



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

18 JULY 2025

FORGING RELATIONS WITH DAIRY PRODUCERS TO OVERCOME FMD

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in KwaZulu-Natal has pledged to collaborate closely with dairy farmers throughout the province to mitigate the impact of Foot-and-Mouth Disease. As the disease already poses a threat to the livelihoods of beef farmers, dairy farmers are equally concerned as the department is currently doing disease investigations for dairy cases that were reported recently uMzinyathi vaccinated herd and uThukela.

KwaZulu-Natal is home to 16 major dairy factories, including Clover Industries Limited, the largest dairy in South Africa, all making the province one of the leading producers of the milk in South Africa, representing about 30 percent of all total raw milk produced in the country.

The MEC for the Department, Ms Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa convened a meeting with dairy producers at Orange Grove Dairy in Dundee as part of efforts to explore solutions amidst the disease outbreak. The department is currently investigating FMD occurrences in three dairy farms situated in the uThukela and uMzinyathi districts. Clinical signs of FMD have been observed on the three affected farms, prompting industry stakeholders to devise a way forward.

The FMD outbreak in 2021 has significantly impacted communal and beef commercial farmers. Since then, dairy farms had been spared of FMD infections until recently in these districts, where veterinary services are conducting investigations following clinical signs of the disease. Speaking after the meeting KaMadlopha-Mthethwa said her department's authorities are on the ground working with all industry role players to control the disease, "As the government, we are promoting partnerships with all stakeholders to tackle the disease. As part of our containment measures, we have issued veterinary movement permits, a We are pleased to report a high level of compliance among farmers, which has minimised the impact of the disease. Since the FMD outbreak in 2021, having started vaccinations in 2022, we have vaccinated over 700 thousand cattle in the province and 24,000 cattle in the uMzinyathi district alone."

Orange Grove Dairy's CEO Dave Durham, whose company in Dundee is heavily reliant on dairy, said that they sought a meeting with the provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to establish a collaborative relationship and strategies on possible solutions to contain the spread of the disease before it could spread to the main corridor, the N3 freeway. He emphasised that this corridor must be protected at all costs, as it is the heartbeat of the country's economy, connecting the Durban Harbour and the country's economic hub, Johannesburg. Durham raised his concerns if any parts of the N3 are declared a Disaster Management Area, as this



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would impact their operations and lead to price increases for dairy products later this year, ultimately affecting consumers.

He said as the dairy industry's message to government is clear 'let's keep this corridor an 'FMD free zone' by collaboratively working together to finding a KZN solution for the province's challenges.' Durham said "One of the key things that we are concerned about is the busiest freeway through Africa that goes through KwaZulu-Natal and if we are not careful it goes to a Disease Management Area which will then cause all the vehicles going through that DMA to be classified for having gone through an FMD area

Regarding some of the proposed measures by the dairy producers, kaMadlopha-Mthethwa said, "The approach taken by the dairy farmers was resonated well with us. Their concern is when government declares places to fall under the disaster management area, the demarcation also includes areas that may not necessarily have the FMD. They also urged that we forge a partnership with them. They are even willing to procure the vaccines so that we curb the disease. We agreed that we will be taking their concerns to the FMD imbizo in Pretoria this week so that we will be speaking in one voice."

KaMadlopha-Mthethwa also emphasised the need for a stronger collaboration, "There's a great need to work together with the private sector and leverage on our skills and weaknesses effectively. As the province we may not have huge amounts of minerals but farming is our mainstay of our economy and as such we have to protect the employment of the workers in the agricultural sector as a whole."

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