



Congress 2024 - Where are we going?

"We must secure the future of agriculture for the next 120 years. The changes in the government of national unity and better understanding for the future of the country give hope to the farmers. However, it is essential that farmers get constructively involved in building the land. Participate, organize in farmers' associations. Help Free State Agriculture, help your community, help your fellow farmers. We must stand together as a unit."

This was the urgent appeal of Francois Wilken, president of Free State Agriculture, to the congress participants during this year's event which was presented from 7 to 8 August in Bloemfontein. More than 230 guests attended the Congress. The Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen, also made time to attend our 120-year celebration dinner.

Videos of the speakers' presentations are available [here](#)



Francois Wilken delivers his presidential speech on August 7, 2024.



Congress attendees socialize outside during the Congress.



The panel discussion made for interesting debates.



Steynsrus District Farmers' Union was named 2024 Agricultural Association of the Year.



Agri Hertzogville achieved 2nd place in the 2024 Agricultural Society of the Year competition.



Hoopstad Agricultural Society entered for the 1st time and achieved 3rd place in the 2024 Agricultural Society of the Year competition.



RURAL SAFETY

Crime figures 1 April to 30 June 2024

On 30 August 2024, the Minister of Police announced the crime figures for the first quarter of 2024-2025 (1 April to 30 June 2024).

Regarding farm murders, there were 9 in the RSA, of which 5 occurred in the Free State (2 workers, 2 producers and 1 other person). Farm attacks in the RSA increased with 15 incidents (88 in total) of which 37 of the 88 attacks were robbery related. In 16 farm attack incidents livestock and vehicles were robbed.

The provinces that recorded an increase in livestock theft were Free State, North West, Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga. The most stolen livestock were sheep (18,892), followed by chickens (16,328), goats (13,809), cattle (13,213), pigs (480), donkeys (277), game (194), horses (141) and ostriches (12)

The Free State has shown an increase in serious violent crimes. This includes business and home robberies. Of concern are kidnappings in the province which increased by 155 cases (31.4%). Livestock theft in the Free State increased by 3.4% (756 cases reported). Selosesha is 14th among the top 30 police stations in the country in terms of livestock theft cases (34 cases).

Safety summit should not be a paper exercise, asks FSA



Free State Agriculture, together with all government departments that have an interest in agriculture as well as all organized agricultural organisations, attended the Provincial Safety Summit led by the SAPS on 28 and 29 August 2024 in Bloemfontein. Both the MEC of Community Safety, Roads and Transport as well as the MEC of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs were also involved.

Jakkals le Roux, chairman of FSA's Rural Safety committee, confirms that challenges identified by the core organizations and departments were discussed in five commissions, where concrete proposals and action steps were given on how they should be addressed and by which departments. [Read more](#)



RURAL SAFETY (continue)

Safety and Livestock Theft Workshops

Free State Agriculture's Rural Safety Committee in collaboration with the Police (RS coordinators and Livestock Theft Units) will offer safety and training workshops in all the districts of the Free State From 4 September 2024 to 20 November 2024.

The workshops will focus on the following:

- The 8 core pillars and criteria for the effective implementation of the National Rural Safety Strategy (NRSS) between the SAPS as a key player in farming communities.
- All core legislation relating to livestock theft.
- What important burden of proof is required in order to successfully carry livestock theft cases through the courts.
- Advice, advice and information on how to address livestock theft.

Farmers, safety representatives and sector leaders are requested to attend the workshops where everyone will be provided with very good advice and information. Leaflets with contact persons' details will be passed out ahead of time. Peet Swanepoel, the provincial coordinator of the Private investigators on livestock theft, Isabel Kruger, livestock theft and safety representative of FSA as well as Dr Jane Buys will provide input during the workshops.

Safety and crimes at Lesotho border



Free State Agriculture (FSA) met with the Free State MEC of Community Safety as well as the MEC of Agriculture on 22 August 2024 regarding the safety and increased crime experienced by all border communities and farmers on the RSA/Lesotho border. Delegations from the SAPS top structure, the SANDF, Border Management Authority (BMA) and House of Traditional Leaders were also present.



The MEC of Community Safety, Mr Mbalula, has indicated that he will soon visit the border areas to hold talks with farming communities in all the border towns.

[Read more](#)



NATURAL RESOURCES

Fire season

With warm weather before cold fronts and tremendous winds, the fire danger index was in the red several times in the previous month. Farmers and Fire Protection Associations (FPAs) were warned in advance and put on high alert. Thanks to good prevention measures, many potential fires were prevented or quickly brought under control.

Unfortunately, large fires that were impossible to stop due to the strong winds still occurred and large areas were burned. Areas that had particularly large fires who approached us for help were N1-Verkeerdevlei and Ficksburg. There were also big fires at Thaba Nchu (North and South, towards Tweespruit), Warden, Vrede and Kestell. Free State Agriculture hereby appeals to farmers in the immediate area who have bales available in their feed banks, or field available for grazing, to call the agricultural association or FSA office to coordinate disaster relief.

Donations for disaster relief actions can also be contributed to our Free State Agricultural Support Trust by visiting our website <https://vrystaatlandbou.co.za/donate/>

FS-Aims system

The RMIS recognizes AIMS as one of the many independent systems that can be linked to the National Animal Traceability system. AIMS has already been rolled out in the Eastern and Northern Cape as well as the Free State.

The FS-AIMS system (Animal identification, movement and safety system) has been running since the beginning of the year. Farmers can set up their account (click on "create an account"), order ear tags and load tagged animals onto the system. Click [here](#) to visit the platform.

Farmers must complete their information, including brand details and brand certificates must be uploaded. Furthermore, the GPS location of your farm must be entered. Once RMIS has launched their GLN (Global Location Number) campaign, the GLN will be integrated here. The GLN is the unique Global Location number of every business in the world that uses a QR code on the GS1 system. It is therefore the number that can show the animal's exact lineage on a bar code in the store or QR code throughout the value chain.

By joining GS1, FSA has received its own unique GLN code and can therefore issue our own unique numbers for our VID (visual ID) ear tags and is not dependent on an ear tag supplier for the unique numbers. Where farmers do use EID (Electronic ID) tags, the unique number is issued by the tag manufacturer and automatically captured on the AIMS system.





COMMERCIAL

Participation in all Environmental Impact Analysis (EIA) processes important

Following a discussion point about the possible dangers of gas mining on agriculture during the Free State Agriculture 2024 Congress, the Natural Resources committee of FSA is gathering data and knowledge to rethink our strategy for dealing with gas prospecting and extraction. Scientific studies show that climate change has a major impact on Southern Africa, highlighting the need to protect high-potential agricultural land for food security. That is why Free State Agriculture also supports the speedy Presidential signing of the Bill on the Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land (Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Bill, B8-2021).

On 11 September 2023, FSA sent an email to all agricultural associations in the Northern Free State (Status of Gas-mine Prospecting in the N-FS & Agri SA Guideline Prospecting Applications) to which we received no response and therefore assumed that our members are comfortable with our explanation, position and strategy on handling gas prospecting and mining applications. Although only Tetra4 has already obtained a gas mining right and already mines under the name Renegen, the following are also in the process of obtaining Environmental Authorization: Rhino Resources, Panoro Energy, Kinetiko under the name Afro-Energy, Imbokodo, Plateau Helium

For information on petroleum products applications in your area, visit [Petroleum Agency Geoportal](#). According to legislation, affected landowners must be notified of prospecting on their land.

Members are encouraged to actively participate in the Public participation process of the independent Environmental practitioner who must draw up the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as well as the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) before Environmental Authorization is granted to be able to prospect. After prospecting has identified certain areas with high potential, the entire EIA process must be gone through again in order to mine there. There are 3 opportunities for public participation:

1. After the introduction of the draft Scoping Report - within 30 days,
2. After the publication of the OIA report and EMP report - also within 30 days, and
3. With the final appeal against the Environmental Authorization which is submitted within 15 days through a thoroughly detailed appeal.

Affected landowners can submit their objections or concerns about any problem or inconvenience that the proposed development may cause, such as e.g. dust/sound pollution, water/groundwater pollution, destruction of road infrastructure, bringing crime to the area, socio-economic impacts on job creation and land prices, etc. Further inquiries can be directed to Dr Jack Armour at jack@vslanbou.co.za



LABOUR ISSUES

Comment on National Minimum Wage

The National Minimum Wage Commission has, by way of the Government Gazette of 20 August 2024, requested comments regarding the possible adjustment to the National Minimum Wage. Submissions must reach the Wage Commission by 30 September 2024 and can include the relevant document to be completed which is available [here](#)

Farmers' associations are welcome to prepare their own submissions and pass them on to Free State Agriculture for the compilation of consolidated comments. The written comments can be sent to gernie@vslandbou.co.za by 25 September 2024 for inclusion in the consolidated comments.

Cannabis for private purposes

On 3 June 2024, the President approved legislation for the use of marijuana (cannabis) for private purposes. It is now crucial to start amending your workplace policies to match the new legislation. The new legislation allows adults to be in possession of marijuana in both private and public areas, but may only use it in private areas where there are no adults objecting to it or in the presence of minors.



The full article by our service provider, SEESA, is available [here](#).

Access to Graves protocol

Agri SA has made the revised and signed version of the protocol for access to graves available.

The document is available for download [here](#).

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