

SA red meat gains access to Saudi Arabian market

In a ground-breaking development for the South African red meat sector, the Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS), in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) and the Red Meat Abattoir Association (RMAA), has secured formal approval of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to welcome South African red meat exports.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

This achievement, a result of more than a year of strategic engagement between stakeholders, is poised to reshape the landscape of South African red meat exports. Recognising the potential for industry growth, the Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) actively engaged RMIS to drive a unified effort towards opening the Saudi Arabian market.

In a noteworthy incident, premature reports in August 2023 about the potential opening of the KSA market led to a surge in weaner calf prices, a testament to the positive industry sentiment surrounding this development.

Addressing the timing of the announcement, RMIS clarified that the news reported in August was a preliminary announcement, indicating the government's intent to trade. The subsequent months saw collaborative efforts by DALRRD, RMAA, and RMIS, alongside identified facilities, navigating challenges to secure necessary approvals and protocols. This rigorous process distinguished the official announcement from the initial, unverified information.

The Veterinary Health Certificate as negotiated and thus agreed by DALRRD, has now been circulated to the respective provinces. The process of including additional facilities to this export market will be clarified with the SFDA as a matter of priority once the export has commenced.

Driving unified efforts

The success of this initiative is rooted in the Red Meat Strategy 2030, a collective vision established in 2019 by industry organisations, including RMIS. Envisaging a 20% export target for the red meat industry by 2030, the strategy outlines key cross-cutting factors such as industry restructuring, a unified voice, public-private partnerships, compartments, and veterinary services.

"The opening of the Saudi Arabian market aligns seamlessly with RMIS's 2030 Strategy, bringing the industry closer to reaching the ambitious export target. Furthermore, the Saudi Arabian market shows interest in four red meat products from the South African farming community, namely beef, lamb, mutton, and goat.

"The unified voice presented to the government had a profound impact on the smooth progression of the project, showcasing the industry's adaptability to meet strategic goals. This collaborative spirit exemplifies the industry's commitment to navigating challenges and driving meaningful change.

"We appreciate the dedication of the Department in handling the challenges with this process and the opportunity for the industry to work closely with the Department in providing market access to the South African red meat industry," says Dewald Olivier, RMIS CEO.

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