

Red meat industry wrap-up

Dave Ford, chairperson of the Red Meat Industry Forum, discusses the current status of several matters concerning the red meat industry, and the forum's response to these issues.

Several pressing concerns of the red meat industry were addressed at the recent annual general meeting of the Red Meat Industry Forum (RMIF) by the chairperson, Dave Ford.

• AGOA

Ford said that while the AGOA agreement trade concessions made by the departments of agriculture and trade and industry were apparently for the benefit of the 'bigger economic picture', the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) had expressed concern about the legislative controls on feed used in Mexico, and the effect it could have on South Africa's BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] status and meat exports.

"Major SPS [sanitary and phytosanitary measures] concessions made by DAFF during negotiations and included in the final agreement are presently being contested in court by the South Africa Poultry Association [SAPA]. Discussions held with the deputy director-general on compiling a veterinary protocol with the US for future exports from South Africa, which initially looked positive, have come to naught," Ford said.

He added that recent proposals made to the director of animal health for the RMIF to assist in compiling a protocol for the US needed to be further pursued.

• Hide Exports

The Department of Trade and Industry was imminently expected to announce a new hide export policy. The policy would ban the export of raw cattle hides, and impose a 20% tariff on wet blue hides during the first year, and a 40% tariff from the second year. According to Ford,



ABOVE: Dave Ford, chairperson of the RMIF, discusses several pressing issues that pertain to the red meat industry, including the Department of Trade and Industry's imminent announcement of a new hide export policy. Ford says that the policy would have far-reaching economic implications for the cattle industry.

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this would have far-reaching economic implications for the cattle and abattoir industries. He said that the RMIF would vigorously oppose this policy.

• Veterinary Strategy

Ford said that DAFF and industry stakeholders had consulted on the new Veterinary Strategy. He added that in all incidences where the word 'should' appeared in proposed actions in the strategy, it needed to be replaced by 'shall' or 'will'. Proposed actions also needed to be accompanied by timelines of real value.

The court ruled in favour of RMIF's application compelling the minister to institute an Independent Meat Inspection Service across all abattoirs in South Africa as required under the Meat Safety Act of 2000. Industry stakeholders, the Department of Veterinary Public Health and legal representatives were presently finalising dates for implementation.

• APAP

The Agricultural Policy Action Plan was debated at various

council meetings with some members for, and others against, RMIF's participation. Ford added that the success of APAP would largely depend on industry driving the process. It was proposed that until such time as broader red meat industry objectives were established, the Red Meat Producers' Organisation would lead the process on the value chain round tables in the interim, while the RMIF would have observer status.

• Maize prices

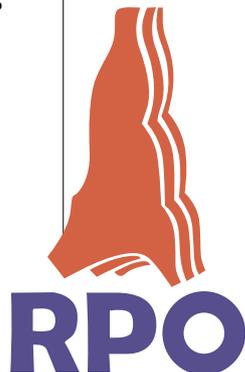
The RMIF and other stakeholders opposed Grain SA's application to the International Trade Administrative Commission to have the imported maize reference price increased to \$123/t. Grain SA subsequently retracted the application.

Ford said that users and traders had once again been approached to submit information and comments on the principle of a maize import price formula. It was agreed that the dollar exchange rate offered sufficient protection for maize producers, while any maize price increase would have disastrous implications for the livestock industry.

• RMIF's action plan for 2017

Finally, Ford said that the RMIF's key focus areas for the next year should include:

- Participating in the carbon tax debate;
- **Developing** a brucellosis action plan;
- Enforcing residue monitoring;
- BSE surveillance;
- Encouraging a sustainable livestock census system.
- *Phone the RPO on 012 349 1102, or email rpo@lantic.net.*



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