

## **PRESS RELEASE**

(for immediate release)

### **RPO SHOCKED AT THE ANNOUNCEMENT BY BOTSWANA REGARDING LIVE EXPORTS OF CATTLE**

The Red Meat Producers' Organisation (RPO) noted with shock and surprise that the Minister of Agriculture, Development and Food Security of Botswana announced that cattle would be allowed to be slaughtered on a temporary basis to be exported. Botswana's legislation has always prevented it.

The announcement indicates that a maximum of 30 % of total herds may be exported. The announcement aims to support farmers in the drought.

Applications for exports must be made to the Department of Animal Production of Botswana and must comply with the veterinary import requirements of the importing country and ownership must be proved.

Botswana's Animal Information and Traceability System will also be used to confirm ownership of animals.

The RPO is of the opinion that the unilateral announcement will put further financial pressure on commercial and emerging cattle farmers in South Africa.

The *Botswana Meat Corporation* (BMC) is also in the process of exporting stored beef to South Africa in larger quantities. The implication of this is that together with the effect of the announcement, beef and weaner prices can come under pressure locally.

The RPO has for some time ensured that import permits for slaughter purposes from neighboring countries have been finalised according to the guidelines of the International Animal Health Organisation (OIE) together with Standard Operational Procedures.

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The import permit provides that livestock from neighboring countries can be exported for slaughter purposes under strict conditions and with proof of an animal health certificate. The certificate includes a list of diseases that need to be tested to prove its disease-free status. This may also include quarantine measures. The measures further stipulate that the animals exported for slaughter purposes must go directly to abattoirs in South Africa and/or to feedlots who are then obliged to slaughter the livestock.

Namibian livestock imports for slaughter are currently handled on this basis. The RPO understands that due to the free market measures that apply within the South African Development Community and the South African Customs' Union, imports from Botswana cannot be prevented.

However, the RPO will ensure that the imports will be conducted according to the current import measures for livestock imports from neighboring countries for slaughter purposes and a personal discussion has already been held with Dr Mpho Maja, Director : Animal Health and an undertaking has been given. It is also true that a Standard Operational Procedure must be negotiated between the Botswana government and the Director of Animal Health, South Africa before any imports can be made. This will be done in consultation with the South African red meat industry.

This is just another example of neighboring countries implementing unilateral measures and legislation and the RPO has a problem with this. Measures are adapted to suit the exporting country without regard to implications. This action was unilateral and not discussed with the South African industry and we are extremely disappointed in this", said Mr Koos van der Ryst, Chairman of the national RPO.

The RPO also instructed Agri Inspec, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, to ensure that the conditions are met.

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