



agriculture

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MEDIA STATEMENT

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MINISTER STEENHUISEN WELCOMES COURT'S AFFIRMATION OF GOVERNMENT'S FMD STRATEGY AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, welcomes today's outcome in the Gauteng Division of the High Court, which has affirmed the Department's lawful authority to regulate and manage South Africa's response to Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD).

The application brought by Sakeliga and others sought urgent interim relief that would have effectively allowed for unregulated private procurement and administration of FMD vaccines, outside of the established national framework.

It is important to note that the Court did not grant the urgent relief sought by the applicants. Instead, the matter has been postponed, and rightfully so to allow the department to finalise its vaccination scheme.

The Department has been given a defined and reasonable timeframe within which to publish a vaccination scheme in terms of existing legislation.

Minister Steenhuisen said the outcome reinforces the principle that South Africa's biosecurity response must be coordinated, science-based, and aligned with national and international standards.

"This matter was never simply about access to vaccines. It was about ensuring that South Africa's response to FMD remains credible, coordinated, and compliant with the legal framework that protects both our national herd and our export markets," said Minister Steenhuisen.

He added that the attempt to secure urgent court intervention to bypass established regulatory processes was both premature and misdirected.

“The Court has recognised that there are no grounds for urgent intervention that would disrupt the State’s ongoing disease control strategy. This is an important affirmation of the role of government in managing animal health risks in a structured and responsible manner.”

The Minister confirmed that the Department has already been working on the development of a formal vaccination scheme, and that the Court’s directive provides clarity on the process and timeframe for its publication. The scheme has already gone through extensive consultation with the Ministerial Task Team and industry stakeholders.

“This process is already well underway. The scheme will provide a structured mechanism for broader participation, while maintaining the necessary safeguards around traceability, vaccine integrity, and disease control.”

The Minister further emphasised that South Africa’s FMD strategy is progressing, with vaccine procurement, distribution, and administration continuing under strict regulatory oversight, and with additional consignments of vaccines already secured.

“Our priority remains clear: to stabilise outbreaks, protect the national herd, and restore South Africa’s animal health status in line with international standards. That requires discipline, coordination, and adherence to the law, not fragmentation.”

Minister Steenhuisen reiterated that the Department remains committed to working with industry stakeholders within the framework of the law, and that lawful mechanisms for participation already exist.

“We will continue to engage constructively with all stakeholders. But we will not compromise on the principles that underpin an effective biosecurity system,” Minister Steenhuisen said.

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