



Farmers are the heart of the value chain

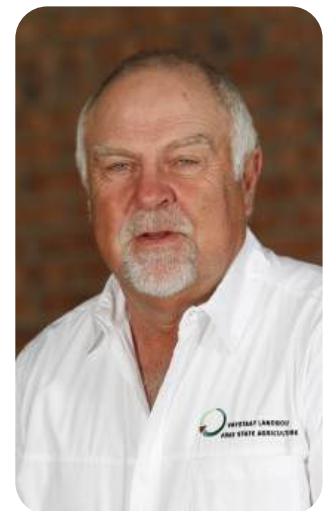
Thousands of years ago, our ancestors lived from what they gathered in the field. Later, farming – the oldest profession – emerged to produce food and provide for themselves in difficult times. Over time, barter trade emerged to provide food for those who did not farm.

Agriculture developed over the years into an industry from which businesses emerged. It is therefore clear that almost all economic activities owe their origin to farmers.

Farmers began to organize themselves into interest groups and appointed people from their own ranks to negotiate on their behalf and protect their interests. The government of the day, at the request of the farmers, began to provide certain services. However, in the 'new' South Africa, this has changed and many of the services have ended up in private hands. This is not necessarily bad, excellent work is being done. The difference, however, is that it is no longer independent and now comes from the farmer's pocket.

What happened that made the farmers lose their voice and influence?

Read the full open letter by Francois Wilken [here](#).



Francois Wilken

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Agricultural Development Committee of Free State Agriculture has identified the following as key decisions:

- **Creeping Expropriation**: FSA is monitoring the risk where animal keeping is claimed as a right of occupancy (ESTA), which affects land value. In disputes, DLA officers can be contacted:
 - Lejweleputswa & Fezile Dabi: Mr. Olebogeng Aiseng (082 947 6099)
 - Thabo Mofutsanyana: Mrs. Lorato Sedupane (083 288 5818)
 - Mangaung & Xhariep: Mrs. Nomonde Mokoena (072 197 3763)
- **By-laws**: FSA is planning a survey of municipal by-laws on impoundments, fences, animal keeping and commonage management. Municipal Agricultural Forums remain important pressure groups for IDP and property rate negotiations.
- **AgriParks**: FSA withdraws from further participation due to corruption and misappropriation on poorly planned projects without grassroots support.
- **Training & Projects**: FSA is already on the Government database of service providers and will also register with AgriSETA to apply for agricultural projects and training on behalf of members.



RURAL SAFETY

Safety training for farming communities

FSA presented safety and stock theft workshops in Wesselsbron and Paul Roux in March 2025, where community patrollers were trained at the request of the farmers to address stock theft more effectively. Workshops will be scheduled for Ladybrand and Wepener areas in April 2025. Reitz and Kroonstad areas will be prioritized in May. The workshops are presented to FSA members, non-members, private security as well as police officers from Visible Policing.

Animal branding & tattooing

Free State Agriculture (FSA) has informed farming communities about the importance of marking and tattooing animals in compliance with the Animal Identification Act (Act 6 of 2002). This includes guidelines on the appropriate age and method for identifying different types of livestock, such as sheep and cattle.

Calves must be tattooed in their ears or branded on any visible part of the body—except the neck—by the age of 6 months. Ear tattooing should be done from the inside of the ear outward.

For smaller livestock, such as sheep and goats, tattooing must be completed by the time they reach one month of age.



Photo: RPO

Video & cellphone recordings in community service centres of police stations

A letter from the Provincial Commissioner of the SAPS in the Free State was distributed to all police members in the province at all police stations. FSA sent a voice message from Gernie Botha, CEO of FSA, to inform all farmers that they can make video recordings of any police officer in a community service centre (CSC) who was helpful to the public/farmer, or not. Reference was made to the RICA and POPIA legislation and what risks the making and especially the distribution of the videos, especially on social media platforms, can entail.

The letter stipulates that such videos can indeed be made, and that it goes hand in hand with certain risks that it can entail, before videos are distributed publicly. The reasons for making the videos will then determine what actions the person will take and what he/she wants to achieve with it.



RURAL SAFETY (continued)

Stock theft: Minister meets with stakeholders in agriculture

The Minister of Police, Mr. Senso Mchunu, met with stakeholders such as Free State Agriculture, RPO, Afasa and various farmers in Bloemfontein on 20 March 2025 to discuss stock theft. Participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the handling and investigation of cases.

Free State Agriculture presented five main points to the Minister:

- 1.) Rural Safety Coordinators (RSC): Each police station should have 1-2 RSC coordinators, with a dedicated vehicle and training in crime scene preservation, evidence collection and stock theft investigations together with the Stock Theft Units (STUs).
- 2.) Stock Theft Units (STUs): More manpower and vehicles are essential. Previously, each of the 11 STUs had 10+ detectives, but currently only 2-3, which complicates large-scale investigations.
- 3.) RSA/Lesotho border road: Patrolling by SANDF, SAPS and BMA is urgently needed. Border police stations must be strengthened with more personnel and vehicles. Specialist detectives must effectively tackle stock theft across the border.
- 4.) Legislation: Laws such as the National Animal Pounds Bill and the Stock Theft Amendment Act of 1959 remain outstanding. Municipalities must introduce bylaws and pounds to better control stray animals.
- 5.) Reservist policy: This policy has been dragging on for years and needs to be finalised by SAPS. Farmers want to help improve their own safety and make a contribution.



Free State Agriculture Golf Day for rural safety

Free State Agriculture is hosting a golf day at the Bloemfontein Golf Club on Friday, 18 July 2025. The funds raised will be used for rural safety, specifically training and the empowerment of farming communities in the Free State.

LGV is offering Phase 1 and 2 training for farmers, their wives and children. In March 2025, the Cocolan farming community was trained and further training dates for other areas will be determined. A special course has also been developed for farm workers.

Farmer associations who wish to participate or book a 4-ball can contact Elize Spence on 072 567 5629 or spence.elize@gmail.com



NATURAL RESOURCES

African Armyworm in Free State

Approximately 70 cases of African armyworm have been reported in the Xhariep district (Petrusburg, Jacobsdal, Koffiefontein and Luckhoff), while 13 cases are in Lejweleputswa, including 11 farmers in Boshof and one each in Dealesville, Hertzogville and Bothaville. In the Mangaung Metro, four farmers in Soutpan also reported cases.

Training and awareness sessions on the control of African armyworms were successfully conducted in Petrusburg and Jacobsdal on 26 March 2025. Farmers were informed about the background, theory and methods of control. Affected farmers received support in the form of chemicals (Sumi-Alfa) and sprayers. Additional chemicals and blowers have been received and will be distributed to Lejweleputswa and Mangaung.

Officials from the National Department of Agriculture are continuously monitoring and evaluating the situation in affected areas to confirm outbreaks and levels of infestation. Daily reports are compiled in collaboration with the Provincial Disaster Management Officer of the Free State Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs.



Climate Change Act

AgriSA has set out a clear policy brief on the Climate Change Act. The document can be downloaded [here](#).

There are several regulations that still need to be drafted before the act can come into effect. The act does provide for a 'greener' development trajectory and the weaning of our coal dependency.





NATURAL RESOURCES (continued)

Foot and mouth disease - outbreaks

In the midst of the foot and mouth outbreaks near Newcastle and a recent case at Bergville, Free State Agriculture advises farmers to immediately report suspicious vehicles via their local SAPS channels or activation groups, so that these vehicles can be stopped and the necessary documentation for the transport of livestock can be checked. FSA confirmed with the newly appointed biosecurity officer of RMIS, Jan Nel, that the fine lists as well as the charge sheets are being drawn up so that traffic police are empowered to pull over suspicious vehicles and make the necessary inspections and arrests. The major obstacle regarding roadblocks is budget and the logistics involved. Dr Jane Buys suggested that RMIS invest in mobile cameras to do 24-hour monitoring via control cameras on strategic routes instead of 24-hour roadblocks.

With the declared control zones in Kwa-Zulu Natal, the SAPS has already been deployed there by the Department of Agriculture, and it is therefore not necessary for the Free State SAPS to also be deployed.

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

Mining / Gas Mining Applications

Rhino Oil and Gas, Panoro and AfroEnergy have major gas exploration applications that are currently in the process of finalising Environmental Impact Assessments. Motuoane Energy 315 1B has renewed its exploration action after the Northern Free State Mineral Forum halted it in 2022.

Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration Pty Ltd (377 and 378 ER) and AfroEnergy (383 ER) are in the final stages of their Environmental Impact Assessment process for drilling exploration holes in the Northern Free State. Landowners are encouraged to participate in all public participation processes of the EIAs. Should they wish to take collective action to establish a mining action forum and jointly undertake the process, Free State Agriculture has offered to assist with this on several occasions. Panoro Energy 2B (376 ER) is currently in the appeal phase, and the last date for appeals against prospecting was the end of March.

Legal advice to Free State Agriculture is to participate fully in the public participation phase and raise all concerns and objections there – in both the prospecting and subsequent mining phases. However, it is recommended to reserve legal action for the final mining application.

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COMMERCIAL

Diesel rebate

The budget speech announced a welcome 100% rebate on diesel for qualifying uses from 1 April 2025.

During a discussion at the GrainSA Congress on 11 March, in which FSA participated, it was proposed that diesel consumption for bakkies and trucks on public roads be excluded, to avoid audits on diesel rebates. While this proposal may be beneficial for grain producers, it may not be practical for livestock farmers.

The original intention of the diesel rebate was to ensure that producers did not pay road tax and the road accident levy on diesel that was used exclusively for agricultural use and never used on public roads.

ESKOM price increases



In its submission to NERSA, FSA objected to Eskom's excessive tariff increase and stressed that the fixed cost component should not have the same increase as power generation.

Although NERSA rejected Eskom's full request, an increase above inflation was still approved and will come into effect on 1 April.

Regarding reports of a possible sharp increase in Grid-tie connection fees, there has been no official announcement yet. Rest assured that FSA will oppose such an increase.

See a [report](#) by Anton Coetzee, co-opted FSA Commercial Affairs committee member, comparing 2024/5 prices with 2025/6 proposed prices

ID-Scan traceability system

FSA has joined hands with ID-Scan in the campaign to get one million animals loaded and identified for free on the ID-Scan DIY application which can be downloaded here: <https://idscan.co.za/>. Members of Free State Agriculture use the following codes to register for free on the app: 08228115 (for owner registrations) and 88582305 (for animal activation).

AIMS ear tags and the nose print certificate work in synergy for livestock management and traceability. AIMS ear tags can be ordered [here](#) to have an easier electronic/visual linked unique number. An ID-Scan certificate can prove ownership even if the ear tags have been cut out. So another level of animal security.

FSA also encourages members to have their farm "geo-fenced" on the RMIS website <https://rmis.co.za/rmis-traceability-platform/> by applying for their GLN number.





YOUNG FARMERS

2025 Young farmer conference

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.

Cost is R200. Inquiries can be directed to elana@vslandbou.co.za



Tug of war fun day

The Young Farmer Committee of Free State Agriculture, in collaboration with Kovsies Agri, is hosting a tug-of-war fun day at Bobbiespark in Bloemfontein on Saturday, 3 May.

Only 20 teams can register, so those interested should hurry! Registration is free.

Contact Nico Lehmkuhl for more information: 079 365 6845/
nicolehmkuhl15@gmail.com



LABOUR

Postponement of declaration of wages return

Please note that the Compensation Fund is currently experiencing a delay in its preparatory actions for the 2024 season. The system will remain closed until 10 April 2025 (midnight 00h00) and will be effectively available for the submission of Returns on 11 April 2025 at 08h00.

In line with the delay in the opening of the system, the expiry date of 30 April 2025 regarding a letter of good standing is extended to 31 May 2025.

See notice [here](#).

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