



# ONGEAG

SINCE 1904

NEWS SNIPPETS FEBRUARY 2024 | ISSUE 20



## ***12 DECADES - THEN TILL NOW***

On 16 February 1893, the 1st agricultural congress was held in Bloemfontein where delegates from the agricultural societies of Bloemfontein, Boshof, Fauresmith, Ficksburg, Ladybrand, Rouxville, Smithfield and Winburg were present: thus 8 of the 19 districts in the Free State. These agricultural societies' main task was to organize fairs, while they also attended to general agricultural matters.

Annual congresses were held until 1896 when they were discontinued, mainly due to the outbreak of rinderpest that was followed by the Anglo-Boer War. After that, a start was made with the establishment of farmers' associations and the need arose to establish the Free State Agricultural Union.

During a meeting on Saturday, March 19, 1904, a Mr. W.C. Whittal of Thaba Nchu elected chairman. The problem that is posed is that when the government receives representations from individual farmers, they are sent away with comforting words and the matter then receives no further attention. According to Mr Whittal, it would be better for the farmers to unite in a central union: *“Wy hebben inderdaad in deze Centrale Unie een Boeren Parlement in iedere zaak van landbouwkundigbelang behoort daar besproken te worden.”* (We indeed have a farmers' parliament in this Central Union and every matter of agricultural interest must be discussed there.)

It was decided that the first congress of the newly formed Union would take place on 23 May 1904 and with that the foundation was laid for posterity to build on. The Union enjoyed full recognition from the authorities from the beginning and the authorities already declared in 1904 that the opinion of the Free State Agricultural Union would first be obtained, before any legislation relating to agriculture would be passed.

The steadfastness of our farmers, the sacrifices that are made, the firm will to practice the agricultural industry sustainably and the certainty that their representations are coordinated in an organised matter, are still as relevant today as they were 120 years ago. The foundation of Free State Agriculture, namely membership of a farmers' association and active participation of members, is what has always distinguished us and made us strong. For the next 12 decades Free State Agriculture will do everything within our power to state and defend the cause of our members.

*Francis Wilken*



# RURAL SAFETY

## Crimes & livestock theft in the Free State - 3rd quarter

### The summary of the crime statistics

- Murder incidents in the RSA increased by 2.1% - incidents against women increased by 3.4% and against children decreased by 10.7% - Murders in the Free State decreased by 2.2%;
  - Attempted murder incidents increased by 13% - against women it increased by 11.9%, against children it decreased by 12.7% - in the Free State it increased by 42.7%;
  - Farm murders in the RSA increased by 6 incidents - 3 producers, 1 workers, 16 residents. In the Free State, farm murders took place in Bloemfontein, Reitz and Welkom;
  - Increase in armed robberies in the RSA by 6.6% (2502 incidents) - Free State had an increase of 6.8%;
  - House robberies in the RSA increased by 1.7% (104 incidents) - in the Free State there were 207 house robberies, a decrease of 0.5%;
  - In a 3 month period (October to December 2023) there were 8 farm attacks in the Free State which included 3 murders - Bloemspruit, Bethlehem, Oranjeville, Reitz, Steynsrus, Welkom.
- There is a 52.9% decrease in farm attacks during the 3 month period in the Free State

### The summary of the livestock theft statistics

- Reported livestock theft cases in RSA are 7,290 - a decrease of 2.1% (156 cases) most of them in KwaZulu-Natal (1,871) followed by the Eastern Cape (1,654) - Free State is third with 830 cases, a decrease of 2.9% (25 cases);
- A total of 57,344 animals were stolen in the three-month period (25,006 sheep, 14,948 goats, 16,124 cattle, 5,301 chickens) - no numbers regarding recovered livestock nor per province;
- Four (4) high crime towns in Free State are Ladybrand, Phuthaditjaba, Selosesha and Harrismith - represent 12.9% of Free State's reported livestock theft figures;
- A further twelve (12) high crime areas reported between 15 and 20 cases where the towns' cases represent 27.59% of the Free State's figures - Bethlehem, Bloemspruit, Botshabelo, Bultfontein, Dewetsdorp, Koppies, Makwane, Memel, Odendaalsrus, Senekal, Tseki, Vrede of which 2 are border towns - they have a combined percentage of 24.9%

The full analysis report is available on Free State Agriculture's [website](#)



## COMMERCIAL

### FSA's Traceability System ready for use

The 1st Foot & Mouth disease outbreak in the Free State had significant financial consequences for the province's livestock value chain. Farmers, agents, auctioneers, feedlots, abattoirs and exporters were seriously affected by this. Therefore, during the organization's 2022 Congress, members of Free State Agriculture (FSA) instructed the organisation to urgently investigate an animal traceability and safety system to prevent further risks.

After many meetings with industry players and trialling some of the systems, VL chose the AIMS (Animal Identification and Movement System) system to be set up for the Free State. This system was developed and is already in use by Agri Eastern Cape. Allfex is the long-standing trusted ear tag supplier providing electronic identification (EID) and visual ID (VID) laser printed tags with a unique animal identification number.

Existing animal tag information and data from existing management systems can also be uploaded onto FS-AIMS.

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**Register 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.

### Eskom Exempts Critical Irrigation Areas In Free State From Load Shedding

The ad hoc ESKOM load-shedding committee of the Central-East cluster (Free State and KZN) granted exemption from load shedding to certain critical irrigation lines to make up for the long periods when the lines were down due to emergency repairs. The decision to give load shedding exemption in the form of load reduction in the future depends on the ability to reduce energy consumption of networks.

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## COMMERCIAL (continue)

### Task Teams To Investigate Roads Challenges In Province

FSA met with the HOD, Directors and District Road Engineers of the Department of Community Safety, Roads and Transport on Friday 23 February 2024 where FSA expressed their serious concerns about the increasing cost of doing business in the rural Free State due to the dilapidated road infrastructure and other concerns .

The following task forces were called by the HOD with an order to meet within the next month to come up with solutions:

- 1) The Lesotho border road and
- 2) Legality of keeping heavy trucks off roads not designed for heavy traffic.

Dr Jack Armour, Commercial Manager for FSA emphasized that much better communication and transparency in the budget, planning and procurement process is needed for the agricultural community to restore confidence in the Department. "However, critical issues are still not being addressed," Armor told the HOD out of concern

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## RURAL DEVELOPMENT

With the election taking place on 29 May 2024, we expect increasing incidents of political parties seeking access to farm workers for political gain. Farmers are also likely to become targets of false statements or provoked to cause friction and it is therefore extremely important that you know your rights! Therefore take note of the following framework **documents** which are available on our website (closed section for members):

- *Guidelines on how to deal with incidents of trespassing and illegal land occupation - AgriSA Feb. 2024*
- *Illegal Hunting with dogs framework document – Dr Jane Buys processing of SAPS doc from Dec. 2023*

We are in the process of writing a framework document on the legal handling of the keeping of livestock by workers and residents on farms. It will be made available to members as soon as it is completed.



‘A familiar face for the agricultural community in the Free State.

The scraper operator, who works in the Reitz area, is paid by the agricultural community.



## NATURAL RESOURCES

### Amendment of Water Act

Dr Jack Armour attended the public consultation session in Bloemfontein and provided input. FSA's main concern is the state's drive towards water redistribution without having the necessary capacity and structures in place. Armour is of the opinion that the state is 'rushing' to complete the current obligations in terms of Validation and Verification so that the transition to compulsory licensing can take place.

The bill still imposes race-based requirements on the transfer of water rights. It emphasizes the "use it, or loose it" principle, but this would be clarified if validation and verification were completed.

Furthermore, according to the mandate of its members, FSA also offered clear opposition to the water right applications for water source pollution due to gas mining activities, especially fracking and UCG (Underground Coalbed Gassification). The point also comes through clearly in FSA's input to the thorough written commentary compiled by Agri SA's team of water law experts submitted 28 February 2024.

## YOUNG FARMERS

### The new generation of agriculture

The Young farmer committee of Free State Agriculture will host their annual conference in Bloemfontein on **11 APRIL**.

Charl Saunderson from the Nooitgedacht Dorperstoet 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.



Book your place in time with [elize@vslanbou.co.za](mailto:elize@vslanbou.co.za) / 051 444 4609

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