

FSA's new livestock safety system to mitigate foot-and-mouth disease risks

In the aftermath of the first foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in the Free State, Free State Agriculture (FSA) swiftly moved to address the pressing concerns, announced Francois Wilken, President of Free State Agriculture.



Source: Pxabay via [Pexels](#)

"Our members mandated Congress to urgently investigate an animal traceability and safety system to mitigate further risks," stated Wilken, emphasising the urgency of the situation.

The outbreak had significant financial implications for various stakeholders across the province's livestock value chain, impacting farmers, agents, auctioneers, feedlots, abattoirs, and exporters. In response, FSA initiated a comprehensive exploration of potential solutions to address this critical need.

"Our investigation encompassed a wide array of solutions, including existing livestock management software, micro-chips, geo-based, and IoT-smart connected systems," Wilken elaborated. "Each option was rigorously evaluated based on practical application, cost-effectiveness, and market readiness."

Ensuring international standards compliance

Of paramount importance was ensuring approval from the International Committee for Animal Recording (ICAR), the international Standards and Certification body for animal biosecurity and traceability products.

Following extensive meetings with industry stakeholders and trials of various systems, FSA ultimately selected AIMS (Animal Identification and Movement System), developed and already in use by Agri Eastern Cape, to be implemented in the Free State. Allfex, a trusted ear tag supplier, will provide Electronic Identification (EID) and Visual ID (VID) laser-printed tags with unique animal ID numbers. VID tags will feature a QR code for accurate data capture.

Dr Jack Armour, commercial manager for FSA, outlined the functionalities of the FS-AIMS (Animal Identification, Movement and Safety) system, which provides a platform for ordering and assigning uniquely numbered ear tags to livestock, as well as logging the sale and transfer of livestock to new locations with the necessary documentation.

At a meeting with the Bethlehem District Farmers Union, FSA launched the live site for FS-AIMS, accessible from the FSA [website](#). Farmers can register for free and populate their profiles with the essential information required for traceability and safety. Data privacy is ensured through compliance with the FSA POPI Act protocol.

Looking ahead, FSA and Agri Eastern Cape have a cooperation agreement to further develop AIMS. A portion of the proceeds from tag sales will go towards system improvements to meet industry needs. In anticipation of the eventual establishment of a National Livestock Identification and Traceability System (LITS), FS-AIMS will seamlessly transfer select data, and ICAR-approved tags will facilitate farm-to-slaughter traceability.

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