**DAFF’S RESPONSE:**

**PQ. 1636/ NW2993E Mr N P Masipa (DA) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development:**

What measures has her department put in place to ensure that (a) the foot and mouth disease facility that was commissioned in 2010 and was to be finished in the 2015-16 financial year is completed to ensure that more vaccines are manufactured to help combat the outbreak of foot and mouth disease and (b) fencing, as one of the biosecurity measures, is implemented and monitored in all provinces, especially in rural areas, to prevent the spread of foot and mouth disease? NW2993E

(a) The ARC FMD Vaccine Project business plan outlined the following three key focus areas:

1. Technology development for manufacture of FMD vaccine;
2. Education and training to ensure appropriate skills for the operations of the manufacturing facility;
3. Pilot scale and bioprocess development; and,
4. Design and construction of the FMD vaccine production facility.

**Below is a synopsis of the performance of the ARC on the main deliverables of the revised business plan**

Since the financial year 2011/12, the following have been achieved:

1. ARC has developed the new GMP compliant suspension culture technology for the manufacture of FMD vaccine – for all virus strains circulating in Southern Africa;
2. At least 10 students were trained at the level of Bachelor of Science Honours degree, with further practical skills development on various aspects of vaccine manufacturing. Subsequently, 7 graduates have been employed by the ARC at the facility;
3. In terms of Process Development – Using suspension culture techniques, the ARC has successfully produced FMD vaccine at 20 litre scale. To date sufficient antigen has been produced to formulate 50 000 doses of vaccine for each of the three virus strains (SAT 1, 2 and 3). Clinical trials to determine immunity and efficacy have been conducted with each of the vaccine strains as well as combinations of the same strains. Assessments of longevity of immune responses continues.
4. On the basis of the outcome/s of the process development, the ARC initiated the design of the manufacturing facility. The design indicated a shortfall in the funds required to construct and complete the manufacturing facility. Consequently, the ARC requested additional funding from the Department/National Treasury in 2012. Unfortunately, there was a delay from National Treasury in responding to the request for additional funding towards completing the project.
5. National Treasury only allocated required funding towards a complete FMD vaccine manufacturing facility in financial year 2019/20 over the MTEF period.
6. Consequently, the ARC has resumed the process towards design and construction of the FMD vaccine manufacturing facility. This process will be in accordance with applicable environmental and municipal regulations. Appropriate procurement processes have now resumed towards ensuring appropriate construction companies could provide the service to ARC.

(b) Fences to achieve disease control purposes is provided for the in the Animal Diseases Act and have been a layer in the FMD control strategy for many years. The location of the current disease control fences, on the international border and around the Kruger National Park complex, are no longer in line with international standards of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). Whereas these fences were intended to provide a barrier between infected zones and adjacent communities in the protection zone, the OIE requires a physical barrier between the protection zone and the free zone. DAFF agrees with the technical soundness of this approach and has already started considering how and where such a fence or barrier will best be placed. Many factors must be taken into consideration, as the placement of this fence will determine the new demarcation of the FMD free zone. As far as possible, DAFF intends placing the line on existing barriers, including the boundaries of commercial farms and existing structures such as highways. Where the existing line cuts through communities, the future placement of a fence must be carefully considered as it will have far-reaching effects on rural communities. The line that demarcates the FMD free zone currently only involves the provinces of Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu Natal.