**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 125**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER [No 1-2022 SIXTH PARLIAMENT]
DATE OF PUBLICATION: 10 FEBRUARY 2022**

**125. Mr N P Masipa (DA) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development:**

1. What (a) countries have been able to export semen and embryos of small ruminants and bovine in the past 20 years and (b) amount in doses of semen were exported;
2. what steps has her department taken to ensure that the SA Dorper Breeder Society is able to conduct trade overseas;

(3) (a) with which countries (i) does the Republic have small ruminants and bovine semen and embryo export and import trade protocols and (ii) have lapsed export and import protocol, (b) what actions have been taken to renew the lapsed protocols, (c) what progress has been made regarding the renewal to date, (d) what challenges have been experienced regarding the renewal of protocol and (e) what actions have been taken to address the challenges? **NW129E**

**THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT:**

1. (a) In the past 8 years, ruminant semen and embryos have been exported to Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, Malaysia, Zambia, Namibia, Canada, Venezuela, Angola and Guyana. The information for the past twelve years is not readily available, since information is archived every five years and this information was stored manually. The information will be retrieved from the archives and be shared later.

(b) Please refer to **Annexure A** for details of semen exported (2014-2021).

1. The following steps were taken:
* The Dorper Breeder Society has expressed interest in exporting sheep semen and embryos to the MERCOSUR member countries (Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela), with emphasis on Brazil and Argentina. DALRRD began negotiations for the export of ruminant semen and embryos in 2010 with Brazil and Argentina and there have been numerous exchanges of information over the years. In 2016, an agreed upon veterinary health certificate for ovine embryos was achieved with Brazil. In 2019, when South Africa experienced the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak and lost our Office International de Epizooties (OIE) recognised free status, DALRRD was informed by Brazil that the protocols had been amended and re-negotiation of the veterinary health certificate was required. The amended MERCOSUR requirements included Scrapie measures which were not there previously, and these excluded South Africa from qualifying for exports of ovine and caprine semen and embryos.
* In April 2021, Argentina gave permission for one consignment of Dorper and Boer Goat genetic material to be imported using the previously agreed upon veterinary health certificate. This information was communicated with the export certifying state veterinarian, who confirmed that certification could be done. The consignment was exported.
* The Dorper Breed Society also expressed an interest in exporting semen and embryos to Australia. DALRRD completed the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) questionnaire and submitted it with our request for market access to the veterinary Authority of Australia. In July 2015, the Australian Veterinary Authority responded that South Africa’s request for market access was not a priority to them.
* There was also interest to export Dorper and Boer Goat genetics in 2021 to the USA. DALRRD wrote to the USDA to request market access and was informed that they are updating the regulations regarding Scrapie and would not consider market access requests until the process had been finalised. At the time, the USDA could not provide an expected time when the updating of the regulations would be finalised. The USA also has a lengthy process of recognising the FMD and other diseases of concern, even when the OIE recognises RSA free of those diseases.

(3) (a) (i) South Africa has agreed upon import and export protocols as follows:

**Imports:** bovine semen from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Namibia, New Zealand, Norway, the Netherlands, the UK and the USA. Import of bovine embryos from Canada, Ireland, Kenya, New Zealand and the USA. Import of ovine and caprine semen and embryos from Australia and New Zealand.

**Exports:** The majority of protocols South Africa had with countries were annulled when RSA lost its FMD free status in 2019. The DALRRD continues to negotiate for the reinstatement of these protocols offering equivalent measures such as compartments free of FMD and other diseases of concern.

South Africa has agreed upon protocols for the export of bovine embryos to Brazil and Argentina. DALRRD is in the process of negotiating an updated the protocol with Argentina, but exports may in the transition still take place.

1. The MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela**)** countries amended their protocols for ruminant semen and embryos in 2019, so the previously agreed upon protocols had lapsed.

3(b),(c),(d) DALRRD began renegotiating veterinary health certificates with Brazil and Argentina, according to the amended requirements set by MERCOSUR. However, the amended Scrapie requirements prevent South Africa from achieving the market for ovine and caprine semen and embryos, the surveillance for scrapie and traceability. The amended requirements have also excluded South Africa from achieving the market for bovine semen due to the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) requirements.

As explained above, South Africa is unable to meet the amended requirements and this was communicated to industry in December 2020. It was recommended that the Industry consider an Industry driven and funded Scrapie surveillance project according to the Office International de Epizooties (OIE) general surveillance and specific Scrapie requirements with due reference to the requirements for OIE self-declarations, as well as a split system that will ensure compliance to all other requirements. South Africa cannot meet the requirements for Scrapie and Foot and Mouth Disease.

(e) The Challenges were communicated, and it was recommended that the Industry consider an Industry driven and funded Scrapie surveillance project according to the OIE general surveillance and specific Scrapie requirements, with due reference to the requirements for OIE self-declarations, as well as a split system that will ensure compliance to all other requirements.