



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Dear Free State Agriculture member

At almost the end of 2023, we would like to thank you for your support during the year. Your involvement in the organization is crucial and no organization can function properly without grassroots structures. It is also important that these structures function properly within their local environment and we often see this in the way in which the farmers' associations play a leading role in their communities, not only when they are supported but also in general.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you the best of luck for the upcoming season as well as the year ahead. In addition to the fact that it is an election year, there are also challenges in nature and we trust that our Heavenly Father will give us a solution in His time.

Enjoy the festive season with your loved ones and let's tackle the new year with optimism!

Regards

Gervie Botha





RURAL SAFETY

8 private investigators working on stock theft

There are currently 8 private livestock theft investigators operating in the Free State, namely 2 in Parys serving the Sasolburg, Heilbron and Koppies area, 2 in Frankfort/Mafube, 1 serving the Kroonstad/Steynsrus/Edenville area, 1 serving the Fouriesburg/ Serving Ficksburg area, and 1 on Ladybrand.

Dr Jane Buys confirms that Free State Agriculture has received requests from Harrismith and the District Farmers' Union of Bloemfontein to expand.

In the towns where the private investigators on livestock theft are currently involved, in the last four months together with the police they have carried out 20 arrests in 9 cases, livestock of 289 sheep and 146 cattle, the value of which is close to R3 million, has been seized or recovered amount to rand. They are also still involved in a variety of inquiry dossiers on groups and syndicates that operate in certain areas.

Safety training progressing rapidly

In the calendar year 2023 (since January), the instructors connected to LGV, in collaboration with FSA, offered 20 contact sessions of training regarding Phase 1 and 2, i.e. home and hearth protection as well as response group training among farming communities of the Free State.

In total, 478 persons, i.e. farmers (men) as well as women and in some cases children were trained at 33 farmers' associations in the Free State. During the training sessions, 12 SAPS members and 6 security company members were also involved. Phase 1 and 2 training usually takes place from a Friday to a Sunday and groups of 40 people can be accommodated. Many young farmers who attend the training experience it in a very positive light and as very instructive. Farmers' associations' safety representatives who have not yet undergone the training are requested to get in touch with **Pieter Kemp** in order to determine dates for the training in 2024.

Festive season sees increase in crimes

Dr Jane Buys shares the following tips with farmers in the run-up to the festive season which usually sees an increase in crime, especially livestock theft.

- Livestock should be counted regularly (daily if possible)
- Ensure livestock are branded/tattooed
- Make sure fences / line wires are in place

If livestock has been stolen, the matter must be reported to the police as quickly as possible or, where possible, get in touch with a private investigator (if an FSA member). Farmers must also ensure that their workers' records are checked and have polygraph tests carried out within the scope of their employment contracts where thefts occur.

All incidents related to livestock theft can be brought to Peet Swanepoel's attention on 066 407 7899 or peetswanepoel86@gmail.com



RURAL SAFETY (continue)

Livestock theft statistics 1 July to 30 September 2023

The recent livestock theft reporting figures that the Minister of Police made available for the second quarter of the financial year 2023/2024 show that the 4 high crime areas in the Free State contribute to 14.73% of the province's 118 livestock theft cases. The crime areas are Dewetsdorp, Ficksburg, Seloseshu and Harrismith.

Compared to the same period last year, the Free State showed a decrease of 51 cases (6%). The 13 border towns' police stations contribute to 217 cases (27.1%) of the Free State's reported figures. Clocolan and Ladybrand, Ficksburg, Fouriesburg, and Zastron each reported more than 20 cases, while the Qwaqwa area reported more than 100 cases. These border town and other town areas collectively reported 351 cases, which make up 43.8% of the Free State's total livestock theft reports.

The areas in the Free State that are considered high crime areas include Bultfontein, Dewetsdorp, Ficksburg, Fouriesburg, Harrismith, Ladybrand, Seloseshu, Qwaqwa area, Vrede, and Zastron. Farming communities in these towns must, especially with the upcoming festive season, focus on preventive actions and demonstrate greater vigilance, preparedness and observation in order to be able to pick up suspicious movement in advance.

In relation to national comparisons, the Free State has two police stations/towns within the top 30 in the country, along with North West and Limpopo, while Mpumalanga has one. KwaZulu-Natal has the most police stations in the top 30 with 11, followed by the Eastern Cape with 10. KZN has 23% of the RSA's livestock theft reports, followed by the Eastern Cape with 24.2%, and the Free State with 11.6%.

It would also appear as if in the Free State more than 6000 livestock were stolen in the 3 month period with a recovery rate of approximately 30%. It is not known how many of the 801 cases that have been reported have resulted in arrests.

Towns with biggest increase in livestock theft cases

The farming communities that recorded the largest increases in livestock theft cases for the second quarter include:

- Tweeling (8 cases - 400% increase),
- Botshabelo (7 cases - 116.67% increase),
- Odendaalsrus (11 cases - 275% increase),
- Reitz (10 cases - 200% increase),
- Ladybrand (9 cases - 90% increase),
- Zastron (8 cases - 66.67% increase),
- Dewetsdorp (11 cases - 100% increase),
- Ficksburg (9 cases - 60% increase), and
- Harrismith (9 cases - 31.03% increase).



NATURAL RESOURCES & DISASTERS

Veldfires - Free State Agriculture helped here

Statistics from the Free State Umbrella Fire Protection Association showed that a total of 6,005 potential wildfires with a total area of 575,665 hectares were recorded during the period 1 May – 5 October 2023.

The Free State went through a lot and the following fire incidents applied to Free State Agriculture for assistance:

- 12 August: Steynsrus/Verkeerdevlei (±8,000 ha)
- 25 August: Brandfort Complex (±29,300ha Brandfort, Soutpan and Dealesville)
- 26 August: Ventersburg/ Senekal (±39,640ha)
- August 27: Ficksburg/ Senekal (±6,500ha)
- 1 October: Virginia/Theunissen/ Winburg (±46 000ha)
- 21 October: Dealesville 2nd fire (±4,500 ha; 1 community member dies)
- 27 October: Philippolis/ Fauresmith (±65 000ha)



Assistance given here:

Thanks to funds that Free State Agriculture received through donations, we were able to pay for, among other things, the following:

- One load of 34t with 50kg bags of fodder pellets for the Steynsrus & Verkeerdevlei fires, divided equally.
- Two trailer loads of fodder for the Theunissen, Winburg and Virginia areas after the devastating fires there. These areas offered their fodder banks to supply the farmers affected by the Brandfort fires that occurred just over a month earlier.
- Funds disbursed to the local OVK branch in Fauresmith for relevant feed immediately available on their floor to local farmers according to the list drawn up by the local farmers' association.
- Funds paid for bale costs of irrigated maize residue for affected Fauresmith farmers to collect
- Funds disbursed for diesel invoices to transport donated feed to the affected farmers' collection and distribution points.



LABOUR ISSUES

CCMA courses for employers

The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration or as the organization is also commonly known, CCMA, offers training courses for employers and short courses offered include:

- KVBA Guidelines in respect of Misconduct Arbitration
- Discrimination and sexual harassment
- Workplace Forums
- Preparation and holding of disciplinary hearings
- Code of Best Practice: Dismissal Schedule 8 of the Labor Relations Act
- How to better understand the CAMB and its processes

More information can be obtained by visiting the following web page:
<https://www.ccma.org.za/training/#training-and-interventions>

There are currently two primary offices of the CCMA in the Free State (Bloemfontein and Welkom) with 11 smaller satellite offices. The focus of the institution is on fairness and therefore it is important that employers follow a proper process that includes full steps (due process) during labor-related matters and especially during disciplinary steps. Should an employer be interested in attending some of the courses, you are welcome to contact Free State Agriculture's office to pass on the necessary information.

Food safety and quality systems

Many in the agricultural sector struggle to make sense of all the food safety compliance requirements requested by retailers to have your product on their shelves, to supply a food manufacturing facility or for you to be able to export your product

Entecom has recently joined us as a service provider and can assist our members to better manage your food safety and quality systems so you can trade with confidence.

They also help with setting up your food safety system and through all the stages of implementing good agricultural practices and the HACCP system.

Support our service providers and business partners

