

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

No.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT STANDARDS ACT, 1990 (ACT No. 119 OF 1990)

DRAFT REGISTERED “FREE RANGE” SYSTEM AS A MANAGEMENT CONTROL SYSTEM FOR CATTLE (BEEF), PIGS (PORK) AND SHEEP (MUTTON) INTENDED FOR SALE AND EXPORT

REGULATIONS RELATING TO THE MANAGEMENT CONTROL SYSTEM IN RESPECT OF THE SALE AND EXPORT OF CERTAIN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

It is hereby made known that the Executive Officer: Agricultural Product Standards has registered the “Free Range” System as a Management Control System in terms of the Regulations Relating to the Management Control System in Respect of the Sale of Certain Agricultural Products No.R.6634 of 19 September 2025.

Further made known is that the Executive Officer: Agricultural Product Standards, in terms of the Regulations Relating to the Management Control System in Respect of the Sale of Certain Agricultural Products No.R.6634 of 19 September 2025 hereby inserts after Regulation 10, the following Annexure in respect of the “Applicable Minimum Standard for the Registered “Free Range” System as a Management Control System for Cattle (Beef), Pigs (Pork) and Sheep (Mutton) intended for Sale and Export”.

ANNEXURE F

THE APPLICABLE MINIMUM STANDARD FOR THE REGISTERED “FREE RANGE” SYSTEM AS A MANAGEMENT CONTROL SYSTEM FOR CATTLE (BEEF), PIGS (PORK) AND SHEEP (MUTTON) INTENDED FOR SALE AND EXPORT

1. Type of Agricultural Product

- 1.1 “Free Range” is a type of agricultural product regulated in terms of sections 3, 4 and 15 of the Agricultural Product Standards Act, 119 of 1990, and that is intended for sale and export.
- 1.2 The animals and products covered are the following:
 - (a) Cattle - beef.
 - (b) Sheep - mutton.
 - (c) Pigs – pork.
- 1.3 “Free Range” refers to cattle, pigs and sheep raised in extensive, pasture-based systems where animals have continuous access to natural veld, grazing lands, or planted pastures. Landless, feedlot, or zero-grazing/foraging systems are not permitted under this claim.
- 1.4 “Free Range” comes from suppliers that use animal husbandry principles and techniques that avoid growth regulators, antibiotics, animal by-products (including fish meal) and any other undesirable additives into animal feeds.

2. Farm requirements

- 2.1 A map of the farm is required and shall be relevant. The map shall include at least:
 - (a) Location and description of buildings, including premises for the storage, processing, packaging and processing of all outputs, raw materials and inputs,
 - (b) Where applicable, location of fields/pasturages, manure storage facilities and feed storage.
 - (c) The sources of water and water courses.
 - (d) The quarantine area/s.
- 2.2 Management Plan:
 - (a) The plan shall set out a description of the practices and procedures to be performed and maintained, including the frequency with which they will be maintained. Points to be covered include: Livestock management programs, feeding, animal welfare, biosecurity and health regimes, pest control such as dipping, deworming, etc.
 - (b) The plan shall have a program to ensure that all staff and contractors working on the property or site are trained in the correct handling of livestock.

3. Feed and water

3.1 Feed:

- (a) Livestock must have access to an appropriate wholesome diet, which is available in sufficient quantity so as to satisfy their diverse and complex nutritional needs.
- (b) Access must be freely available as applicable to the type of animal, unless specifically prescribed to the contrary by an attending Veterinary surgeon.
- (c) No growth promoters, stimulants, hormones, steroids or routinely/systematically fed antibiotics may be given.
- (d) Feeds and supplements must be stored correctly as specified by the manufacturer with no pest contamination.
- (e) Feeding troughs must be in good condition and clean.

3.2 Water:

- (a) Water must be available at all times (including in sub-zero temperatures), unless otherwise prescribed by an attending Veterinary surgeon.
- (b) Water must be clean and fresh, and sources regularly cleaned to eliminate algae, feed waste and other contaminants.

4. Housing (Subject to item 5 below)

- 4.1 Housing and grazing conditions for animals that meet the animal's behavioral needs regarding appropriate freedom of movement and comfort.
- 4.2 Protection against excessive sunlight, temperatures, rain, wind, humidity, dust and noxious gases according to the needs of the animals.
- 4.3 Animals shall be adequately protected against predators and dogs.
- 4.4 Prolonged confining or tethering of animals is prohibited.
- 4.5 Environment and facilities shall be designed to ensure ease of handling and to prevent injury to animals.
- 4.6 Appropriate housing and sanitation practices to minimise the occurrence and spread of diseases and parasites.
- 4.7 Group housing to be provided for different categories (consideration to size, number, sex and maturity) of animals to avoid distress, bullying and injury, such as size, number, sex and maturity.
- 4.8 Indoor housing:
 - (a) Faeces, urine and uneaten or spoiled food shall be removed as often as necessary to minimise odour and avoid attracting pests.
 - (b) Housing shall be designed to allow for temperature levels, ventilation and air circulation appropriate to the animals.
 - (c) Floors to be smooth, but not slippery.
- 4.9 For each animal type, there should be a dedicated quarantine area to separate sick animals from the main herd or flock. These areas must be clearly marked.

5. Animal "Free Range" management

5.1 Animals shall –

- (a) be raised primarily on natural veld or pasture; and
- (b) have continuous access to grazing/foraging, except during temporary management-related confinement.

5.2 Production systems that confine animals without access to grazing, including feedlots or high-density indoor housing are not permitted.

5.3 Temporary confinement may occur only for:

- (a) Veterinary examination or treatment.

- (b) Lambing assistance when required.
 - (c) Handling, shearing, or identification.
 - (d) Extreme weather protection
 - (e) Temporary holding prior to transport
- 5.4 When confinement occurs, animals shall have space to stand and lie normally
- 5.5 Stocking densities shall be:
- (a) Pigs no more than 50 per 0.25 ha. Flock size limits are 50 pigs per enclosure and may not live in closed confinement and cages except when farrowing (giving birth).
 - (b) Sheep shall not exceed the LSU (Livestock Unit) (1 Cow or 6 Sheep) defined for the area of operation.
 - (c) Cattle shall not exceed the LSU (1 Cow or 6 Sheep) defined for the area of operation.
- 6. Animal Health**
- 6.1 Animals shall be treated in such a way as to minimise stress and injury.
- 6.2 The excessive use of prodders is not permitted.
- 6.3 No animal that is diseased or injured shall be denied appropriate treatment.
- 6.4 Euthanasia – provision to be made for humane killing of casualties.
- 6.5 Veterinary Medicines and Treatments:
- (a) Only registered stock remedies may be used and must be used as per the manufacturer's instructions.
 - (b) Other remedies may only be used on veterinary prescription.
 - (c) Animals shall be adequately vaccinated against prevailing pathological conditions.
 - (d) Where necessary, animals shall be weighed to ensure the correct dosage is administered.
 - (e) Records shall be kept for all medicines (including vaccinations) used that include at least the following information:
 - (i) The animal that was treated (Animal Identification).
 - (ii) Name of the medication.
 - (iii) Expiry date of medication.
 - (iv) Dosage administered.
 - (v) Withdrawal period implemented.
 - (f) Needles and syringes shall be clean and disinfected and disposed of in an environmentally safe manner and procedure shall be in place to handle situations where a needle has broken during treatment and remains in the animal.
 - (g) All medicines shall be stored in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
 - (h) Animals that have undergone treatment shall be identifiable and/or segregated (where necessary).
 - (i) Treated animals and their products may not be consigned for slaughter or sale during withdrawal periods specified for the medication administered.
 - (j) The withdrawal period for livestock shall be double the prescribed withdrawal period.
 - (k) The suspected presence of any notifiable disease shall be reported to the relevant authorities.
- 6.6 Transport of animals
- (a) The same principles as prescribed in the Red Meat Regulations in terms of the Meat Safety Act. 2000 (Act No.40 of 2000) for the transport, off-loading and handling of animals shall be applied when loading the animals, as summarised below:
 - (b) The floors of the vehicle--
 - (i) must be solid without openings between different decks that could cause contamination of animals on a lower deck; and
 - (ii) must be non-absorbent and slip free.
 - (c) The sides and partitions of the vehicle –
 - (i) may not be lower than 1 800 mm for cattle and 750 mm for smaller animals; and

- (ii) partitions must be installed at every 3 m of loading space if the vehicle is longer than 4m.
- (d) Shade must be provided for pigs in transit.
- (e) Ventilation in the vehicle must be ensured.
- (f) The loading space may not have sharp angles, corners, protrusions or holes that may injure animals or have loose objects stored between animals.
- (g) The minimum required floor space per animal on a vehicle is –
 - (i) 1.4 sq. m per adult bovine or equine;
 - (ii) 0.3 sq. m per small calf;
 - (iii) 0.4 sq. m per sheep or goat;
 - (iv) 0.3 sq. m per porker (20-60kg);
 - (v) 0.4 sq. m per baconer (60-110); and
 - (vi) 0.8 sq. m per adult other pig.
- (h) The following animals shall not be transported together or there must be partitions on the vehicle to separate them –
 - (i) bulls and cows or heifers;
 - (ii) adult and young animals;
 - (iii) different species;
 - (iv) aggressive/unruly and normal animals; and
 - (v) injured or blind and normal animals.
- (i) No heavily pregnant animals shall be transported.
- (j) No animals to be transported if they display any injuries, signs of disease or abnormal behaviour that could compromise their welfare.
- (k) The vehicle used to transport animals to an abattoir shall be kept in a clean and hygienic condition.
- (l) Animals shall be calmly loaded by trained personnel to avoid excitement, fear, stress and injury.
- (m) No electrical prodding of pigs and calves is allowed.
- (n) Animals may not be picked up by their heads, fleece, skin, ears, tails, horns or legs.
- (o) Animals may not be forced to jump from different levels or over gaps during offloading.
- (p) No transporting for longer than 18 hours, provided that –
 - (i) if longer than 18 hours of continuous transportation, livestock must be offload given food, water and shelter before reloading;
 - (ii) This detail is to be recorded in a logbook for inspection where required for verification; and

7. Traceability

- 7.1 Animals and/or product batches shall be traceable to the farm of origin.
- 7.2 All animals shall be traceable and where required, identifiable as prescribed by the Animal Identification Act, 2002 (Act No.6 of 2002) and the regulations published in terms of this Act, provided that lesser harmful applications of identification marks shall take preference if allowed.
- 7.3 Records shall connect animal identification, treatments, feed inputs, movement, and exclusion lists.
- 7.4 Records of antibiotics administered and double withdrawal periods shall be available for the animals and products concerned

8. Labelling and claims

- 8.1 The type of agricultural products mentioned in point 1 may be presented as “Free Range” only if it complies to this minimum standard for the registered “Free Range” system.
- 8.2 The “Free Range” system require compliance with other management control system standards registered in terms of the Regulations Relating to the Management Control System in Respect of the Sale of Certain Agricultural Products No.R.6634 of 19 September 2025. These and other management control systems may be referenced together with “Free Range” on the label provided that the product in question complies with all the standards required, and where the standards differ, compliance to the stricter requirement shall be adhered to.

- 8.3 Products derived from the “Free Range” system shall also be labelled in accordance to the regulations and standards for the mentioned products published in terms of the Agricultural Product Standards Act, 1990.

9. Enforcement

- 9.1 The designated assignee/inspectors shall ensure that only farms registered with the Department for the “Free Range” system as a Management Control System” are allowed to pack and label the product, container or outer containers as “Free Range.”
- 9.2 The List of registered farms will be placed on the department website at <https://www.nda.gov.za/index.php/core-business/agricultural-production/inspection-services/food-safety-quality-assurance>

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