



Mr Senzeni Zokwana
Minister
Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
PRETORIA

5 February 2019

By email: PA.Minister@daff.gov.za

Dear Minister Zokwana,

BRAZIL POULTRY IMPORTS

Because of the appalling food safety record of Brazilian producers, FairPlay believes South African consumers have reason to be concerned about the recent bans by Saudi Arabia and the European Union on poultry exports from several Brazilian producers.

We intend to publish an article about the continuing food safety risks posed by Brazilian chicken imports, and would like your assistance in providing information in this regard.

The Saudi ban, for “technical reasons”, comes on top of an EU ban on Brazilian chicken because repeated incidences of salmonella were found in tests of Brazilian product at EU ports of entry. The EU ban will remain in place until Brazilian producers are shown to be salmonella free for a period of six months. As you will be aware, the EU has a zero-tolerance policy for salmonella.

The Saudi and EU actions to protect their consumers against potential food safety risks from Brazilian poultry imports will lead to justifiable public concern that similar action is not being taken here.

A list of questions is attached. As you will see, our planned article is not intended to be hostile to DAFF; rather we believe the department is under-resourced and requires additional funds from the National Treasury to carry out its food safety and health checks as mandated.

We believe that the Saudi ban followed an inspection of Brazilian poultry facilities and are concerned that the same inspections are not being carried out by South African inspectors, because of a lack of funds.

As you will be aware, Brazil supplies more than 60% of South Africa’s poultry imports. While a significant proportion is mechanically deboned meat, or MDM, these imports include nearly 150 000 tonnes of the popular frozen chicken portions, bone in and boneless.

As you will also be aware, the “Weak Flesh” food safety scandal in Brazil in 2017 showed that major meat and poultry producers were evading food safety checks, or bribing officials to falsify test results. This led to a temporary ban on Brazilian meat products by a number of countries, including South Africa.



The additional EU and Saudi Arabian action shows that consumers still have reason to be worried. There is a very strong possibility that chicken consignments originally destined for Saudi Arabia and EU countries will now be diverted to the South African market because they know our health checks are less stringent.

An under-resourced food-safety inspectorate means that public health is being put at risk. FairPlay believes DAFF should be adequately staffed and funded so that our consumers have the food safety protection to which they are entitled.

The answers to our questions will enable us to campaign for these additional resources.

We look forward to your co-operation in this matter, and your early reply would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

FRANCOIS BAIRD
FOUNDER



Questions to DAFF regarding food safety checks in imported poultry

1. How many foreign poultry producers have permits to export to South Africa?
2. How many of these plants have South African inspectors visited in the past 10 years?
3. Does DAFF have the capacity to inspect these plants and, if not, what capacity is required?
4. Has DAFF inspected any Brazilian poultry production sites, particularly since the 2017 food safety scandal there? If not, why not?
5. Is DAFF satisfied with its capacity to conduct inspections at South African ports? If not, what capacity is required?
6. Are all import consignments inspected and tested?
7. If it is random sampling of containers, what percentage is tested?
8. How many consignments have been rejected, for what reasons, at which ports and from which countries?
9. What are the main bacteriological problems that have been identified with imported chicken products?
10. Specifically, was salmonella or listeria found on any poultry import samples, particularly from Brazil?
11. Has DAFF received any reports from Saudi or EU authorities on their decisions to ban Brazilian poultry imports?
12. Is DAFF considering a ban on Brazilian poultry imports based on the information it has received, or is it considering conducting its own tests on Brazilian facilities? If not, why not?
13. What progress is being made on banning the repackaging of bulk frozen chicken? As we understand it, this dangerous practice is prohibited by DAFF but has been allowed because of a dispensation from the Department of Health.
14. What progress is being made from DAFF's side to implement requirements that imported chicken meet the same labelling and traceability standards required of South African producers? The listeria outbreak showed how important traceability is in maintaining food safety.
15. What requests for additional funding for its food safety inspectorate has DAFF made to National Treasury, and what has been the response?