



SOUTH AFRICAN POULTRY ASSOCIATION

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MEDIA STATEMENT

THE GOVERNMENT MUST DEFEND SOUTH AFRICA'S POULTRY INDUSTRY AND PROTECT ITS FOOD SECURITY

by Izaak Breitenbach, CEO of SAPA's Broiler Organisation

The South African poultry industry has asked the government to withdraw the “concession” granted to the United States authorities to determine for themselves which US states can export poultry to South Africa following outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI, or bird flu).

These decisions have previously been taken by the Department of Agriculture (DoA), based on US notifications to the World Organisation of Animal Health (WOAH). However, the department has now allowed the US to “self-impose and self-lift” bird flu restrictions. This decision – quietly implemented three months ago with no consultation with the domestic industry – is an alarming abdication of its responsibility to defend South Africa's poultry sector.

Bird flu is rampant in the United States. All poultry producing states in the US have been affected, and 27 of those states are currently banned by the South African authorities from exporting poultry to this country. By granting the United States the right to determine its own disease status and export policies, the DoA has created a serious conflict of interest. The risk is palpable: a country grappling with widespread outbreaks of bird flu can now prioritise its own interests and potentially expose South Africa to the very disease that cost this industry R9.5 billion and wiped out 30% of its long-living chicken flock in 2023.

This is an unprecedented and reckless shift that compromises South Africa's disease-free status and threatens both food security and the future sustainability of the poultry sector. It sets a dangerous precedent that other large-scale poultry exporters, such as the European Union and Brazil, could soon demand the same latitude, leaving the South African poultry industry further exposed to devastating disease outbreaks.

That is why the South African poultry industry has formally asked the DoA to reverse this disastrous decision. The overriding concern is clear: decisions about the risk and spread of HPAI into South Africa must be taken by the South African authorities — not ceded to the United States, or any other exporting country.

We call on the DoA to end this “concession” and restore its role as a protector of the local industry, the workforce it supports, and the nation's food security. The future of South Africa's poultry sector depends on it.

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