



# agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:  
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **SPEAKING NOTES OF HONOURABLE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES, (MR) SENZENI ZOKWANA, AT THE FOOT AND MOUTH FREEDOM STATUS MEDIA CONFERENCE**

**16 MARCH 2015  
IN PRETORIA AT 09:00**

Thank you Programme Director and a hearty welcome to you all on this important day for South African agriculture, with specific reference to the livestock industry.

You will recall that during the media conference held in this very same room on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2015, we pronounced on our aggressive plans to ensure that we maintain South Africa's Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) freedom status. Our pronouncement was prompted by a follow-up on World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) expert mission which was carried out from the 30<sup>th</sup> November to 6<sup>th</sup> December 2014 to assess progress made in addressing non-conformances observed during the November 2013 OIE expert mission and also to assess compliance with the relevant provisions of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* to ensure the maintenance of FMD free zone status.

During that brief, we gave sufficient background on the status of (FMD) control measures in the country and furthermore provided details on how we would jealously guard against any challenge that could threaten the FMD free zone status of South Africa as determined by the OIE. To this effect we launched '**Operation Compliance**' – an initiative aimed at ensuring that the marching orders as determined by the OIE are met and adhered to, without fail.

You will further recall that we pronounced on the key FMD control measures that were needed to effectively safeguard the South African FMD free zone status include but are not limited to the following:

- Intensified disease surveillance at the farm or dip tank level;
- Strict and controlled movements of livestock and game and livestock products within and in-between different FMD zones linked to animal identification;
- Adequate vaccination of cattle against FMD in the designated areas
- Implementation of effective livestock identification and traceability system; and
- Efficient International border fence maintenance and patrols particularly the borders of countries with a different FMD status.

At that media conference we drew your attention to our cooperation with the Provincial departments and livestock industry in conducting Izimbizo in locations within the affected provinces:

- Bambanani in KwaZulu-Natal on 15 January 2015;
- Mhinga in Limpopo on 16 January 2015; and
- Bushbuckridge Municipality, Marite in Mpumalanga on 16 January 2015.

These Izimbizo were aimed at mobilising local municipality leadership, traditional leadership, communities and other strategic stakeholders in raising awareness around FMD. During this marathon of Izimbizo, there were a number of valuable lessons learnt and probing questions which were posed by the stakeholders that will enhance our compliance to the requirements of the OIE. These engagements have also sharpened our understanding of the pressing needs and preferences of our stakeholders. We would like to thank all participants who took time to assist in making these Izimbizo a success. For us, these Izimbizo, were also a learning

platform on social cohesion and stakeholder participation within the livestock sector. Indeed we learned that FMD has profound impact on the economic, social and environmental facets of our dynamic stakeholders. We have listened and we have heard the concerns, counsel and advice from our stakeholders and we have summarised these into four thematic areas, namely market access: infrastructure, wildlife and logistics.

## **1. Market Access**

- Unavailability of adequate markets to deal with cattle from the FMD infected zones and the financial woes and social ills that this lack of markets has left on communities.

## **2. Infrastructure**

Three core issues were raised relating to infrastructure, namely fences and dipping tanks:

### **(i) Fences**

- Importance of fencing in dealing with the FMD control measures with the following areas highlighted for attention:
- Cooperation between government departments in dealing with FMD, with specific reference to the Department of Environmental Affairs and the authorities in the Game Reserves, adjacent to grazing areas, with buffaloes;
- Securing and maintenance of the international border through cooperation with the departments within the Border Control Coordinating Committee of government.

### **(ii) Dipping tanks**

- Construction of additional dip tanks and water points (dams) in the FMD zones in South Africa; and
- Capacity building in the area of construction of dip tanks by the community members.

- Importance of the separation of animals from infected zones and those from FMD free zones during the dipping process.

**(iii) Abattoirs**

Ensuring additional abattoirs within the FMD free zones.

**3. Wildlife**

The ownership of wildlife and the responsibility for compensation relating to damages was sharply raised and the following areas had a common thread through the provinces:

- Impact of stray buffaloes on livestock and the need to determine actions to be followed against the owners of stray buffaloes; and
- Predation in South Africa and government response to predation in line with current legislation administered by the Department of Environmental Affairs.

**4. Logistics**

- Effect of the delays in availing FMD laboratory results to the farmers;
- Importance of the separation of animals from infected zones and those from FMD free zones during the dipping process; and
- Authorisation for the movement of livestock by the relevant department.

The inputs from the Izimbizo are appreciated and we have incorporated most of these inputs into our implementation plan. We are alive to the impact that the FMD controls have in the social space of our people as we heard that restricted movement of livestock has an impact on lobola, education and other important transactions. We will further, together with the relevant government departments and provincial departments of KwaZulu-Natal; Limpopo and Mpumalanga finalise discussions on infrastructure, with specific reference to fencing, dipping tanks and abattoirs.

During that media conference, you will recall that we pronounced on the key FMD control measures that were needed to effectively safeguard the South African FMD free zone status include but are not limited to the following:

- Intensified disease surveillance at the farm or dip tank level;
- Strict and controlled movements of livestock and game and livestock products within and in-between different FMD zones linked to animal identification;
- Adequate vaccination of cattle against FMD in the designated areas
- Implementation of effective livestock identification and traceability system; and
- Efficient International border fence maintenance and patrols particularly the borders of countries with a different FMD status.

Furthermore to buttress Operation Compliance the Department together with the Provincial Departments of Agriculture of Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal came up with an implementation plan for Operation Compliance in December 2014. Accomplishments chalked to date and those tasks in progress include:

1. Repair and maintenance of the fence is taking place on the South African/Zimbabwe border and more staff was deployed to assist with the repairs and more 40 kilometers of border fences have been completed;
2. As a temporary measure cattle from the protection zones and the high surveillance area of the free zone in KwaZulu-Natal are now dipped on separate days. For more permanent solution on this issue KwaZulu-Natal province has prioritised funding to construct ten further dip tanks starting in March 2015;
3. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been developed to address the handling of carcasses in abattoirs that slaughter animals that originate from protection zones. Currently Limpopo Province will manage the two abattoirs that are slaughtering such animals. The KwaZulu-Natal Province abattoir is under construction.
4. A total of 300 000 doses of FMD vaccine were ordered from Botswana Vaccine Institute (BVI) and distributed to Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces. Vaccination of cattle is in progress and is expected to be completed by the end of March 2015. A further 300 000 doses were also

requested to be procured by Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute (OVI) and the batch is expected to be delivered in April 2015. Studies to assess the efficacy of the FMD vaccine are being carried out by OVI and a final report is expected soon.

5. The KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development committed to construct the fences on the eastern boundary of Ndumo Game Reserve in an effort to prevent the buffalo and cattle contact. This project is expected to be completed in June 2015.
6. Mpumalanga, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal provinces have started implementing the erection of FMD signboards at all major roads that pass through the different FMD control zones. This project is expected to be finalised by the end of March 2015. Limpopo has already put up all their signs (40 signs at 20 entry/exit points).
7. The red line fence construction in northern KwaZulu-Natal Province is progressing well and will be finalised by end of May 2015.
8. All affected provinces have prioritised the ear tagging of cattle in the dip tanks and areas that are adjacent to the free zone. The ear tagging is expected to be completed by the end of April 2015.
9. Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal provinces have made advanced plans in recruiting Animal Health Technicians (AHTs) in an effort to increase the number of technical staff within the FMD areas.
10. DAFF has since established surveillance plans for the entire protection zone and also the high surveillance area with movement control of the free zone of KZN. Meetings with provinces and OVI were held on 4 and 5 March 2015 to discuss the implementation of these surveillance plans.

Subsequently, a document detailing the progress made and also outlining the implementation plan crafted towards addressing the OIE Expert Mission concerns was shared with the OIE Expert Mission on the 06<sup>th</sup> February 2015. This was in

preparation for the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (SCAD) of the OIE meeting held on the 9 to 13 February 2015.

In its feedback to us, the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases concluded that South Africa has made commendable progress to comply with the relevant requirements of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code for the maintenance of its FMD free status.

The Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases made additional recommendation with regard to the separate dipping days in the FMD protection zone and the high surveillance area of the free zone of KZN that dipping of the cattle from the protection zone must be after those from the free zone. The Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases also took note of the actions taken at the relevant abattoirs that slaughter animals from the protection zone but would need clarification on how the Veterinary services will ensure compliancy and provide training to abattoir staff.

We commit to ensuring total compliance to the requirements of the OIE and we are therefore taking hands with the relevant national departments, provincial departments, organised agriculture and wildlife organisations, amakhosi, farmers, communities in continuing to maintain our FMD status.

Our vigilance in dealing with the issues dealing with FMD and its impact on our livestock sector remains. We will for the next year observe the first deployment of veterinarians in line with the Compulsory Community Service as provided for within the Veterinary and Para-Veterinary Amendment Act, 1982. The new cohort of veterinarians will assist in expanding our footprint in dealing with animal health issues within our livestock industry in order to safeguard our animal health status. Together, we can ensure food security, job creation and economic growth of this sector.

I thank you.