

Agoa - SA Poultry slammed for 'protectionism'

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The Association of Meat Importers and Exporters of SA (AMIE) on Tuesday criticised the SA Poultry Association (Sapa) for its "stubborn protectionism" of the local chicken industry.



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On Monday, Department of Trade and Industry (dti) Minister Rob Davies informed reporters of the possible suspension of SA from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (Agoa) and said that the move would affect the agricultural sector. The Agoa is a United States trade act which aims to enhance market access to the US for qualifying sub-Saharan African countries.

According to AMIE CEO David Wolpert, Sapa played a "disproportionate" role throughout the negotiation process with the US. "Their insistence on unreasonable and extraordinary measures to protect the uncompetitive local industry, while constantly demonising American poultry, which is already subject to more stringent testing than SA products, has come at a very high price indeed," he said in a statement.

According to an earlier report, South Africa had failed to meet a deadline to resolve various disputes and would now have its trade tariffs re-imposed.

Salmonella testing protocol

Sapa CEO Kevin Lovell told Fin24 that the Salmonella testing protocol used by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries was the main issue under dispute. Lovell contrasted protocol for US chicken imports with local production: "With any local production, you can test all steps in the production process so you have a wider set of results on which to base an assessment of disease incidence."

According to Lovell, the SA poultry industry was subjected to multiple tests including breeding stock, feed ingredients, farms, abattoirs, and the final product with all the data available to government veterinary services.

"With any imports, DAFF can but only test what lands on our shores." He said Salmonella testing protocol used by DAFF was based on that of the EU and complied with standards set by the World Organisation for Animal Health.

The dti announced in November 2015 that a deal between US and SA veterinarians paved the way for the US to resume exporting 65,000 tonnes of chicken to South Africa. In terms of the Poultry Veterinary Trade Protocol (PVTP), which covered poultry and day-old chicks, the quota would be open by 31 December 2015, but would exclude poultry from avian flu-hit areas. Almost 20 US States experienced outbreaks of avian flu in 2015.

Source: Fin24

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