



agriculture

Department:
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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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**SPEAKING NOTES FOR MOOKETSA RAMASODI
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOUTH AFRICAN BEE INDUSTRY ORGANISATION (SABIO) BEECON 2026, SUN CITY,
NORTH WEST
30 JUNE 2026**

NATIONAL BEEKEEPING PLAN
(Including the future of agriculture, pollination, food security, and how government and industry can collaborate to protect this vital sector)

Programme Director;

The Minister of Agriculture, Mr. John Steenhuisen (MP) ;

MEC of the North West Province Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Madoda Sambatha;

Bojanala District Municipality Mayor - Cllr. Suzan Dikeledi Nthangeni

Chairperson of SABIO (South African Bee Industry Organisation) – Ms Tumi Mobu;

Distinguished Colleagues and Partners;

SABIO Board Members;

Beekeepers, Farmers and Researchers;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is both an honour and a privilege to address you today. Allow me, at the outset, to express my sincere appreciation to the South African Bee Industry Organisation (SABIO) for inviting the Department of Agriculture to participate in this important annual Bee Conference.

This gathering has become a significant platform for dialogue, collaboration and innovation, bringing together stakeholders who share a common commitment to advancing beekeeping and protecting honeybees as a strategic national resource. I commend SABIO and the broader industry for demonstrating the collective leadership, vision and dedication required to strengthen and sustain South Africa's beekeeping sector across the entire value chain.

The beekeeping sector remains a priority for the Department of Agriculture because of its direct contribution to several of our strategic objectives, namely:

Outcome 2: Increased production in the agricultural sector;

Outcome 3: Improved food and nutrition security;

Outcome 5: Increased market access; and

Outcome 6: Enhanced biosecurity and effective disaster risk reduction.

These priorities underscore the critical importance of beekeeping not only as an agricultural enterprise, but as a cornerstone of sustainable food production, environmental stewardship and economic growth.

Legislative and Regulatory Framework

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Department administers various legislative instruments that impact honeybees, beekeeping activities and bee-related products, including:

- **The Agricultural Pests Act, 1983**, which governs honey imports and honeybee disease management. While this Act is in the process of being repealed by the **Plant Health Act, 2024**, bee-related matters will continue to be regulated through appropriate legislative instruments within the Department.
- **The Animal Improvement Act, 1998** (Act No. 62 of 1998), under which bees have been declared animals for purposes of genetic improvement and enhanced productivity.
- **The Agricultural Product Standards Act, 1990**, which regulates the grading, packing and marking of honey and honey-related **products**.
- **The Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947**, which provides for the responsible use of pesticides and agricultural remedies with implications for bee health.
- **The Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act, 1983**, which supports the protection of natural vegetation, including critical bee forage resources.

The significance of honeybees within South Africa's agricultural landscape cannot be overstated. Honeybees pollinate an estimated 80 percent of the country's fruit crops and other economically important plants and vegetation. For many fruit growers, pollination services provided by managed honeybee colonies can increase yields dramatically, often doubling production.

This reality places beekeeping at the heart of agricultural productivity, food security and rural economic development.

The Strategic Importance of Bees

Despite their immense contribution, honeybees remain one of the most underappreciated species in our agricultural ecosystem. Yet they are indispensable to the sustainability of our food systems and agricultural value chains.

Beekeeping is perhaps one of the few agricultural activities that delivers overwhelmingly positive environmental benefits while simultaneously generating economic opportunities. However, globally and locally, honeybee populations face mounting challenges.

These include:

- Habitat destruction and degradation;
- Declining bee forage resources;
- Increasing pressures from climate change;
- The spread of pests and diseases;
- Environmental contamination; and
- Human-induced threats affecting biodiversity.

If left unaddressed, these challenges could undermine both agricultural productivity and ecological stability.

National Beekeeping Policy and Strategy

Distinguished Guests,

The development of an effective and comprehensive National Beekeeping Strategy is therefore not merely desirable - it is essential.

The Department is committed to ensuring that the South African beekeeping industry remains resilient, competitive and sustainable. A well-crafted policy and strategic framework will strengthen the entire value chain, from pollination services and honey production to research, market development and environmental conservation.

Such interventions will contribute directly to:

- Enhanced food security;
- Sustainable agricultural production;
- Economic growth;
- Rural development; and
- Job creation opportunities.

Addressing American Foulbrood and Other Threats

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Regarding American Foulbrood (AFB), a disease that continues to threaten honeybee colonies worldwide, the Department has commissioned and funded the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) to undertake critical research through the project:

“Survey of American Foulbrood in Honeybee Colonies in South Africa: Protecting Beekeeping and Pollination Services.”

This important initiative seeks not only to understand the prevalence and impact of AFB in South Africa but also to support the development of both an AFB Management Strategy and a comprehensive National Beekeeping Strategy.

I am pleased to inform you that work on the National Beekeeping Strategy is progressing well. Upon completion, it will be subjected to extensive consultation with stakeholders across the sector. Our intention is to finalise the strategy during the 2026/27 financial year.

Key Strategic Priorities

The strategy will address several critical priorities requiring urgent attention:

1. Legislative Reform and Regulatory Certainty

There is a need to establish a coherent and integrated legislative framework governing all aspects of beekeeping, including:

- Bee diseases and biosecurity;
- Industry regulation;
- Imports and exports;
- Honey standards and quality assurance;
- Adulteration control; and
- Pollination services.

Given ongoing legislative reforms, consideration may need to be given to the development of a dedicated National Beekeeping or Bee Act.

2. Institutional Arrangements

Effective governance requires strong institutional structures and clear linkages between national, provincial and local authorities.

This will include:

- Strengthening extension support services;
- Dedicated bee-sector officials;
- Ongoing technical training; and
- Enhanced stakeholder coordination.

3. Establishment of an Apicultural Advisory Committee

The creation of an Apicultural Advisory Committee (AAC) will provide expert advice to both the bee industry and the Minister of Agriculture on matters affecting the sector.

4. Research and Capacity Building

Continuous investment in research and skills development remains essential.

- Priority areas include:
- American Foulbrood management;
- Capensis bee challenges;
- Bee forage development programmes;
- Pollination research; and
- Capacity building across the value chain.

5. Laboratory Accreditation

South Africa requires accredited laboratory capacity to support:

- Bee disease diagnostics;
- Honey testing;
- Detection of adulteration;
- Pesticide residue analysis; and
- Export certification requirements.

6. Export Facilitation

The finalisation of a Residue Monitoring Plan remains critical for maintaining and expanding access to international markets.

7. Strengthening Industry Collaboration

The strategy further proposes:

- Establishment of a Honey Value Chain Roundtable Forum; and
- Resuscitation of the bilateral engagement platform between the Department and SABIO.

Departmental Commitment

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To address existing challenges and ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector, the Department will intensify its efforts to build capacity and provide training at both national and provincial levels, including among extension officers who serve as a vital interface between government and producers.

The conservation of bee-forage resources remains a matter of critical importance. The ongoing loss of forage, coupled with theft and vandalism affecting beekeeping operations, continues to undermine the sector's growth and sustainability.

Working together with industry stakeholders, research institutions and other government departments, we will strengthen systems and interventions aimed at addressing these challenges.

Furthermore, we acknowledge concerns previously raised by industry regarding statutory and regulatory constraints. The Department remains committed to working closely with SABIO and all stakeholders to identify and close gaps within the legislative framework.

We are open to regular engagements on proposals for consolidated bee legislation and will pursue an integrated approach to both regulation and institutional arrangements that support a modern, effective and sustainable apiculture sector.

Conclusion

As I conclude, allow me to emphasise that the beekeeping sector is not a peripheral component of agriculture - it is one of its foundational pillars.

The future of our food systems, biodiversity, agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability is inextricably linked to the health and survival of honeybees.

The Department of Agriculture stands ready to provide leadership, support and partnership in building a resilient and thriving beekeeping sector for generations to come.

I also wish to acknowledge my colleagues from the Department who have been doing a stunning job in liaising with the bee industry at various stages. I encourage you to engage my colleagues on these important matters and participate in constructive discussions throughout the conference. Regarding the nerve point on bee matters, Dr Rambauli, remains your entry point.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let this Bee Conference be remembered not merely as a gathering of stakeholders, but as a turning point for the future of South African apiculture. Let us exchange knowledge, embrace innovation, strengthen partnerships and commit ourselves to meaningful action.

Together, we have both the opportunity and the responsibility to elevate South African beekeeping to new heights.

The future of agriculture depends on the future of bees, and the future of bees depends on the choices we make today.

I wish you a productive and successful conference.

I thank you.