



agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

13 February 2013

DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO MEDIA ENQUIRIES REGARDING THE "HORSEMEAT SCANDAL" IN EUROPE

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) has noted the developments in the so-called "horse meat scandal" in Europe and various media enquiries regarding South Africa's situation.

South Africa, as a global player in the international trade, is involved in the export and import of various foods of animal origin to and from various countries, including European countries.

The current problem in Europe appears to be related to involvement of multiple intermediaries across multiple countries in the supply of raw meat products, making it difficult to trace the ingredients used in the meat products.

In South Africa, the importation of animal products is very stringent – the veterinary authorities currently allow importation of recognisable cuts of beef and certain beef from Germany, Ireland, UK, Spain, Switzerland and veal meat from the Netherlands – horse meat is imported from Brazil and Belgium only at this stage. These consignments are inspected at the port of entry where veterinary authorities are stationed.

There are also imports of processed meat products, such as salami and ham from certain countries. However, South African veterinary authorities require that the raw meat used in those processed meat products shall be sourced within the country of origin of the consignment and shall be independently certified by the veterinary authorities of the country of origin.

The department therefore is of the view that it is unlikely that South African importers could have unknowingly imported animal products contaminated with horse meat as imports usually involve a single country and are properly certified by the veterinary authorities of the country of origin.

Regarding the local production, it must be noted that it is neither unsafe nor illegal to consume or sell horse meat in terms of South African legislation.

In fact, South Africa has a small market for horse meat. Presently, there are only three privately owned abattoirs approved for the slaughter of horses. Such abattoirs are regulated under the Meat Safety Act, 2000 (Act No. 40 of 2000). Meat is inspected and passed by qualified meat inspectors. Horse meat is used in various animal products.

The labelling of foods is controlled by the Department of Health (DoH) – and DoH has labelling regulations that stipulate that the label of products shall declare the names and quantities of all ingredients under the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectant Act, 1972 (Act No. 54 of 1972).

DAFF has noted the sporadic research articles relating to incorrect labelling of foodstuffs, and colleagues at the DoH have been alerted for follow-up.

DAFF and various role players in the regulatory environment will continue to monitor the events unfolding in Europe and will maintain the stringent import control measures.

For media enquiries please contact:

Steve Galane

Acting Chief Director: Stakeholder Relations and Communications

Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Cell: 083 635 7346

E-mail: SteveGAL@daff.gov.za