



## **AGRICULTURE'S PERILOUS PATH WITH THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**

Since coming to power in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) government has defined as its goal the promotion of centralised power for itself, whatever the cost or the consequence. But the more the control, the quicker the rot has set in. There isn't one activity within their ambit, be it a ministry or a state-owned enterprise that has not succumbed to the now well-known inability of the government to manage the undertaking. On the contrary, they have displayed an unerring capacity to steal, corrupt and destroy whatever they have seized. The list of the results of their tainted touch is endless: Eskom, South African Airways, the country's railways, its road system, the nation's ports, the post office, the court system, the police service, the SA Defence Force, the SA Navy, the country's water system, once-functioning municipalities, veterinary services, our erstwhile world-renowned hospitals, health systems, schools and universities, the destruction of more than 3 000 productive farms, and virtually everything else that has been within reach of their avarice.

One group that has to a degree remained reasonably independent of this plague is the South African commercial farming industry. It is a powerful lobby because it produces and controls the food that keeps the barbarians from the ANC gate, as the saying goes. Sixty five million people need to be fed every day and this is way beyond the ANC's competence (?). But this industry is tempting for the ANC. If it controls food production, there is little hope of anyone unseating them from power. Food is a basic need, and the lack of it is instant revolution. Nobody must be allowed to hold the ANC to ransom, using food as a weapon.

Some farmers suspect that the ANC's efforts over the years to undermine commercial farming is an attempt to disrupt this powerful lobby. The arsenal against commercial farming in South Africa is increasing. Since 1994, the ANC has targeted this industry, albeit carefully. But the campaign to disrupt farming is always present. Crippling legislation has burdened farmers with regard to workers' rights, residential and basic wage legislation are just two examples of these laws. Labour has ben retrenched because of wages which farmers

cannot afford, which was not the ANC's intention. But increasing input costs have escalated dramatically. There are no state farm subsidies to speak of, compared to say France, which nurtures its agricultural industry.

Eskom's increasing load shedding has drastically cut into farming profits as scheduled irrigation has been severely disrupted. Farm murders are regular, as are farm attacks not only on the farm owner but on his staff. There is ravaging stock theft which problem farmers must try to salvage themselves as the police pay little attention to this crime. The sabotage and theft of crops never before experienced under previous governments at this level is a daily occurrence. Droughts of great severity are not declared disasters, thus no funds are made available to alleviate what is a regular natural occurrence.

This Bulletin is Part 1 of a two part series on the vicissitudes suffered increasingly by South Africa's commercial farmers. The list is long and deeply unnerving. How will commercial farmers survive, and what will happen to South Africa's food security if the ANC manages to penetrate the soul of South Africa's commercial agriculture with its iniquity? They have destroyed so much, so it is important to protect this vital industry against ANC avarice.

## **VACCINES**

"Water, SA's Next Eskom" declares The Citizen headline 17 May, 2023. A close third to become the next Eskom after water could be the collapse of the heretofore extraordinary enterprise called Onderstepoort, the heart and soul of veterinary science in South Africa and throughout the African continent.

There is nothing that the ANC touches that escapes the toxicity of SA governing party's corruption, negligence and incompetence, and Onderstepoort is no exception. Established as a research facility in 1908, it falls under the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) which deals with animal and crop science as well as research. Onderstepoort has always been regarded as the hub of veterinary science in Africa.

For more than 100 years, Onderstepoort has been renowned worldwide for its innovative research on livestock vaccine development. "As a result of its advanced research capabilities over the years, many vaccines used globally were developed there, such as anthrax, live vaccines for horse sickness and blue tongue, lumpy skin disease, heart water and Rift Valley fever, among others." (Daily Maverick (DM) 8.5.23). It is indicative that all of these vaccines and strains were developed BEFORE the ANC government became the sole shareholder of the facility under the name Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP).

## **ANIMAL DEATHS**

“Horses dropping dead as government fumbles vaccine production at crumbling Onderstepoort Biological Products”. (Headline DM 9.5.23)

There it is again, over and over. Once the ANC goes anywhere near something successful and innovative and profitable, their poison seeps in and the destruction commences. Horses are dying of deadly African Horse Sickness and blue tongue is threatening SA's vital red meat industry. Below the surface of the escalating crisis are reports of missing millions and staff dismissals at the facility. The same pattern emerges wherever the ANC moves in. It has been Eskom and Transnet and South African airways and Denel and all the other state-owned enterprises (SOE's) that have fallen like dominoes as the ANC's toxicity spreads throughout their structures and their working environments.

Says DM: “Without access to inoculation, hundreds of horses are dying from African Horse Sickness (AHS) and traumatised farmers have been posting horrific pictures of their animals in the throes of death”. The Red Meat Producers' Association has signalled a state of disaster in its industry, predicting a 50% livestock mortality rate and a threat to national food security. “Following a high fever and difficulty in breathing, the horse's head, neck and body swell. It coughs, its eyes water and liquid drips from its nose. This is followed by coordination problems: the horse stumbles, falls and is unable to get up, its eyes dilating with fear. Unless it is put down, it drowns in its own body fluid.” (DM 9.5.23) Once contracted, there is no treatment for AHS. The only defence is vaccination. OBP declares it was prepared to contract out production to the private sector, but this didn't happen. The freeze dryer was broken and not repaired. OBP says it will have a new freeze dryer UP AND RUNNING WITHIN 18 MONTHS TO TWO YEARS. The existing freeze dryer needing repair will be back in production within a month, says OBP.

How's that for efficient governance. Where is farm-owner president Cyril Ramaphosa? Have his cattle been inoculated? Does he care what is happening to the country's red meat industry, given that the majority of South Africans eat red meat almost daily? This is criminal negligence from a government that cannot keep the lights on nor fix a tap. Their arrogance and ignorance is a noxious mix.

According to farmers, vets and executives in the agricultural sector, there have been critical and persistent shortages of vaccines needed to protect livestock – horses, cattle and sheep - production issues which it attributes to “past failures” to maintain the plant properly. The OBP calls these failures “production challenges”. (DM 9.5.23)

It is the same old story as the rest of the ANC's failures. Politically-correct ANC chums and other acolytes are appointed to critical boards, many of them with little or no qualifications to enable them to handle the job at hand. Things start falling apart. There is little or no oversight from the relevant cabinet ministries. What about parliament? Does it now have oversight committees to detect these malfunctions before they set in to become the norm? The president seems not particularly interested. He does nothing to stop the rot. As well known political commentator R.W. Johnson says about the ANC: "They stick to the African script."

There are echoes of Eskom here. Some farmers declare there have been periodic shortages of crucial livestock vaccines "for several years." The problems seem to have taken a turn for the worse in recent months, this while South Africa's agricultural sector is one of the few green shoots in a desolate economic landscape. (DM 9.5.23)

The inevitable slide into criminal activity and incompetence is an ANC hallmark once it gets its hands on anything that previously worked. According to DA shadow minister of agriculture Noko Masipa, OBP has recently faced "many challenges" including political interference, lack of expertise, outdated technologies being overtaken by newer, cheaper, safer and more effective technologies, and crumbling infrastructure due to lack of maintenance. This sounds tragically familiar. It has become a pattern with the ANC. There is also the matter of millions in public funds that are missing. In sum just over R1 billion in public money was allocated towards livestock vaccines, but there is nothing to show for it, says Masipa.

Outbreaks of these animal diseases have shut the door on meat exports which are devastating to farmers. Worse, given the criminal climate now present in SA, there are fears that substandard and unregistered labs will enter the market to fill the gaps. This will not go unnoticed within South Africa's export market countries where some are already imposing onerous conditions on many exported SA products. (This will be discussed in Part 2.)

A task team appointed by minister of agriculture Thoko Didiza to investigate the vaccination scandal presented the minister with a shocking report in 2021, although it carries a date stamp May 2022. It has only now been released, in mid May 2023.

## WHAT WE USED TO BE

This is yet another sorry tale of present-day South Africa: what we used to be and what we are now. How could it happen that this country could be handed over to an organisation like the ANC whose only contribution to this country was violence in their path to power? What did they have to offer other than what we see now? In virtually every sphere South Africa was a top notch country. Whatever one's opinion, apartheid kept the incompetents and the thieves and the corruption out of the country's body politic and the administrative sectors. The economy thrived. There were ups and downs but certainly it was never imagined we would end up as the travesty we are now. In 1978 \$1 US equalled R0.78, in 1989 R2,33 equalled one us dollar. In 1994 as Mandela came to power it was R3.43. In 2009 Under Jacob Zuma it descended to R10,32 and today, under Ramaphosa, it is R19.33.

By 1926, Onderstepoort issued 2 million doses of anthrax vaccine free of charge annually. Also annually, 750 000 to 2,5 million doses of Blue Tongue vaccine were manufactured, as were 750 000 doses of Blackquarter vaccine. 7 million doses of Wireworm remedy were manufactured per annum, and 3000/4000 vaccines were created per year to immunise mules.

Today, the OBP they cannot issue vaccines on time or within scheduled emergency periods because the freeze dryer machine needs repair!! The government has not sourced vaccines from the private sector even though they have intimated they would. But this hasn't happened. And they haven't created any new vaccines since 1994.a

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The history and some current articles about Onderstepoort are contained in the bibliography below:

- + Book review – Onderstepoort 1908 – 2008, by DW Verwoerd and R.D Bigalke (editors)
- + FoodforMzansi.co.za – “Animal Vaccine shortage a ticking time bomb” (11.2.22)
- + “Alarm sounded on shortage of livestock vaccines in South Africa”. Daily Maverick 12.1.22
- + Daily Maverick – “Horses dropping dead as government fumbles vaccine production at crumbling Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP).” (8.5.23)
- + “OBP – Past, present and future. The history of Animal Vaccinology at Onderstepoort. Veterinary Library, University of Pretoria and Washington State University, USA. Pretoria Conference, July 1992.
- + “SA livestock under threat as “broken” animal disease control reaches critical levels.” News 24 (11.5.23).
- + [www.vetclick.com/news/onderstepoort-centenary-celebration-P.490.-2008](http://www.vetclick.com/news/onderstepoort-centenary-celebration-P.490.-2008).
- + Profile of ARC-OVR. <https://www.arc.agric.za/arc-ovi> . 2014

