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ONGEAG



High Court forces action as Minister's delays continue in FMD case

Dear FSA member

On 28 April 2026, the Pretoria High Court was forced to impose strict deadlines and a punitive cost order against the Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, and his department following continued delays.

The court has now ordered that the long-delayed Section 10 vaccination scheme be finalised and published by 5 May 2026, with the matter set down for argument on 11 May 2026.

“Despite the severe impact of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) on farmers, agribusinesses and livestock, the Minister of Agriculture and his officials again attempted to delay urgent court proceedings. The lack of urgency and slow response by the department, is costing farmers millions and yet there seems to be no urgency!”

FSA reiterates that there is no legal basis to prevent the private sector from playing a meaningful role in FMD vaccination.

“FSA remains committed to working alongside the provincial Department of Agriculture, which continues to drive the provincial vaccination programme despite limited resources.

We will continue to pursue the matter in court to ensure that any final framework enables effective, immediate and practical disease control measures — including private-sector vaccination.”

Francois Wilken

President, Vrystaat Landbou

ESKOM

Free State Agriculture's Commercial Committee met with ESKOM on 24 April 2026 regarding affordability, service delivery and risk. ESKOM confirmed that veldfire claims under R10mil are handled locally, but larger, combined claims may be delayed at Mega-Watt Park.

Biosecurity was also discussed, with confirmation that contractors are receiving training and equipment. FSA once again emphasised that protocols must be strictly and practically applied.

FSA & Department of Roads clash

Free State Agriculture and the Provincial Department of Roads recently disputed over the condition of gravel roads and the department's budget priorities.

While farmers are being asked to help with Letsema/PPP projects, FSA made it clear that farmers already spend a lot to maintain most roads and fill potholes themselves. FSA insisted that a way be found to compensate farmers for the work they do.

Furthermore, FSA requested that the schedules for road grading be shared on District WhatsApp groups for transparency and that the department actively work on plans to properly train and employ new grader operators – an issue that FSA has been advocating for for years. It was decided that FSA should designate a person per district to liaise directly with the District Engineers.



For further information or questions, contact jack@vslandbou.co.za

Legislation to take note of



Free State Agriculture is aware of the following legislation and is responding on behalf of our members:

- PDALA: [Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Regulations](#)
- Call to [unregistered water users](#) to register their water use. Note important [exemptions and obligations](#)
 - [Schedule 1 -water users](#) (for domestic use and livestock watering), as well as water users who fall within the area of operation of a water users association, are exempt from the requirement to register their water uses.
 - However, where a water user uses a borehole for commercial purposes, the registration of that borehole remains mandatory, notwithstanding any exemption that may otherwise apply.
- FMD: [Section 10](#) regulations
- [Draft Amendment Bill on the Prevention of Illegal Eviction and Illegal Occupation of Land](#)



Review of national rural safety strategy

FSA commented on the Revised National Rural Safety Strategy (NRSS) by the end of April 2026, of which the 8 pillars have been reduced to 5 with a focus on SAPS capacity and community engagement.

FSA continues to emphasise:

- Strengthened SAPS capacity (Vispol, STU, Crime Intelligence) and dedicated resources
- Better trained Stock Theft Unit detectives and improved investigations for successful prosecution
- Deployment of reservists (farmers and private security) to support SAPS
- Finalisation of key legislation (Pound Act, Stock Theft Amendments, municipal compliance)
- Improved border safety, including 4x4 border road and greater SANDF/BMA involvement

Maize theft

Maize theft in the Free State is a seasonal, highly organised crime (March–July) that amounts to approximately R234 million in losses annually. Groups steal maize directly from fields or from vehicles, and even cargoes are hijacked. Farmers bear high costs for security, with districts such as Fezile Dabi, Lejweleputswa and Thabo Mofutsanyana being hit hard.

Farmers are encouraged to report incidents to the SAPS, implement permit systems and ask for greater visibility. Municipal law enforcement should also be requested to prohibit street vendors selling maize through by-laws.



Wage returns

The Department of Employment and Labour has issued a notice in terms of the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, 1993 regarding the submission of Return of Earnings (ROE) for the 2025 assessment period.

Click [here](#) for the full document



Stock theft – conversation with new SAPS Provincial Commissioner

FSA and the Free State Stock Theft Forum recently met with the new SAPS Provincial Commissioner, Lt Gen Lesia. The purpose of the discussion was to discuss the shortcomings of the Stock Theft Unit, and what steps will be taken by the police to address them.

Where problems with police service delivery are experienced, farmers are requested to first bring it to the attention of their station commanders (who must act as chairpersons during the LV meetings), then refer it to the District Commissioner for investigation. If they are not satisfied, it should be forwarded to the provincial Vispol office. It was clearly stated that the SAPS does have serviceable vehicles and there should be no reason why a complaint cannot be attended to.

Copper cable theft

One of the biggest crime threats currently in the Free State is that of copper and scrap theft which also adversely affects the agricultural sector. More than 20 incidents were reported by approximately 10 farming communities where copper cables from irrigation systems, solar panels, solar pumps, Eskom transformers, etc. were stolen from farms. Several requests were made to the SAPS and specifically the Organised Crime Unit, Vispol and Crime Intelligence to visit second-hand dealers, outlets for “compliance” inspections. There were also several arrests carried out by the SAPS.

Farmers are requested to report these types of crimes to their local SAPS and to communicate all information regarding this type of crime to the FSA structure through safety representatives. Written requests are made to effectively address this type of crime.



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standard stock available for immediate pick-up or 2-weeks lead-time for printing		Nr. / Aantal	Subsidised price (R)	Normal price (excl)
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ID-Trax UHF-RFID Tag (not picked up by standard RFID scanners) - Order / collect directly at SAStamboek in Bfn			15.00	15.00
	ID-Trax			



2026 Young Farmer Conference

On Thursday, 16 April 2026, approximately 130 young farmers from across the province gathered in Bloemfontein for Free State Agriculture's 2026 Young Farmer Conference.

Although dark clouds hung in the sky, the atmosphere was light and positive.

Key Highlights of the Day:

- **Biosecurity and Technology:** Dr. Fanie Steyn (RAMSEM) stressed the critical importance of biosecurity to protect exports and reproduction. He pointed out that South Africa has world-class genetics and that the use of embryos and semen is the fastest way to improve herds.
- **Market Outlook:** Albert Myburgh of Afgri noted that, although input costs are high, South Africa is still the "food basket" of the region.

- **Leadership and Engagement:** Friedl von Maltitz (VL Vice President) encouraged farmers to stop complaining on "Facebook and at barbecue fires" and instead join local Farmers' Associations to use their collective economic power.
- **Resilience and Attitude:** Dr. Johan Beukes advocated a shift from a "complaint mindset" to a "solution-oriented" approach. He distinguished between technical problems and complex challenges that require adaptation.
- **Succession Planning:** Experts from Old Mutual discussed the importance of estate planning and noted that only 30% of family businesses are successfully transferred to the second generation due to poor communication.

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