



VRYSTAAT LANDBOU
FREE STATE AGRICULTURE



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Together against FMD

Best Free State Agriculture member

Since the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in the Free State in mid-2025, Free State Agriculture has been at the **forefront of advocating for real solutions** and support for you - our members - and the wider livestock industry. The rapid escalation of foot-and-mouth disease across key livestock regions threatens farming incomes, food security and rural livelihoods and is a crisis that no farmer should face alone.

Free State Agriculture has been calling for decisive, science-based action and clear communication on protocols, increased veterinary deployment, strict biosecurity enforcement and sustainable access to vaccines since 2022. We have stressed the importance of effective quarantine and movement control on cloven-hoofed animals, and we have supported members with practical biosecurity guidance on the ground.

On Monday, 26 January 2026, Free State Agriculture took the fight to the letter by formally challenging the state monopoly on access to vaccines, by submitting **a letter of demand** to the Minister of Agriculture together with key industry partners (Saai and Sakeliga) to unlock vaccine supplies and remove barriers that limit an effective response. This step reflects our commitment to not just voice concerns, but to drive real policy change that protects farmers' livelihoods and the future of our industry.

Free State Agriculture demands transparent leadership, coordinated action and equitable support for those who are hit hardest. We will continue to represent your interests at every level, REGARDLESS of the challenges and attacks against us. This is not politics. This is survival. Farmers on the ground are desperate, under siege and have no more options. Urgent and transparent action is needed now – because our industry is at stake.

Francois Wilken

President, Free State Agriculture



RURAL SAFETY

Safety checklist for Biosecurity

In light of the current foot-and-mouth disease crisis, the Rural Safety Committee of Free State Agriculture has taken the initiative to compile a Biosecurity Safety Checklist.

The essence of the checklist is to limit and prevent access to a farmer's property/farm.

The **main points** to consider are:

**Protocol notice board
for access to farms**

**Setting up a checkpoint
near your home**

**Involvement of
workers**

**Inclusion in
contingency plan in
your area**

**Empowerment with
knowledge – training
courses**

**Important contacts /
emergency numbers**

**Movement of animals
and trading**

**Warning signs –
related to the spread
of BKS**

**Information and
communication/flow**

The complete checklist is available from Dr Jane Buys at jane@vslanbou.co.za

Biosecurity fine list & other issues

Free State Agriculture met with the Department of Agriculture, SAPS, SANDF and legal professionals on 3 February 2026 on a proposed biosecurity penalty list regarding the spread of Foot and Mouth Disease. There was consensus that such a penalty list is essential to effectively deal with breaches of the Animal Health Act, especially in quarantine areas.

Three Free State districts are currently showing a higher incidence of FMD among cattle, with recent outbreaks among pigs. Procedures for reporting, quarantine control and collaboration between veterinarians, SAPS and SANDF were confirmed. Effective public communication, including in communal areas and the handling of stray animals, was emphasised.



NATURAL RESOURCES

Locusts reported near Hopetown & De Aar

Farmers along the Free State's southern and southwestern borders are urged to be vigilant for brown locusts and be prepared for a possible influx from the nearby Hopetown and De Aar areas, where brown locusts already hatched in the last week of January.

The protocol for reporting brown swarming locusts is to report it immediately to your nearest Locust Control Officer (LCO), as well as on the Locust app by answering the questions via WhatsApp at 079 467 0702

Heat increases fire risk

Prolonged heat waves, strong winds, lightning and a high nutrient load on the veld during the mid-summer drought have led to the fire danger index increasingly indicating red warnings over large parts of the Free State. Farmers are encouraged to fulfil their responsibilities within their Fire Protection Associations (FPAs) and ensure that all fire protection equipment and protective clothing is ready and serviced.

FSA thanks the sponsors who have made fire prevention and firefighting training worth R300 000 possible for farmers and their workers by the end of 2025.

COMMERCIAL

Energy

FSA has submitted comments on ESKOM's proposed tariff increases that are higher than NERSA allows, as well as on the planned unbundling of a new State Power Distribution Network entity.

Our main objection is the valuation of the current network as if ESKOM alone paid for it, while farmers have financed the "last mile" infrastructure themselves over the past 25 years. FSA believes that agriculture, like smelters, should qualify for a special tariff concession due to the sector's importance for job creation, the rural economy and food self-sufficiency.

FSA will hold its first quarterly meeting of 2026 with ESKOM's central regional branch on 30 January, where affordability, service delivery and outdated infrastructure will be on the agenda.



LABOUR

National Minimum Wage

The National Minimum Wage (for farm workers) was recently announced and is as follows:

	1 March 2026
Hourly tariff	R30.23
Day tariff *(8 hours)	R241.84
Weekly tariff *(5 days)	R1209.20
Monthly tariff (40 hours)	R5239.46

	1 March 2026
Hourly tariff	R30.23
Day tariff *(9 hours)	R272.07
Weekly tariff *(5 days)	R1360.35
Monthly tariff (45 hours)	R5894.40

Die amended National Minimum Wage will be implemented on **1 March 2026**.

The Government Gazette is available [here](#).

YOUNG FARMERS

Young Farmer Conference & Young Farmer of the Year



Young farmers are the future of agriculture and must be part of the solutions. Hence the theme for this year's conference, 'Be part of the solution', which will be presented in Bloemfontein on 16 April 2026.

Free State Agriculture is also pleased to receive entries for the 2026 Young Farmer of the Year competition. Entries close on 23 February. The entry form can be downloaded [here](#).

Contact Melissa for any enquiries regarding the conference and/or competition at melissa@vslanbou.co.za

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