

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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**Report Name:** South Africa Announces Foot and Mouth Disease Strategy

**Country:** South Africa - Republic of

**Post:** Pretoria

**Report Category:** Livestock and Products

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**Report Highlights:**

On January 14, 2025, the South Africa Minister of Agriculture announced a national mass vaccination program to contain the ongoing Foot and Mouth disease (FMD) outbreak. The objective of the mass vaccination is to achieve FMD-free status with vaccination. According to Ministry of Agriculture, eight of the nine provinces in the country have reported outbreaks of FMD in their commercial and communal farms. According to industry sources, the economic impact extends beyond direct livestock losses, threatening South Africa's R80 billion livestock sector through trade restrictions, quarantine costs, and the loss of export markets.

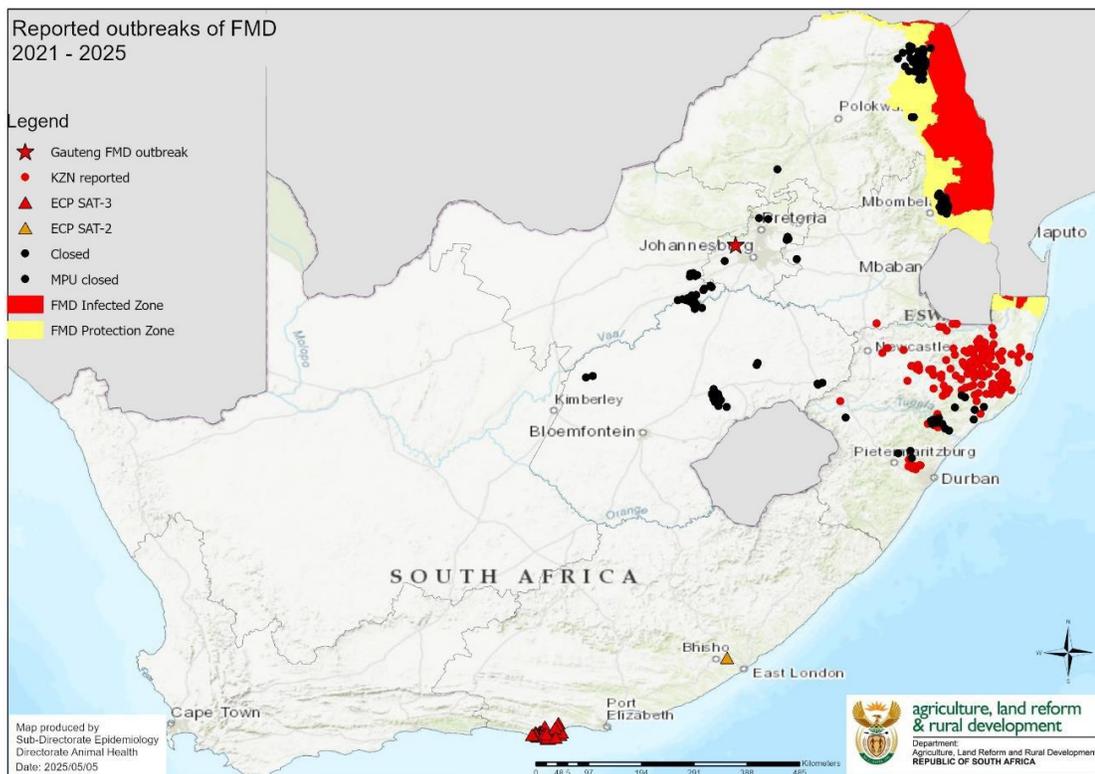
## Background

On January 14, 2025, the Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, announced a national mass vaccination program to contain Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in South Africa. The objective is to achieve FMD-free status with vaccination.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, eight of South Africa’s nine provinces have reported FMD outbreaks in both commercial and communal farms. The affected provinces are Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West, and Western Cape. The Northern Cape remains the only province without reported outbreaks. The current outbreak reportedly began in 2021, following the movement of animals from Phalaborwa in Limpopo Province to KwaZulu-Natal. Phalaborwa borders Kruger National Park, which is home to buffalo populations known to carry FMD (see GAIN report SF2025-0018: [South Africa Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreak and International Trade Partner Reactions](#)).

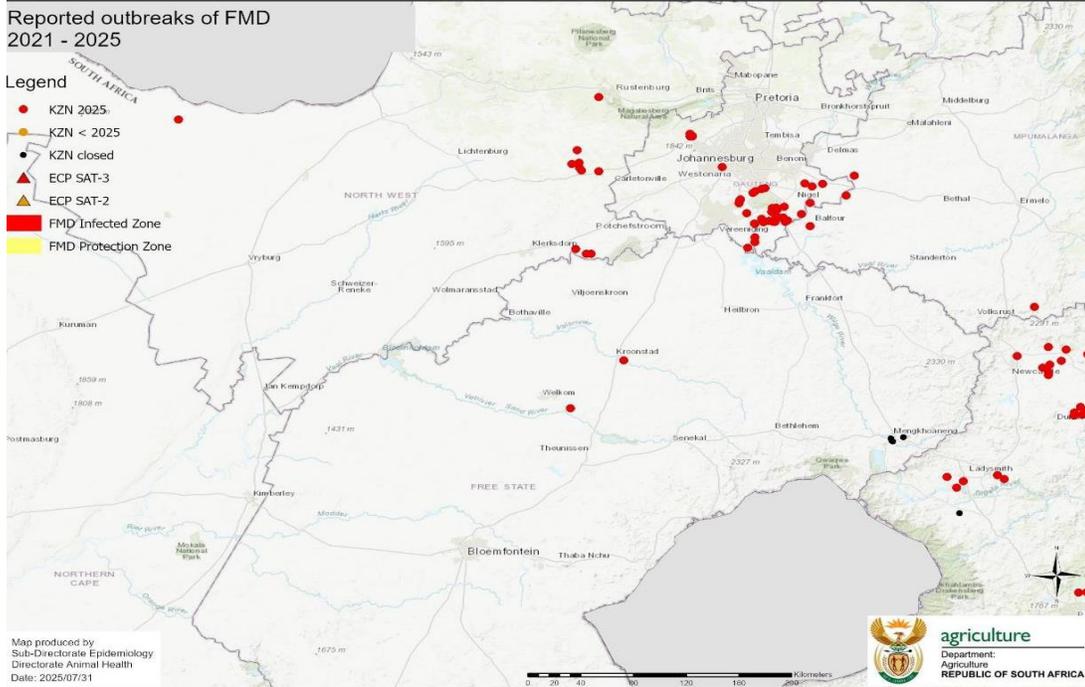
KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Free State, and North West are currently the hardest hit, particularly KwaZulu-Natal with 207 outbreaks and Gauteng reporting 195. Free State has reported 58 outbreaks, North West 50, and Mpumalanga 30. From among the 207 outbreaks in KwaZulu-Natal, 187 remain unresolved, while 20 have been resolved and officially closed with the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH). Initially, outbreaks were limited to communal dip tanks and small-scale farmers but have since spread to commercial beef and dairy herds. Five game reserves, all located near one another, are also affected. The Department of Agriculture has indicated that complete resolution in KwaZulu-Natal is unlikely due to the carrier status of buffalo populations in these reserves.

Figure 1: FMD Outbreaks in KwaZulu Natal



In April 2025, Gauteng and Mpumalanga reported FMD outbreaks, followed by Western Cape and North West in June and July 2025, respectively. The virus strain identified in Mpumalanga and Gauteng matches the strain circulating in KwaZulu-Natal.

Figure 2: FMD Outbreaks in Gauteng, Mpumalanga, North West and Free State provinces



Source: Department of Agriculture

### Mass Vaccination Rollout Strategy

In response to ongoing outbreaks and appeals from farmers and industry stakeholders, the Department of Agriculture established a Ministerial Advisory Task Team on Animal Disease Prevention and Control. This team developed the vaccination strategy, which will be implemented over ten years. The strategy begins with stabilization, followed by the eventual withdrawal of vaccination and final recognition of national FMD-free status with vaccination by WOA.

The department plans targeted vaccination in high-risk zones, aiming for at least 80 percent coverage of cattle in these areas. The high-risk areas include KwaZulu Natal, with a population of 2.3 million cattle, followed by North West with a population of 1.6 million and Free State and Gauteng with populations of 2 million and 246,000 cattle respectively. Since the outbreak began, South Africa has imported vaccines from Botswana. In 2025, Botswana confirmed it will supply South Africa with one million doses per month. Six million vaccine doses will be imported from Argentina by March 2026, with additional imports from Türkiye pending necessary permits.

Local production of vaccines will be activated through the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP), initially producing 20,000 doses per week and scaling up to a capacity of 960,000 weekly doses. The ARC has committed to producing 12,000 doses by mid-February.

The vaccination rollout will be accompanied by enhanced surveillance and movement control, coordinated through the government’s laboratory network led by ARC and OBP. Additionally, the department will implement a digital livestock traceability system to ensure safe, monitored animal movements.

In conversations with FAS Pretoria, some farmer organizations expressed skepticism in the department’s plan for FMD status in South Africa. While the government’s shift to a ten-year “FMD-free with vaccination” strategy offers hope, experts warn of continued volatility into 2026 and 2027, with beef prices likely to remain elevated until production recovers. On January 26, industry groups sent [a formal demand](#) to the Minister of Agriculture “in response to the State’s continued failure to implement a workable, lawful, and effective response to the escalating Foot-and-Mouth Disease crisis.” Experts attribute the situation to government monopoly, capacity shortages, poor communication, and delayed response. They call for urgent privatization of vaccine production, removal of regulatory barriers, and a national disaster declaration to enable rapid access to resources such as police and military support.

## Trade

Table 1: South Africa’s exports of beef and beef products to the world in tons (2021-2025)

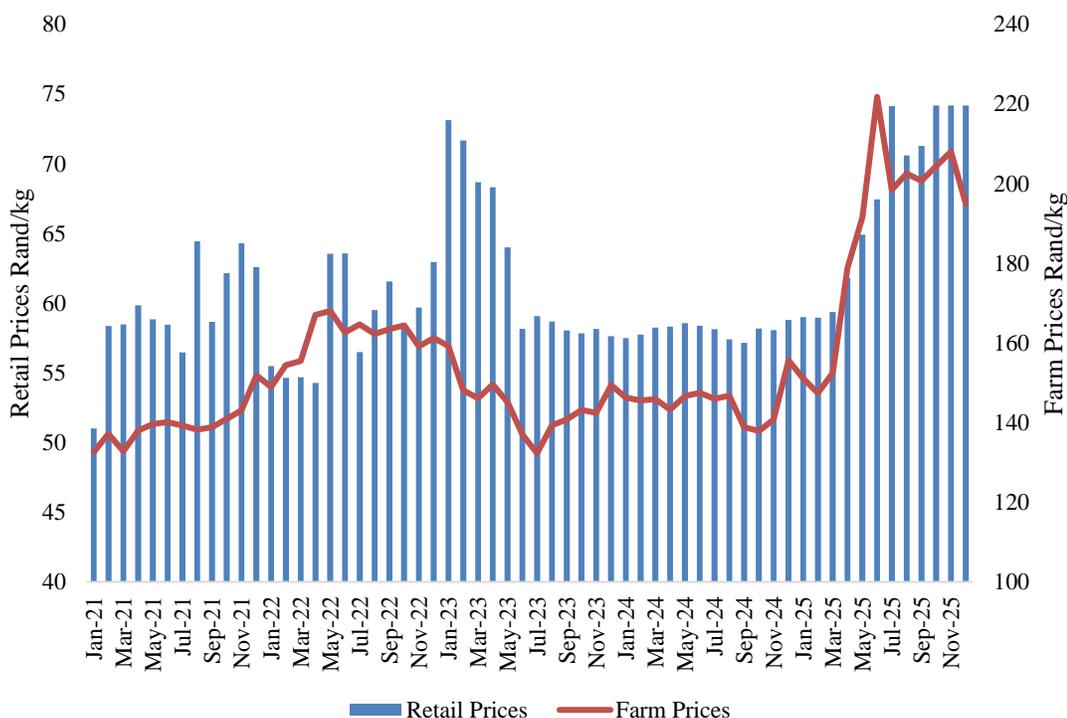
Partner Country	2021	2022	2023	2024	January to December 2025	%ΔJanuary to December 2025/January to December 2024
Jordan	2,965	2,843	5,386	6,290	4,714	-25.06%
United Arab Emirates	4,201	4,122	4,144	6,288	4,855	-22.79%
China	9,187	1,795	1,127	5,523	1,701	-69.20%
Lesotho	4,131	4,299	5,051	5,448	3,095	-43.19%
Kuwait	4,127	4,156	4,862	4,449	3,467	-22.07%
Mozambique	3,634	3,460	4,607	4,061	4,087	0.64%
Qatar	1,466	2,209	2,070	2,324	1,556	-33.05%
Botswana	2,648	2,053	980	2,248	2,113	-6.01%
Egypt	1,045	1,039	1,182	2,191	1,307	-40.35%
Namibia	1,557	1,694	973	1,469	1,080	-26.48%
Others	6,821	9,808	7,388	7,635	8,958	17.32%
World	41,782	37,478	37,770	47,926	36,933	-22.94%

Source: Trade Data Monitor

Between January 2024 to December 2024 and January 2025 to December 2025, South Africa’s beef exports to the world dropped by -22.94 percent in volume. China recorded the largest decrease at -69.20 percent, followed by Lesotho at -43.19 percent and Qatar at -33.05 percent.

The top ten export destinations for South African beef are Jordan, United Arab Emirates, China, Lesotho, Kuwait, Mozambique, Qatar, Botswana, Egypt, and Namibia. South Africa has signed a compartmentalization protocol with trading partners to allow exports from areas not affected by the outbreak.

Figure 3: South Africa’s Farm and Retail Prices for Beef



Source: Red Meat Industry Services and Statistics South Africa

### Economic Impact

Industry sources report that the economic impact extends beyond direct livestock losses, threatening South Africa’s R80 billion livestock sector through trade restrictions, quarantine costs, and loss of export markets. The concentration of cases in key agricultural zones, along with spillover into commercial operations, disrupts food supply chains, increases feed costs for quarantined farms, and disproportionately affects small-scale and communal farmers who lack financial buffers to withstand prolonged restrictions. Supply disruptions, and reduced slaughter volumes have driven up domestic beef inflation, contributing to a 12.2% increase in meat prices in the year up to November 2025. This exacerbates food insecurity for low-income households already struggling with high staple costs, adding pressure amid a broader malnutrition crisis. During January 2025 to August 2025, retail prices for beef increased by 34 percent while farm prices increased by 24 percent. This is the period when four provinces, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, North West and Western Cape reported their outbreaks. Karan beef, one of the biggest feedlots in Africa with a capacity to keep 210,000 cattle, is based in Gauteng.

**Attachments:**

No Attachments.