

PRESS RELEASE
14 October 2015

THE NATIONAL RED MEAT PRODUCERS' ORGANISATION (RPO) STRONGLY CONDEMS THE SMUGGLING OF WILD FROM THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

The national RPO strongly condemns the two incidents of illegal smuggling attempts of sable from Zimbabwe and Zambia which occurred in the past three weeks. Not only is such lawless behaviour unacceptable, it also poses a big risk for the local red meat industry because of the possibility of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) being brought into the country.

Such irresponsible and selfish actions have a serious bearing on the animal health status of the national stock- and wild industries. A FMD outbreak can have catastrophic results for the South African agriculture.

South Africa has since February 2014 been recognised as a FMD free zone. It is of critical importance that this status be protected at all costs, as the local agricultural industry suffered losses to the amount of R4 billion during the loss of the country's status.

The export of red meat products, genetic material, dairy products, wild products and fibre products has been escalating since the change in the country's FMD status. Such imports make a viable contribution towards producer prices and also earn foreign valuta.

The RPO has with great concern take note of recent outbreaks of FMD in Zimbabwe, Mocambique and Namibia. Zambia is FMD endemic. Therefore, the smuggling of wild and stock poses serious risks.

The Red Meat Industry Forum, on which the RPO is represented, has been supporting the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) since 2009 in its resolution to not approve permits for the export of sable from Zambia. All this actions has been successful. At this stage, there is no scope for legal imports of sable from Zambia.

The DAFF is currently doing everything within its power to maintain South Africa's FMD status. However, the international animal health organisation, the OIE, reviews this status on an annual basis.

The blatantly illegal smuggling of wild which are now occurring, can have an influence on the country's status, even if there are no outbreak of FMD.

The RPO congratulates the Zimbabwe and Zambia authorities with the arrests and requests that the suspects be heavily sentenced if they are found guilty.

The RPO calls on the SAPS, DAFF, the Department of Environmental Affairs and other role players to nip any possible further smuggle attempts in the bud. The RPO fully supports these actions.

The RPO is concerned about the fact that South Africans buy sable in Zambia, because it is currently not possible to legally bring the animals into the country.

Smuggle actions are only possible if various role players work together. Prohibitive actions are needed to identify suspects, who will then be able to identify target farms and owners in South Africa.

Contempt of animal welfare measures should also be used as aggravating evidence in such cases.

The RPO liaise with the organised wild industry, national Animal Health Forum role players as well as state departments in an effort to do all that is possible to prevent the occurrence of further incidents. The RPO calls on the farmer community to report any suspect incidents to the national RPO.

ENQUIRIES

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