

New vaccine plant to help Zambia combat FMD

By Jeff Kapembwa | 26 February 2024 | 11:45 am

Zambia is mobilising US\$22 million (about R415 million) to set up a veterinary medicine production plant to help mitigate the high rate of cattle and other animal fatalities that have affected local farms.



It is imperative for the country to address diseases coupled with pathogen concerns as it prepares for goats to be exported to Saudi Arabia and other parts of the world.

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is one of the major diseases that has affected the livestock sector since it broke out in the country in 1993.

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Livestock and fisheries minister Makozo Chikote said that imports of vaccines for cattle and other farm animals were not cost-effective and prohibited the prospects of the livestock sector to grow. He said an ultra-modern vaccine factory was needed to help the sector.

Chikote noted the impact of FMD on the sector, saying the disease had remained a major setback to the growth of the industry. Vaccines are currently imported at great cost and many farmers fail to access them due to lack of funds or resources.

“We have great challenges eradicating the disease because of its complex nature, and at the same time we have to import vaccines every month, and this is costly,” he said.

Zambia’s imports of veterinary vaccines for uses other than FMD cost millions of dollars and set the sector back drastically.

The country is expected to provide Saudi Arabia with an average of one million goats per month and the conditional demands of monitoring pathogens are a major challenge that could hinder exports.

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The government noted that most infectious diseases were caused by pathogens, which included bacteria, fungi, protozoa, worms, viruses and even infectious proteins called prions.

Chikote said: “Exporting goats to Saudi Arabia is a good foreign exchange earner, but it also has challenges because there are conditions that the animals have to undergo or be exposed to before they can be exported. At the same time, we don’t have the capacity to supply one million goats monthly.”

The minister said that the government, with help from African Agrovet Zambia and Dumas Pharmaceuticals, had mobilised funds to set up a veterinary manufacturing plant before the end of this year to help avail the vaccines in real time and defray import costs.

Director of Dumas Pharmaceuticals, Rajah Vashista, said that the two partners remained optimistic that the construction of the veterinary plant would help Zambia reduce import costs by over 50%, redress various agriculture-related challenges, and enhance animal welfare.

“We are setting up a plant in Zambia, which will help smallholder farmers, many of whom are faced with animal health concerns. We believe this will cut the cost of doing business for many people, especially those that don’t have insurance,” he said.

