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Abstracts

Stakeholder Engagement

Community of practice on sanitary and phytosanitary risk assessment: a step towards a national risk assessment agency?

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With 106.057 ZAR Billion in 2018 (current prices) agriculture represented 2.44% of the GDP of South Africa. Despite this relatively small contribution to the national wealth agriculture remains one of the main employment provider of the country particularly in rural areas as well as a major earner of foreign exchange through international trade. This activity is regulated by sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures that require an effectively regulated framework and technical expertise in risk assessments. To provide a supportive and seamless trade framework for the country a Community of Practice (CoP) model has been funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF) supported by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) to support government in high level strategic negotiations and positioning and support industry to prevent the introduction and spread of major pests and pathogens in plant, animal and public health. This CoP aligns with the Veterinary Strategy Plan which stipulated the needs for a national agency to define, coordinate and develop risk analysis (RA) in the field of sanitary, phytosanitary, environmental and occupational risk assessment. The primary research objective of the CoP SPS RA framework will be to assess the risks associated with, and to develop and test surveillance, diagnostic and control models to detect the emergence of, selected plant diseases, insect pests, animal diseases and animal health-related conditions, including zoonoses, food borne diseases, chemical residues, mycotoxins and antimicrobial resistance. The second objective of the CoP is to train postgraduate students and government regulators in RA and advanced epidemiology and diagnostics, thus building human capacity. The third objective will be to provide government and other stakeholders with relevant information and scientific advice on the risk of emergence, entry and spread of diseases in SA in order to facilitate inter-sectorial coordination mechanisms at national and regional level to respond to SPS issues. This CoP, with the development of collaborations and relationships, will build some strategic partnerships with the local and international scientific community in the areas of SPS Risk Assessments. It will provide scientific coordination of expert committees set up by DAFF and provide technical support for the establishment of the sanitary agency proposed in the Veterinary Strategy. In the longer term and with the establishment of this national SPS Agency/Authority, South Africa will meet its international commitments to the WTO in terms of Codex, IPPC, OIE rules and regulations, as risk assessment is one of these commitments.

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