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MEDIA STATEMENT

GOVERNMENT CONFIRMS START OF HPAI VACCINATION STRATEGY AT AVI AFRICA 2025

In a significant development for South Africa's agricultural sector, the Deputy Director-General for Agricultural Production, Biosecurity, and Natural Resources Management, Dipepeneng Serage, confirmed at the AVI Africa conference that government will proceed with the vaccination strategy against Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).

A keynote speaker at the event, Mr Serage highlighted the department's commitment to ensuring that farming can continue safely and sustainably. "My job is to bring science and legislation together and allow farmers to farm without risking anyone's health, while positioning South Africa as a net exporter of food," he said.

The government's HPAI vaccination strategy is a controlled, science-based approach that will focus on four key pillars:

1. **Controlled Use of Vaccines** – Only vaccines registered in South Africa will be used. Sales and distribution will be strictly controlled, and farmers must register and comply with biosecurity and surveillance protocols.
2. **Biosecurity** – Enhanced on-farm practices will remain critical to preventing disease spread.
3. **Traceability** – All vaccinated flocks must be trackable to maintain export integrity and health transparency.
4. **Surveillance** – Ongoing monitoring will ensure early detection and effective management of any outbreaks.

"This is about ensuring the maximum benefit of vaccination with the minimum risk of the negative effects that come from uncontrolled use," added Serage.

South Africa is ready to begin vaccinations immediately. Three H5 vaccines have been officially registered for use, with an H7 vaccine currently under development. One farm is already under evaluation for compliance and may be the first to begin vaccinations under the new framework. "We have the data, we know which farms we're starting with — now we have to start," continued Serage. The Deputy Director-General concluded by acknowledging that science is still evolving, but the urgency of the situation requires action. "We hope science can evolve much faster so we can talk about HPAI vaccination freely," he said.

This move represents a major step forward for biosecurity in South Africa's poultry industry and signals government's determination to protect both public health and the country's agricultural economy.

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