



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

We trust that you were all able to spend a blessed Easter with family.

The past few months since the beginning of the year have already brought about numerous challenges for agriculture. The biggest is probably the heat waves that ruined crops and left many farmers with their hands in their hair. The welcome rain that occurred during the Easter weekend and later is probably too late to save crops but can hopefully still make a difference to the field.

Farming is a risk. All of us in the industry know this! However, I am convinced that none of us would choose another profession if we had to make the choice again! REGARDLESS of the challenges, farming is our passion!

I would like to leave you with a passage that always encourages me: *"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."* (Isaiah 41:10)

Regards

*Francis Wilken*



## NATURAL RESOURCES

### Agricultural conditions

**Drought damage:** Free State Agriculture's natural resources committee takes note of the great damage as a result of the mid-summer drought and persistent heat wave conditions which took its toll especially on sown crops. The 20% reduction in total expected maize harvest for the country from 16.4 to 13.2 million tonnes in the Crop Estimates Committee's latest report of 27 March confirms the drought damage.

We therefore want to warn producers to be careful with financial and management decisions and to be in good time with your financiers / insurance agent etc. to talk to make necessary plans and make bridging arrangements.

Livestock farmers are advised to reduce livestock sooner rather than later, even though prices are currently weak. The money from the sales can go into the LandBank Livestock Reduction scheme, tax-free and with interest, to buy livestock again after the drought.

**Disaster relief:** Free State Agriculture was bitterly disappointed that no help was received from the government after the devastating fires last year. We therefore encourage our farmers to assist each other and plan for their own resilience.

**Fire hazard:** With the heatwave conditions, the fire season arrived earlier than normal. All landowners are therefore encouraged to ensure that they are part of their local fire protection association (BBV) and that the necessary precautions are in place on the farm. Therefore, all firefighting equipment must be in good working order, the latest emergency number must be at hand, workers must be adequately trained and informed about emergency plans and possess the necessary protective clothing and equipment.

FSA invites fire origin and damage assessors to contact us and register as service providers so that we can quickly make a list of experts available to members from the office as soon as arson is suspected and to effectively determine the extent of damage..

**SASRIA insurance:** It is very important that farmers ask their brokers to add the very affordable SASRIA cover to their insurance if not already included in your policy. With the big Boshof fires of 2020 which were started by public rebellion on the common lands, only a handful of the affected farms were covered by SASRIA - who did pay out.



## LABOUR ISSUES

### Submission of Wage Returns

Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, Act 130 of 1993

On 12 February 2024, the Director General announced that the wages must be declared from 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024. These are the wages that were paid out by a farm from 1 March 2023 to 28 February 2024 as well as an estimate of the wages from 1 March 2024 to 28 February 2025 and include working directors, temporary, permanent and seasonal workers.

Stephan Pietersen from Work Accident Support kindly provided information regarding the submission of the wage returns as well as a wage return form. The information is available on the closed section of our [website](#) (Log in > Documents > Labour)

## COMMERCIAL

### Traceability System ready for use

Free State Agriculture has recently launched its Animal Traceability and Safety System (AIMS) and is encouraging livestock farmers to register on the system for free.

Unique numbers from QR codes can be easily read, stored and managed with any smartphone. Existing animal tag information and data from existing management systems can also be uploaded onto FS-AIMS.

For any queries about the system, Dr Jack Armor can be contacted at [jack@vslandbou.co.za](mailto:jack@vslandbou.co.za)



### Registration on FS-AIMS

By clicking on the FS-AIMS sticker image, you will be directed to a free registration website where any livestock farmer can securely fill out their profile with essential information that is subject to FSA's Personal Information Protection Act compliance protocol.



## COMMERCIAL (continue)

### Eskom: Information on price increase, prepaid customers and solar systems

Nersa already approved a price increase of 12.74% for Eskom in December 2023. It comes into force from 1 April 2024.

Anton Coetzee, FSA Commercial Affairs committee member and independent ESKOM consultant, shares tips for prepaid customers:

- Eskom Rural customers can switch to prepaid. The tariff name is Landlight 20 or 60A.
  - It is a single phase supply of 60 or 20 amps.
  - This rate is suitable for low consumption e.g. a pump for livestock watering or herdsman's house.
- NB: The rate is not suitable for "grid tie" or feedback on the Eskom network!

#### Advantages:

- No fixed monthly costs.
- No Eskom account with estimated reading.
- Pay only for what is actually used.

#### Disadvantages to conversion

- An expensive tariff for high consumption at R6.11c per unit /kWh (VAT included). Note that the rate also increases by 12.74% from 1 April 2024.
- Must convert 3-phase installation and equipment to single phase.
- Tariff is not suitable for "grid-tie" or feedback on Eskom network!
- As long as the conversion is not for solar "grid-tie" purposes, there is no restriction for the application of the tariff.

**Solar systems** must be installed on an 'island base'. This is done by establishing a visual disconnection between the Eskom point and the solar power system by installing an electromechanical control system or "manual change over switch".

If the switches are not installed and the inverter is used to block the feedback, the converter is still "grid-tie". For that, an Eskom application must be submitted to obtain permission. If permission has not been obtained from Eskom, the system is illegally connected and Eskom can take action which can lead to cut-off, fines and recovery of electricity consumption.

Island solar power / solar system means that the consumer of only 1 energy source (at a time) uses electricity. In other words, either from the solar system or from Eskom. In such a case, there is no need for an Eskom application. You must complete an Eskom declaration which is handed in with the certificate of compliance and a single line diagram.



## LAND AFFAIRS

### Expropriation Bill

On 27 March 2024, the National Assembly (NA) convened to consider and vote on the Expropriation Bill [B23D-2020]. The majority of the NA voted in favor of the amended Expropriation Bill and it was sent to the President for signature.

The President currently has the discretion to take one of three steps on the way forward with the Expropriation Bill:

1. The president can refer the Expropriation Bill back to the National Assembly;
2. The president may refer the Bill to the Constitutional Court for a declaratory order to confirm that the Expropriation Bill complies with the Constitution;
3. The president can sign the Expropriation Bill into law.

Agri SA is in the process of obtaining legal advice on when is the appropriate time to intervene from a legal perspective based on the above events and is ready to take the required steps with care and attention to protect private property rights.

## YOUNG FARMERS

### Young Farmer Conference 2024

The Young Farmer Committee of Free State Agriculture will host their annual conference in Bloemfontein on 11 APRIL.

Charl Saunderson from the Nooitgedacht Dorper Stud and also a motivational speaker, will address the young farmers about his experience and life lessons learned. Matters such as livestock and crop production, financial matters, etc. will also be discussed.

Inquiries can be sent to [elize@vslandbou.co.za](mailto:elize@vslandbou.co.za)

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