**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 126**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER [No 1-2022 SIXTH PARLIAMENT]
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**126. Mr N P Masipa (DA) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development:**

1. Whether the South African animal breeders’ associations has been in contact with her office to request assistance with the opening of an export and import market for semen of bovine and small ruminants; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what (a) are the relevant details and (b) are the results of the engagements with the breeders’ association;

(2) whether there was any information received from breeders’ associations; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what follow-up has her department made with countries that are interested in South African breeders? **NW130E**

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

1. The DALRRD has been approached by several breeder associations to request market access for ruminant semen and embryos.
2. The main interest from these associations is between South Africa and the MERCOSUR countries with emphasis on Brazil and Argentina.
3. DALRRD began negotiations for the export of ruminant semen and embryos in 2010 with Brazil and Argentina and information has been exchanged over the years. In 2016, an agreed upon veterinary health certificate for ovine embryos was achieved with Brazil. In 2017, Brazil agreed to the veterinary health certificate for caprine semen and embryos. In 2019, when South Africa experienced the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak and lost our 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.

Industry also expressed an interest in exporting bovine semen and embryos to Australia. DALRRD completed the Foot and Mouth Disease questionnaire and submitted it with our request for market access to the veterinary Authority of Australia. In July 2015, the Australian Veterinary Authority responded to SAVSEG that South Africa’s request for market access was not a priority to them.

There was also interest to export 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.

1. Industry has assisted with obtaining copies of the MERCOSUR requirements for the export of ruminant semen and embryos to MERCOSUR member countries. They have also assisted with having these requirements translated into English and assisted with translating the proposed veterinary health certificates into Spanish or Portuguese for the negotiations. This assistance was of great value in the negotiations and successful conclusion of the veterinary health certificates for ovine embryos and caprine semen and embryos by Brazil in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

DALRRD was informed that the USDA process to update their Scrapie regulations is due to be finalized in February 2022, the updated process has not been shared by the USA yet, and DALRRD is following up periodically.

At present South Africa is facing several challenges with regard to opening markets for the export of ruminant semen and embryos. These challenges include, but are not limited to, the following:

* there is no national animals identification and traceability system which follows livestock from birth to the final product,
* South Africa has lost its OIE recognized FMD free status,
* South Africa does not have adequate surveillance system for Scrapie in order to declare itself free according to the OIE general surveillance and specific Scrapie requirements, industry has been requested to assist.

Until these challenges have been resolved, South Africa is in a difficult position to provide the necessary animal disease guarantees required by countries interested in importing ruminant semen and embryos from South Africa.

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