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FREE STATE AGRICULTURE

ONGEAG



NEWS SNIPPETS

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COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS

Lack of cell phone signal in rural areas

The lack of cell phone signals caused by load shedding has resulted in the agricultural sector in the Free State suffering losses of approximately R346 and R488 million in the past three months.

These figures were obtained through a survey recently undertaken by Free State Agriculture's Rural Safety Committee. The purpose of the survey was to determine the impact of load shedding among members. Of the 88 Free State farming communities, 38 participated in the survey.

The lack of cell phone reception also has a connection with crime incidents on farms. Dr Jane Buys points out that 64.4% of farmers indicated that they had experienced between 1-4 crime incidents in the last 3 months when load shedding took place, while 21% indicated that they had between 5-19 crime incidents.

In addition to the numerous crime incidents, 58% of the farmers, their families and workers also indicated that they could not get hold of any emergency services in the last 3 months due to poor reception during load shedding.

FSA believes that mobile phone service providers must come up with urgent interventions, or bring in rebates for farming communities, subsidies for erecting wi-fi towers and green energy in order to ensure communication in rural areas, which in turn can better address the impact and scale of crimes.

How does FSA help?

If a community experiences problems with cell phone reception, a case must be reported to MTN or Vodacom immediately. Once there are 10 reporting numbers, the information can be passed on to Dr Jack Armour at FSA jack@vslandbou.co.za



COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS

Give us power.....

ESKOM Central-East cluster and Free State Agriculture met on 2 February 2023. FSA presented to ESKOM the results of their survey on the impact of load shedding on farmers in the Free State. As of 1 Dec 2022, farmers have suffered losses of R372.5 million due to the impact of load shedding on crops and emergency expenses for the purchase of additional generation (mostly generators) and the fuel to power it. Thanks to the 300+ (10%) members who participated in the survey!

ESKOM is well aware of the crisis. However, NERSA regulations NRS048-9 Code of Practice of 2019 are very restrictive. Since this regulation contains no reference to agriculture on the exemption list, it may therefore not be granted.

The NERSA advisory board on load shedding is chaired by BUSA, among others. elected and therefore Agri SA must be represented there as a member of BUSA. There is also a FS ESKOM Payload Committee to which FSA has requested representation.

Load reduction requests

Farmers, either as individuals or as a group on a feed line, can submit applications to the ESKOM contact center for load shedding reduction (curtailment).

The farmer representing the group needs a written authorization (proxy) from each ESKOM customer on the feed line to negotiate on their behalf. In this way, farmers can then decide among themselves how they will adapt to load shedding schedules and arrange among themselves who will use less power when. Smart devices can also be used to manage it.

Contact persons for ESKOM 'Load Curtailment' requests:

Annakie Swanepoel - SwanepAN@eskom.co.za
CC: Eugene Myburgh - MyburgEC@eskom.co.za & jack@vslanbou.co.za

For enquiries, contact Dr Jack Armor at FSA office 051 444 4609



COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS

Road infrastructure: A little hope

The S67 Hammonia-Senekal dirt road has been beautifully and decently repaired by the new contractors appointed there by the roads department. There are 13 contractors appointed across the Free State which is definitely a spark of hope.

Free State Agriculture (FSA) would like to express our sincere thanks to all the farmers and workers who rolled up their sleeves to do what they can do! In the last week of February we received photos from Steynsrus, Tweeling (Heilbron dirt road), Waaikraal (R706) and Wesselsbron where farmers stepped in, in collaboration with the roads department and support from the local businesses, and repaired the roads themselves. The Department of Roads has in certain cases supplied the road signs and hot tar to the agricultural community.

Light in the tunnel for dirt roads

In the meantime, FSA met with Infrastructure SA on 28 February regarding the repair of dirt roads in the province in particular.

The surveys carried out by FSA last year have reached Infrastructure SA and real action is being planned. Dr Jack Armour also informed them of the condition of the Free State's yellow fleet and it was indicated that attention would be given to repair it. The replacement of drainage pipes that were scratched open or washed away was also brought to their attention.

In a National roads working group follow-up meeting chaired by Minister Didiza on 14 February, the issue of the signing off of the R30 and R34 roads by the Free State Premier to SANRAL was raised in order that work on the roads can also receive quick attention. SANRAL reported that they use the information through the ValaZonke SANRAL Pothole App to fix the roads under their supervision and do pass the information on to the other levels of government responsible for provincial and municipal roads. They do however not get the reports back as to whether the problems reported have been fixed. The minister indicated that she will talk to her department heads to pay attention to this.



RURAL SAFETY

FSA questions Minister's livestock theft figures

The 3rd quarter livestock theft figures for the period 1 October to 31 December 2022, according to the Minister of Police, show a drop in the Free State of 4.9% at 111 police stations with a reported number of 855 cases.

However, Dr Jane Buys, safety risk analyst from Free State Agriculture, questions the drop. "Although the Free State had a decrease of under 5% in livestock theft notification rate, the large numbers of livestock show that reported cases should not be the measure by which a crime has increased. The values in monetary losses/money value must be determined and the numbers that are stolen per case will show that the type of crime is taking place in an organized manner and is being orchestrated."

According to Dr Buys, the high crime areas in relation to cattle theft in the Free State for the period were identified as Bloemspruit, Ficksburg, Harrismith, Mafube, Phuthaditjaba and Selosesha. Towns that can further be identified as high crime areas are Bultfontein, Hennenman, Reitz, Rouxville, Senekal, Vrede, Verkeerdevlei, Warden and Winburg. Border towns that stand out in the period are Ficksburg, Kestell, Phuthaditjaba and Tseki in the QwaQwa area, and Tweespruit.

It is important that farming communities and the police prioritize the towns that show a rise in livestock theft in order to establish crime prevention actions and operations. Detailed crime pattern analyzes must be done on reported cases in order to realize white/blue light operations and also other actions at the right times for maximum impact.

Animal Identification mark certificate

FSA constantly receives inquiries to help farmers obtain their Animal registration certificates from the Registrar of Brands, or make inquiries about such certificates.

The Red meat Producers Organization (RPO) and in particular Carine Annandale can be contacted for these purposes.

Carine can be contacted on mobile number 079 529 5000 or email address

vrystaatrpo@rpofs.co.za



RURAL SAFETY

Livestock theft training in collaboration with NPA

Ilisabel Kruger, representative of FSA's Rural Safety Committee, was involved in the training of public prosecutors in the Welkom cluster together with Adv. Jacques Harrington from 22-24 February 2023 .

The training focuses primarily on the impact and extent of livestock theft on the commercial agricultural sector in the Free State, as well as ensuring that all complaints related to livestock theft are placed on the charge sheets.

Future training will be offered in all the clusters in the Free State for the prosecutors.

Safety training for agricultural communities

Standardized training for farming communities was offered in February 2023 in 2 geographical areas in the Free State, namely Parys and Bethlehem. At Parys, Phase 1 (largely home-and-hearth) training was offered in connection with farmers' association where 16 persons were trained. In Bethlehem, farmers were trained in Phase 1 and 2 training where Phase 2 primarily focuses on response group training. Farmers from six (6) farmers' associations were involved, a total of 32 people.

Further training for March 2023 has already been booked for Reitz and Zastron area. Farming communities can get in touch with **Pieter Kemp** from LGV in order to book their training regarding Phase 1 and 2.

Important dates 2023

- 23 March District meeting, Warden
- 18 Apr Young farmer conference & Young farmer of the year function
- 20 Apr District meeting, Perdeberg
- 3 May District meeting, Smithfield
- 12 May Young farmer day, Bloemfontein
- 2 & 3 Aug Annual Congress
- 22 Sept Agriculture.Golf golf day



RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LAND AFFAIRS

Expropriation Bill

The Expropriation Bill is currently at the National Council of Provinces for deliberation. The Select Committee on Transport, Public Service and Administration, Public Works and Infrastructure invites stakeholders to submit written comments on the Expropriation Bill [B 23B - 2020].

Agri SA and its members are particularly concerned about the following:

1. The definition of Expropriation – clause 1 of the Bill;
2. Determination of compensation - Sections 12(3) and 12(4) of the Bill.

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Agri SA members are also encouraged to submit written input on the Bill. Written inputs can be submitted via the online submission form available at the following link: <https://forms.gle/PTNQaCjRyEzVcvVa8>

Free State Agriculture is also busy with its thorough clause by clause comments as requested in the official online submission form .

Members need only mention the main clauses in their submission, which are the following:

1. The definition of Expropriation – clause 1 of the Bill; (here any property, not just land – can be expropriated for a public purpose or in the public interest) and the
2. Determination of compensation - clauses 12(3) and 12(4) of the Bill, which opens the door to zero compensation where the state wants to expropriate any property.

Any inquiries can be directed to Dr Jack Armour at jack@vslandbou.co.za



LABOUR

National Minimum Wage

In a shocking step, the Minister of Employment and Labour, against the recommendations of the National Minimum Wage Commission as well as input from other role players, decided to increase the National Minimum Wage to R25,42 per hour from 1 March 2023. So it comes down to:

Hourly rate	R25.42
Daily rate *(9 hours of work)	R228.78
Weekly rate *(5 day working week)	R1 143.90
Monthly rate based on 9 hours per day and 5 day working week (weekly wage multiplied by four and a third)	R4 956.52

Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA)

In terms of the Government Gazette Notice of 17 February 2023, all employers must submit their returns of earnings for the 2022 Assessment Period (2022/2023 Financial year) from 1 April 2023 and the deadline for submitting the returns is 31 May 2023. A 10 % penalty will be charged for submissions after the deadline and interest will be charged on overdue accounts or payments paid 30 days after date of invoicing.



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