected with FMD. This is captured in the amendment of the 2024 FMD Contingency Plan, which will be gazetted soon.

For the movement of milk from quarantined farms, only a single pasteurisation process will be required for local consumption. Milk that originates from properties under FMD restriction may not be processed for the export market, unless expressly agreed to by the importing country.

“We are moving away from treating high-risk farms as: guilty until proven innocent”. Only farms with confirmed or clinical signs of infection will be quarantined.

“We will not stop until FMD is eradicated, and South Africa receives its ‘FMD free with vaccination’ status. This is our promise to our farmers: We are doing everything in our power to keep your milk moving and your herds safe,” Minister Steenhuisen said.

The minister also welcomed Cabinet’s approval of the national mass vaccination programme and National Treasury’s reallocation of approximately R400 million underspent agriculture funds toward the war on FMD.

### **Easing restrictions**

To ease restrictions on affected farms as soon as possible, the Veterinary Working Group has also agreed on the following amended guidelines that can be implemented immediately, pending the formal amendment of the requirements for the control and management of FMD.

Identification of infected and vaccinated animals:

- On farms/premises that are infected or suspected of being infected, all cloven-hoofed animals must be individually identified and recorded on a database that will ensure lifelong traceability;
- On farms/premises that are NOT infected or suspected of being infected, all vaccinated cloven-hoofed animals must be individually identified and recorded on a database that will ensure lifelong traceability;
- No F branding will be required for suspect/infected and/or vaccinated animals.

Controlled slaughter from FMD quarantined premises:

- For slaughter earlier than three months after day zero, the current requirements and risk mitigation for slaughter at designated abattoirs remain in place;
- From three months after day zero, controlled slaughter from quarantined premises can take place at any registered non export abattoir;
- After three months post day zero, meat must be subject to maturation, however, there will be no further risk mitigation and no loss of parts of the carcass;
- No animals originating from properties under FMD restriction may be slaughtered for the export market, unless expressly agreed to by the importing country.

### **Message to stakeholders**

“In the face of this unprecedented FMD outbreak, I want to express my sincere gratitude to every farmer, farm worker, industry body and member of the broader community who has stood with us. The messages of support, the practical cooperation on movement controls and vaccination, and the willingness to work within difficult restrictions have reminded us that this is a national effort—one that the government cannot wage alone.

“There have been moments in this battle when the strain has been immense and the criticism loud, however, the steady encouragement from producers on the ground and from ordinary South Africans who understand what is at stake has strengthened my resolve. It is this

partnership between government, industry and community, that will ultimately see us overcome FMD and restore confidence in our livestock sector,” Minister Steenhuisen said.

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**Issued by: The Ministry of Agriculture**

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