



DALRRD news

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CONTENTS

- **Response by Minister Thoko Didiza during the panel discussion at the 13th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture 2021 in Berlin, Germany**
- **DALRRD fights poverty in Lambasi community**
- **Citrus Growers Association transformation**
- **A call for the management of the fall armyworm in SA during the 2020/21 crop production season**
- **Pest Alert: Asian Citrus Greening ‘Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus’**
- **Vaccinate against Rift Valley Fever**
- **Strategic Agricultural Inputs Forum**
- **2020 Agricultural Writers SA Awards: A tribute to the heroes of agriculture**
- **Markets for litchis**
- **Rift Valley Fever**

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Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development



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Response by Minister Thoko Didiza during the panel discussion at the 13th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture 2021 in Berlin, Germany

It is a well-known fact that approximately 70% of human pathogens have their origin from animals. Ms Thoko Didiza, Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development spoke in response at the 13th Global Forum for food and Agriculture 2021 in Berlin, Germany. This fact calls for good collaboration amongst the medical, veterinary and the environmental health practitioners which is the basic tenets of a “One Health” approach.

A number of major recent epidemics and pandemics, such as, Ebola, SARS and MERS including the current SARS Cov-2 pandemic that is afflicting the whole world and adversely affecting the economies and posing a huge threat to human health and food security, are reminders of the damage viruses that spills over from wildlife can cause. It is important therefore to constantly think of and apply innovative approaches to prevent the spill over of pathogens from wild-life to humans and livestock and from animals to human beings. Similarly, some diseases like Rabies, Rift valley fever are perfect examples and often we do forget that these diseases have a wild-life origin.

In the context of the African continent

the Specialised Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment had in its African Union - Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023 already identified a few issues of relevance to this topic that require urgent attention, namely (i) the significant lack of attention and support to wildlife issues; (ii) the lack of a functional One Health Platform at the continental, regional and the Member States levels, and; (iii) the need to enhance its advocacy capacity by building on its success in achieving important targets such as animal disease prevention, control and eradication.

South Africa has established a surveillance programme that routinely samples for circulating viruses in wildlife species of interest (e.g. bats). In our case, Ms Thoko Didiza said the Kruger National Park presents a very good interface area as the majority of the wildlife is found in the bigger wildlife parks.

DALRRD has stationed veterinary staff at the park to specifically monitor animal diseases and movements

Response by Minister Thoko Didiza during the panel discussion at the 13th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture 2021 in Berlin, Germany

from p 2

inside the park and to detect any possible interaction with other animals including livestock if it happens. The interactions of animals within the park is significant to monitor transmission of diseases between animals, including the inter species transmissions. Some diseases like Anthrax and tuberculosis which are bacterial and not viral are of significance and these are well known zoonoses. Data collection and management are extremely crucial for epidemiological assessments and surveillance of different ecosystems and interface of wild and domestic animals. The veterinarians have placed special microchips on some selected animals to monitor their behaviour and interactions with other animals, humans and possible livestock. The data on these interactions is transmitted by satellite to a database for capturing. There is as a result an established surveillance system which is used to detect any possible spill overs from the interactions and appropriate actions are taken should it be necessary.

Accompanied by this is very good laboratory support and in these laboratories, the latest technologies

must be applied. Sequencing capacity is necessary to determine the genetic makeup of these viruses and any differences they may show with what they have on record. Highly trained staff is significant for the success of these systems.

The veterinarians in the park are linked to the Onderstepoort Veterinary Research of the Agricultural Research Council and the Veterinary Faculty at the University of Pretoria. We have consequently also established a repository, record or bank of all isolated viruses in different parts of the country.

We also ensure that the communities living around the parks are not only sensitised that wildlife is dangerous, but that interacting with livestock may carry risks of introducing uncommon conditions to the people. Innovative approaches of Extension Services are being used to disseminate information and manage this interface.

“One Health, according to my summation, requires involvement of all to establish sound policy frameworks to allow for rapid transdisciplinary responses to biosecurity risks,” Ms Didiza said.

DALRRD fights poverty in Lambasi community

By Samuel Kgatla

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) continues to fight poverty in the community of Lambasi in the Eastern Cape Province. The department has delivered water tanks, pumps and garters, chickens and garden tools as part of delivering on the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development's legacy projects in the province.

Officials from the Directorate: Subsistence Farming in the department led by Khathutshelo Ravele and Nthuteng Makeng went to Lambasi and made a few promises in September. The department started delivering on those promises made during last year's World Food Day by Minister Thoko Didiza. The delivery of the materials excited the Chief of Lambasi Thahle Mkwedini, who said he was surprised by the swift response from the department. He said he expected things to take time, especially during the Covid-19 lockdown regulations.

Minister Thoko Didiza visited Lambasi last year, an area situated next to the 2

800 ha Magwa Tea Estate. It comprises seven villages, divided into three wards with, at the moment, one recognised chief and three councillors. The village has fertile soil with many people living in poverty. It is for this reason that the department intervened to improve the people's lives.

Chief Mkwedini mentioned that the department is delivering on the promises made recently. Furthermore, he said that the department's officials had promised the community chickens, farming equipment, water tanks and garters, all of which they have now delivered on. "All the chicken beneficiaries received them. We distributed them in two days' time. We received 32 water tanks and taps, and we have a list of all who are supposed to receive them. We are still expecting more. I am happy that the department is delivering according to the plans and promises they made. There is hope and we must appreciate what our government is doing and big thanks to the department," he said.

to p 5

DALRRD fights poverty in Lambasi community

from p 4

One of the chicken and water tank beneficiaries, Mamxetiswa Mgwegwane said she was really happy for what the government and the chief have done for them.

“We are a family of three and any

help from government is appreciated with both hands. I like chickens and farming in my backyard garden. This government has proven me wrong and I will forever appreciate their help. The water tank is longterm assistance that is going to help the majority of poor people of Lambasi,” concluded Mgwegwane.



Chief of Lambasi in Eastern Cape, Thahle Mkwedini together with DALRRD officials monitored the equipment given to people of the area.



Ms Mamxetiswa Mgwegwane from Lambasi in Eastern Cape received a water tank from DALRRD.

Citrus Growers Association transformation

It's a known fact that farming, with its various barriers to entry, requires considerable business savvy and technical know-how. Additionally, the fruit industry recognises that our black growers are often at a particular disadvantage.

Therefore, in May this year the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) extended an invitation for growers to apply for the R307 million Economic Transformation of Black Citrus Growers Programme. This initiative will fund black citrus growers, as well as provide them with technical support for orchard establishment, expansion and rehabilitation. In addition, on-farm development will include packhouses, bulk-water supply and irrigation systems to ensure robust infrastructure.

A number of stakeholders have partnered

with the CGA on the project, including the Jobs Fund, the Land Bank, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) and the Agriculture Sector Education Training Authority (AGRISETA).

The CGA Grower Development Company (CGA-GDC) received great response from black growers, with the number of applications reaching R72 million by the application deadline date.

These applications were assessed by a joint steering committee comprising representatives from the CGA, the CGA-GDC and the Lima Rural Development (who has been appointed as the programme manager of the project.)

The first group of successful applicants is soon to be announced.



A call for the management of the Fall Armyworm in SA during the 2020/21 crop production season

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development hereby makes a clarion call to all maize and related host crops such as sorghum and sweet corn growers, including community members, to take precautionary measures in controlling the Fall Armyworm.

In South Africa, Fall Armyworm (FAW) is a regulated pest in terms of the Control Measures Relating to Fall Armyworm, R. 449 of 26 May 2017 of the Agricultural Pests Act, 1983 (Act No. 36 of 1983). FAW is a disastrous exotic pest with a wide host range and, if not properly controlled, it may lead to damage of the host crop and/or yield/loss. With early rains experienced in different parts of the country, high infestation levels of FAW can be expected.

Farmers and community members are advised to take precautionary control measures, which includes diligent/vigilant scouting for egg packs, leaf damage and caterpillars as well as trapping, to ensure early detection for effective control of FAW.

The moth can be caught in traps with a lure, which can also serve as an early warning of the presence of the pest. For agrochemical control, a list of registered

agrochemicals is available on the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development's (DALRRD) website:<https://www.dalrrd.gov.za/News-Room/Media-release/Fallarmy>

Effective control of the FAW can be realised through integrated pest management practice. It is best to start agrochemical spraying while the caterpillars are smaller than one centimeter (1 cm) long. Big caterpillars (over 1 cm) crawl deep into the leaf whorls of maize plants and that makes it difficult to reach them when agricultural chemicals are applied.

The main concern with this pest is that it can rapidly develop resistance to agrochemicals, therefore it is highly recommended to rotate the agricultural chemicals within the cropping season in accordance with the resistance group and mode of action.

Farmers and community members are encouraged to do regular scouting of FAW, particularly in younger plantings. They can call the nearest Local Agriculture Centre for technical advisory.

For further media enquiries, please contact: Reggie Ngcobo, Media Liaison Officer on 082 883 2458

Pest Alert: Asian Citrus Greening 'Candidatus *Liberibacter asiaticus*'

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) in the Republic of South Africa hereby alerts the agricultural community, importers, international travellers, academic institution and the entire citizenry about the potential risk faced by our country, Southern African Development Countries (SADC) region and the entire continent as it relates to the Asian citrus greening '*Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus*'.

Asian citrus greening is the most devastating disease of citrus worldwide and presently does not occur in sub-Saharan Africa. However, Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP) was detected and is spreading in central-east Africa, and Huanglongbing (HLB) occurs in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius and Reunion. Both HLB and ACP occurs in countries that are frequent trading partners with southern African countries, traders and travellers pose a threat of inadvertently spreading the disease or the vector.

Asian citrus greening is a bacterial disease caused by *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus* and is spread by the insect vector Asian Citrus Psyllid

(ACP), *Diaphorina citri*. Symptoms on leaves and shoot include yellow shoots, asymmetric, mottled leaves, small upright chlorotic leaves, out of phase flushing and branch dieback. Flower and fruit symptoms include unseasonal and heavy flowering on diseased branches, small, lopsided, bitter-tasting fruit with small, brown, aborted seeds and uneven colouring at maturity and excessive fruit drop. The sooty mould growth resulting from excess honeydew production can also affect the plants' ability to photosynthesise, which can affect overall plant health. Production costs would increase because of the need to control this pest. Market access, the economy, the citrus and nursery industry and backyard citrus production would also be negatively affected.

Considering the socioeconomic value and the impact that citrus production has in the country, this pest must be taken seriously because citrus contribute immensely to job creation and economic growth.

Please contact DALRRD in case of any suspicious-looking symptoms on citrus trees and fruit.

Vaccinate against Rift Valley Fever

Rift Valley Fever (RVF) is an acute viral hemorrhagic fever that causes illness in animals (such as cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats, and camels). RVF is a zoonosis, meaning that people can also become infected, mainly by handling sick or dead animals. Based on recent research from a group of international researchers it however seems as if RVF infections in humans are more likely to come from mosquitoes than cattle. Rift Valley Fever occurs after a five to ten-year drought. Fortunately only a small percentage (around 10%) of people infected with this disease develop severe symptoms, including eye disease, excessive bleeding, and swelling of the brain. The recovery rate for humans are good with 1% deaths recorded. The last case was reported during 2018 in Jacobsdal, Free State. All this said, it is severe and consequently a Notifiable disease.

We have already experienced the joys of good rains, almost countrywide, with the Free State particularly wet and lush. These conditions are ideal for flooding and the formation of pans of water in which the Aedes mosquitoes responsible for the transmission of the RVF virus breed and multiply.

The only ways to prevent the disease spreading and infecting livestock are to vaccinate our livestock and to prevent mosquito bites, using products that are registered for the control of mosquitoes (usually deltamethrin containing dips, sprays and pour-ons). Clearly, an annual vaccination against the disease is the most effective and easiest route. Onderstepoort Biological products is currently producing two vaccines, viz:

1. OBP Live RVF vaccine containing the Smithburn strain. Although it is believed that this vaccine gives protection of longer duration, it is still recommended that all animals should be vaccinated annually. This vaccine should, however, not be used in pregnant animals.
2. OBP killed RVF vaccine, which needs annual vaccination and is safe to use in pregnant animals. It however requires two initial doses six weeks apart, making it more expensive and labour intensive to administer.

Ideally, vaccination should have already been carried out in early spring, but it is not yet too late. Time is now however of the essence as most outbreaks begin mid-to late-Summer.

Strategic Agricultural Inputs Forum

The Strategic Agricultural Inputs Forum (SAIF) was recently established to shape a new regulatory environment in the industries of the founder members.

As a united forum the SAIF – which consists of the Animal Feed Manufacturers' Association (AFMA), CropLife South Africa (CropLife SA), the Fertilizer Association of Southern Africa (Fertasa), the Pet Food Industry Association of Southern Africa (PFI), the Plant Science Consultants' Association (PSCA), RSA Renderers, the South African Animal Health Association (SAAHA), the South African Bioproduct Organisation (SABO) and the South African Pest Control Association (SAPCA) – will primarily work alongside the Registrar of the Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947 (Act No. 36 of 1947) in a public-private partnership (PPP).

The chief executive officer of AFMA, De Wet Boshoff, was unanimously elected as chairperson of the forum. Alan Kloeck, president of SAAHA, was elected as the vice-president and Fikile Nzuzza, regulatory and government affairs manager of CropLife SA, will

act as secretary. Together they will represent the SAIF management team for the first term and have committed to serving the various input sectors.

The forum is made up of the pillars of the industries that are governed by Act 36. “Although we are all from different industries, they are regulated by the same Act,” says Boshoff. “During the COVID-19 pandemic we saw an increase in the pre-existing backlog of product registrations. We were all faced with a central challenge – the lack of a strategic joint platform to work from or to engage with government. We established the forum with the goal of becoming a Section 21 company. With this new platform we will be able to work in partnership with government.

“The forum will be represented mainly by the CEOs of the different organisations and their regulatory and technical experts. We want expertise at the table as well as the authority to engage with government at the most senior level. However, this will not just be a piece of paper,” says Boshoff. “It will be a PPP with government, and it must be signed off by government. There must be timeframes and deliverables linked to it.”

2020 Agricultural Writers SA Awards: A tribute to the heroes of agriculture

South Africa's contributors to agriculture in a time of crisis was recognised at the Agricultural Writers SA Awards on 13 November in a virtual event dedicated to the heroes of agriculture in 2020. The reason for the change in theme of the awards, which traditionally presented the farmer, agriculturalist and new entrant to commercial agriculture of the year awards, was to honour the agricultural community for the way in which it came together to overcome the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent national lockdown.

"The event was on the brink of being cancelled altogether, but we realised that in a year such as this that was so difficult, nonetheless so many rallied together to help where it was needed, we couldn't but use our platform to pay tribute to the industry. There were so many farmers, agricultural companies and associations that contributed to helping communities in need, near and far, assisting fellow farmers and wherever there was help needed. They not only clothed and fed the nation but kept the economy afloat," said chairperson of the Agricultural Writers of SA, Liza Bohlmann.

Markets for litchis

Accessing new markets while retaining and optimising existing ones remains a top priority for the export-oriented fruit industry. The industry has made great strides in opening up further markets for South African subtropical fruits.

Consequently, lockdown has presented various challenges with regard to market access applications, like the prevention of verification visits due to travel bans.

For litchis' entry into the US, DALRRD has submitted a response to technical issues raised by USDA-APHIS. The PIP for litchis' entry into China has been submitted. For India the application for litchis is being processed, and a verification visit is due shortly.



RIFT VALLEY FEVER (RVF)

QUESTION	ANSWER
What is Rift Valley Fever?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rift Valley Fever (RVF) is a disease of sheep, cattle and goats that leads to abortion (loss of pregnancy) and deaths. It is caused by a virus and is spread by mosquitoes.
How do people get sick?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People can get RVF if they handle blood, tissues or other body fluids of infected animals. Most people get sick from RVF 2 to 6 days after contact with the virus and they typically show flu-like symptoms (fever, muscle pain, back ache, weakness and dizziness). Some people may get more severe diseases, and may even die.
How can I protect my animals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy animals should be injected with a vaccine against RVF. Non-pregnant animals should be vaccinated with the modified live vaccine. Pregnant animals, or animals that might be pregnant, should be vaccinated with an inactivated (dead) vaccine.
How can I protect myself?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not slaughter sick animals or eat meat from sick animals Wear a mask and gloves when you slaughter animals or work with animal tissues, such as blood, meat, or an aborted calf or lamb. Boil or pasteurise milk before use and cook meat well before you eat it. If you think you need more advice or assistance, please contact your nearest State Veterinarian or Animal Health Technician.
What must I do when I think my animals have RVF?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you see abortion and deaths in your animals, contact your nearest State Veterinarian or Animal Health Technician immediately.

Protect yourself, your family and your animals against Rift Valley Fever!

Contact your nearest Animal Health Technician or State/Private Veterinarian or Directorate Food Import and Export Standards.
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