**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 3761/ NW4445E**

**MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES:**

MR W M MADISHA (COPE) TO ASK THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES

**QUESTION**

1. Whether in view of the wide-scale destruction of bee colonies in the Western Cape through Foul Brood Disease, the Government has taken steps to scale up and accelerate plans in support of year round foraging for bees by encouraging all sectors of society to use gardens, parks, road verges and farm strips to grow plants that will support foraging by bees in order that pollination of key economic crops is guaranteed, farm workers and owners have their livelihoods protected, prices of food remain highly affordable through plentiful supply, importation of honey from Argentina and elsewhere can be eliminated and South African beekeepers have a guaranteed livelihood; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details? NW4445E

**REPLY**

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) continues to work closely with the various South African national honeybee commodity organisations aimed at supporting honeybee health in South Africa. The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) has been conducting research on South Africa’s honeybees, as an indigenous part of this country’s biodiversity. It has investigated the relevant resources underpinning the managed honey bee industry. Earlier in 2015, a project was completed that has been funded by the Working for Water Programme of the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) and implemented by SANBI and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC). It showed that eucalyptus trees, certain crops (e.g.  sunflower, citrus and canola), as well as indigenous trees and shrubs, in addition to various flowering plants in suburban gardens and on roadsides (wildflowers or weeds) are critically important to South Africa’s indigenous honey bees. It is to be expected that the various role players will act on this information in support of the South African honeybee.

In 2013, DAFF promulgated a control measure, Regulation 858, under the Agricultural Pests Act 1983 (Act No. 36 of 1983) to ensure beekeepers register with DAFF on an annual basis. Beekeepers must mark their beehives with the registration number and inspect colonies on a regular basis to check for symptoms of regulated bee diseases such as American Foul Brood (AFB), and the social parasite, *Apis mellifera capensis.* If a beekeeper detects AFB, a management plan must be implemented to manage the pest and DAFF must be notified regarding a detection. The aim of the control measure is to ensure reliable and timeous notification of AFB outbreaks in the country. Unfortunately, DAFF has received very few notifications from individual beekeepers to pinpoint the exact locations of the detections. However, serious outbreaks are indicated by the Beekeeper associations such as the South African Beekeeping Industry Organisation (SABIO). These were also reflected in the media on several occasions. The DAFF has developed a Biosecurity Strategy for AFB which will be finalised depending on a delimiting sampling process. It is hoped this will provide scientific evidence of the presence and virulence of the AFB disease in the Western Cape and elsewhere in the country.