MAY NEWS 2026

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ONGEAG

FMD: Victory for farmers

Best FSA member

Free State Agriculture (FSA) welcomes the latest order of the Pretoria High Court, which marks a decisive turning point in the ongoing fight to protect South Africa's livestock industry against foot-and-mouth disease (FMD).

Following months of legal action driven by FSA and its partners, the Court has on 25 May 2026 confirmed that livestock owners may, under clearly defined conditions, procure and administer lawfully imported or manufactured FMD vaccines to their animals.

The order further prohibits undue interference by the state in lawful commercial relationships within the vaccine supply chain, reinforcing the need for a functional and accessible vaccine market.

While the order provides immediate interim relief, the matter will proceed to final determination, with further legal steps to be instituted within 20 days.

FSA will continue to engage the legal process to ensure that the final regulatory framework supports the agricultural sector, protects livelihoods, and strengthens national biosecurity.

Francois Willem

President,Free State Agriculture

Energy challenges and opportunities

Free State Agriculture remains actively engaged in discussions with ESKOM regarding the impact of electricity costs on farmers.

Following our previous quarterly meeting, ESKOM Central hosted an online information session to explain the new tariff structures and bill components. Although attendance was limited, the session provided valuable insight – particularly that the fixed cost component makes up a larger proportion of the bill.

Despite these challenges, farmers are encouraged to consider alternative energy solutions where feasible. Financial support is available through the Landbank's Agro-Energy Fund, which can cover up to 50% of the cost of alternative energy installations in the form of a grant.

Subsidized ear tags

In May, FS launched a subsidised ear tagging initiative to place unique identification numbers in the ears of livestock. This supports the roll-out of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) vaccine and encourages farmers to participate in the voluntary vaccination scheme, while also helping to put in place the necessary regulatory systems for the purchase and administration of vaccine.

Farmers who are not yet registered on https://FS.AIM.farm can order ear tags at R6 per set (standard ITT tags) or RFID buttons at R8 (first 200 per FS member). After that, standard prices apply. Stock is available immediately from FS, with the option for additional laser printing for a one-off fee.

Registration on the system is required, and all ear tags are uploaded to the AIMS traceability system in the purchaser's name. When animals are moved, relevant information is automatically shared with RMIS, which generates documents such as Section 6 and 8 forms and animal health declarations. These integrated systems contribute to a national traceability system that supports international trade according to WOAH standards and strengthens local biosecurity.

FSA thanks the Free State Department of Agriculture for their sponsorship that makes this initiative possible.

Click on the photo to enlarge

VL AIMS Tag Price List
from 01 May - 30 Jun. 2026
Register and order online:
http://FS.AIMS.farm
standard stock available for immediate pick-up or 2+ weeks lead-time for printing

BKS PROMOSIE (gesubsideer)

Reëls: Net 200-tags/buttons per VL lid gesubsidieer, daarna volle prys. | Vereiste registrasie op http://FS.AIMS.Farm | Bewys van brandmerk, adres (=GLN) en enting aansoek (vee getalle) benodig

Cattle		Nr. / Aantal	Subsidised price (R)	Normal price (excl)
Complete set: RFID + ITT M3F3 *(Visual ITT Unique Number with place to write animal number + Unique RFID Electroninc number for easy reading)*			14.00	20.10
Senior Male and Senior Female ITT Tag set *(no custom printing if immediate pickup - only ITT - available in Yellow or Pink)*			6.00	10.10
Female RFID Button + Male Button			8.00	10.00
Aditional extras if needed:	**Design & Courier Fees**			
Design Fee for additional printing			200	200
Pick up @ FSA Offices FREE			0	0
Courier Charge *(actual fee may differ from indicated price)*			100	100
TOTAL		VAT inc.		

Vehicle Registration & License fees

Farmers should take note of new vehicle registration and license fees, as announced in the Government Gazette of 29 May 2026.

Most categories remain unchanged at 0% but there are certain categories where a 4% increase applies.

Click here for the full document.

Maize theft

Maize theft remains a major risk that can adversely affect farming communities. The SAPS has been requested at all levels of policing to pay attention to the type of crime and assist complainants (farmers or security guards working for farmers) to report complaints, attend crime scenes, launch crime prevention actions and operations and ensure that arrests are made.

Farmers are advised to insist that all crimes are discussed during monthly meetings so that suggestions and solutions emerge regarding policing.

FSA has drawn up a guideline document on what farmers should put in place when they are targeted by maize thieves, especially regarding policing. The document was distributed to all safety representatives of farmers' associations. If it is not available, Dr Jane Buys can be contacted at jane@vslandbou.co.za

Crime Reporting Line

Free State Agriculture operates a WhatsApp Chatbot where farmers can report all incidents – regardless of whether they have been reported to SAPS.

The system automatically categorizes messages and shares them with Free State Agriculture for follow-up.

PLEASE NOTE that the number only receives WhatsApp messages and does not handle calls.

061 079 1253

VRYSTAAT LANDBOU
FREE STATE AGRICULTURE

Monthly meetings – SAPS within national rural safety strategy

During a Priority Committee meeting with the SAPS, FSA expressed concern that monthly meetings within the National Rural Safety Strategy (NRSS) were not consistently taking place according to guidelines.
To address this, practical documentation was developed in Afrikaans and English to better structure meetings and improve results. This includes, among others:

- Power of attorney forms from farmers to safety representatives of farmers' associations to enable them to make inquiries about their criminal cases;
- Example of an agenda and what everything needs to be discussed, e.g. all crimes and feedback regarding operations/patrols/actions carried out by SAPS and other role players;
- List of cases on which feedback is requested from the Detectives (high profile cases);
- Complaint form that a farmer can hand over to a Station Commander if he/she is not satisfied with the investigation of a case (attendance at crime scene, etc.);
- A feedback report that is passed on to the regional safety representative of FSA;
- A checklist indicating what should be discussed at monthly meetings and feedback that should be obtained.

Safety representatives and sector leaders are encouraged to apply these guidelines where meetings are not functioning as desired and farmers are also encouraged to keep a clear paper trail if they are not satisfied with SAPS service delivery.

RSA/Lesotho border

Free State Agriculture recently attended a cross-border meeting in Clocolan between SAPS and Lesotho's LMPS. Farmers were able to obtain direct contact details for Lesotho's stock theft unit to improve response times.

Key issues discussed included the FMD outbreak in Lesotho, stock theft, illegal grazing and other cross-border crimes. Lesotho declared a state of emergency in March 2026, with a 10 km livestock exclusion zone along the SA border.

The Setsoto Municipality is currently busy with vaccinations on communal lands in Ladybrand, Excelsior, Hobhouse and Tweespruit.

Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARDE) is setting up quarantine camps in four towns along the RSA/Lesotho border, namely QwaQwa, Ficksburg, Ladybrand and Wepener/Zastron.

Stock theft remains a serious concern in the Thabo Mofutsanyana district, with calls for more detectives and increased awareness campaigns in Lesotho communities to address related crimes, including cross-border grazing and the theft of products such as solar pumps and solar panels.

2026 Congress

Free State Agriculture will host our annual Congress on 5 & 6 AUG 2026, titled '*Together for a stronger agriculture in the Free State'*.

The discussions will cover, among other things:
👉Rural Safety – Together for a safer countryside
👉Foot and mouth disease – Lessons learned, solutions moving forward
👉Input costs – Doing more with less
👉Infrastructure – The bridge to a working economy
👉Free State Agriculture's structure will also be shared again to confirm its relevance and effectiveness.

We invite ALL members to inquire with your local farmers' association regarding delegation to the congress. Closing: 3 July!

The Call to congress & registration form is available here👉https://www.vrystaatlandbou.co.za/more-about-us/#congress

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