



AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Equitable Distribution of Land Bill

The bill is still in an early stage of development. Once drafted, the bill must be approved by Cabinet before being published for public comment and ultimately submitted to Parliament.

Due to the process that still needs to be followed, the current draft may differ significantly from the final version. AgriSA will participate in the legislative and public comment stages and monitor the development of this bill. Summary available [here](#).

Guidelines for Handling Illegal Land occupations

In light of the signing of the Expropriation Act, Agri SA has compiled guidelines to assist landowners if they are faced with an illegal land grab situation.

Free State Agriculture urgently appeals to landowners to be vigilant regarding any illegal occupations. See the guide for dealing with illegal land occupations [here](#).

Promulgation of the Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Act

Agricultural land is a scarce and valuable natural resource, and its protection is an integral part of national food security. Agri SA and Free State Agriculture therefore welcome the signing of the Agricultural Land Conservation and Development Act (ALDC), on 27 January 2025.

This Act establishes a national regulatory framework to coordinate the responsible development and conservation of agricultural land in order to ensure food production for current and future generations.

[Read more](#)



RURAL SAFETY

Safety training for farming communities

Free State Agriculture, in collaboration with LGV private security, has been offering safety training to farming communities for the past 3 years. The training, which is divided into Phase 1 (home and hearth) and Phase 2 (Response Group), involves training farmers, their wives and even children in all aspects related to safety. Phase 3 involves more advanced training and focuses largely on involvement and integration into safety structures. Phase 3 has already been developed and can be offered after communities have successfully completed Phase 1 and 2.

FSA is urging farming communities, especially young farmers who have not yet undergone such training, to empower themselves. The threats and risks to safety and crime that appear to be increasing in certain areas necessitate farmers, their families and even workers to equip themselves with the necessary knowledge on how to effectively address certain situations. FSA is partially funding the training, while farmers' associations are also required to make a financial contribution.

Farming communities that are in need of the above training are requested to contact [Pieter Kemp](#) to determine dates for training.

Survey: Weak cellphone signals in rural areas in the Free Stat



Free State Agriculture is currently sending out a survey to all farmers regarding the impact and extent of poor cellphone signals in farming communities in the Free State. A recent farm attack has once again highlighted the poor cellphone signals that make farming communities very vulnerable to criminal exploitation. FSA has already lodged a complaint with the telecoms regulator, ICASA, because safety structures could not be deployed following the attack.

Consolidation of respondents will take place, after which the report will be forwarded to various departments as well as semi-state institutions with active requests for intervention.

Farmers are requested to please complete the survey, which only takes 2-3 minutes, on their cellphones.

For inquiries, [Dr Jane Buys](#) or [Dr Jack Armour](#) can be contacted.

A photograph of a wire fence with a sign that reads "KEEP OUT PRIVATE PROPERTY". The sign is white with a red border and black text. The fence is made of metal posts and wire, and there is a chain lock on one of the posts. The background is a field of tall grass and trees.

RURAL SAFETY (continued)

Survey: Stray animals in the Free State

Stray animals—including cattle, sheep, pigs, horses, donkeys, and Boer goats—pose a serious safety risk to motorists, particularly in the rural areas of the Free State. To address this issue, municipalities must implement appropriate by-laws and establish impoundments for stray animals, as outlined in the Free State Provincial Gazette No. 64 (18 October 2024) for Matjhabeng Local Municipality’s Animal Safekeeping and Impoundment regulations, as well as the Free State Impound Ordinance No. 18 of 1952.

However, enforcement remains a challenge, as these by-laws lack an approved fine structure. Without a proper system for law enforcement officers to issue fines for stray animal-related offences, municipalities struggle to hold offenders accountable.

The urgency of this matter was highlighted during the December 2024 festive season when multiple motor accidents were reported due to collisions with stray animals, resulting in injuries—some severe.

Given ongoing complaints from farming communities, it is essential to assess the full impact of this risk across 88 towns in the Free State. To facilitate this, Free State Agriculture (FSA) is calling for a survey where farmers, their families, and farmworkers document incidents. FSA is therefore requesting a survey where farmers and their families and even workers ensure that their photos & GPS coordinates, together with an incident report book entry, are passed on to the nearest police station as well as to a safety representative of a farmers’ association.

By March 2025, FSA will compile a comprehensive report based on the collected data. This report will be presented to key departments and stakeholders to drive urgent action. If necessary, FSA will also seek legal counsel to take action against government departments failing to address this serious safety risk effectively.

Visits to agricultural associations & ‘Earthranger’ imports

In 2025, FSA will focus on ensuring that crime incident entries are made on the EarthRanger software platform. Safety representatives from farmers’ associations as well as control rooms can handle their entries themselves, and where necessary, Peet Swanepoel can be contacted to assist. The use of the platform is very beneficial in order to observe crime trends, patterns and manifestations on a map in order to initiate preventive actions.

FSA’s Rural Safety Committee intends to visit high crime areas and provide training regarding imports on EarthRanger. Safety representatives will be contacted to schedule dates for visits and similar training.

For further inquiries contact [Peet Swanepoel](#), [Isabel Kruger](#) or [Jane Buys](#) gekontak word.



NATURAL RESOURCES

Prosopis control project

Free State Agriculture submitted a project proposal and budget to the Free State Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs in February to deal with the control of the invasive Prosopis bush and is currently awaiting the results.

Prosopis is a huge problem, especially in the Western Free State.



African Armyworm

The African Commando Worm has also made its appearance in the Free State after major outbreaks in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Kwazulu-Natal.

It is not a reportable species that can have a massive destructive effect on veld and crops, but the less harmful species that has an effect on the animals grazing on kikuyu grass in particular.

Free State Agriculture is geared to plot any outbreaks on Earthranger to monitor its movement and extent. FSA has also confirmed with the Department of Agriculture's disaster department that there is assistance with poison for the control of reportable pests and plagues if a disaster is declared.



For any enquiries, contact jack@vslandbou.co.za

Lesotho Highlands tunnel maintenance

Free State Agriculture is involved in the monthly JOC meetings on the progress, impact and management of the consequences of the Lesotho Highlands Tunnel maintenance. The reopening of the tunnel, which closed on 1 October 2024, has been postponed due to the resealing chemicals not being able to dry out quickly enough due to more humid conditions than expected.

Fortunately, there is currently sufficient rainfall to keep the streams and dams full for local water needs.





COMMERCIAL

FSA addresses Eskom customer service & more

Free State Agriculture met with Eskom Central Region General Manager, Mrs Bidir, as well as department heads of human resources, maintenance and customer service on 13 February 2025 due to increasing complaints in these departments.

Francois Wilken, president of FSA, outlined the frustrations of farmers by using a real example where the error reporting systems and channels were lacking. This resulted in poor maintenance and customer service.

Eskom has taken note of the complaints and acknowledged that they need to work more closely with FSA structures, and requested more regular meetings. The full meeting report is available [here](#)

FSA demands answers about poor roads



On 27 February, Free State Agriculture handed over a memorandum on the condition of roads to MEC Mbalula in the presence of Vice-President Mashatile and Minister Steenhuisen.

This report focuses on the larger systemic issues within the department. The report will also be forwarded to the Free State Legislature, Economic Cluster dealing with Infrastructure, for responses by their next sitting on 18 March 2025.

Foot & mouth disease

Foot and Mouth Disease was reported in Newcastle on 25 February and reported to FSA by Memel District Farmers Union. On 27 February, the official results were released confirming the outbreak.

On 25 February, Free State Agriculture requested directly from the MEC Agriculture, Chief State Veterinarian as well as the HOD Police and Roads that the necessary biosecurity measures be put in place to prevent the spread from Newcastle to the Free State.





COMMERCIAL (continued)

Traceability systems

Free State Agriculture signed a cooperation agreement with ID-Scan on 11 February 2025. This system uses biometric nose prints of cattle to combat livestock theft, and links unique IDs to FSA's AIMS system for secure tracking and proof of ownership. "The origin of ID-Scan was developed due to the fact that ear tags are lost, changed or cut out, but a nose print of a cow remains unique to the animal, just like a human fingerprint."



[Read more](#)

YOUNG FARMERS

The Young Farmer Committee of Free State Agriculture is hosting a conference for all young farmer members on 10 April.

The theme of the conference, "Action Steps for a Better Farmer", aims to empower young farmers with practical information and guidelines that can be applied in their farming.

The "sheep shearing king" of South Africa, Tienie du Plessis, is one of the highlights of the day.



[Register on/ before 3 April at cynthia@vslanbou.co.za](mailto:cynthia@vslanbou.co.za)

LABOUR

Minimum wage from 1 March 2025

It is essential for employers to understand working hours, overtime, meal breaks and rest periods to ensure compliance with South African labour laws. SEESA has made available an article that provides an overview of the legal requirements that regulate farm workers' working hours. The article is available [here](#)

The Minister of Employment and Labour on 4 February 2025 adjusted the hourly rate in terms of the National Minimum Wage to R28.79 per hour which came into effect on 1 March 2025. The schedule for calculating the wage in respect of an 8-hour working day is available [here](#) .

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