

Economic growth depends on animal health management

By [Claudi Nortjé](#)

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The National Animal Health Forum (NAHF) and Agricultural Writers South Africa recently held a liaison workshop and information session on animal health and the impact it has on the economy. The workshop took place at the SA Veterinary Association (SAVA) offices in Pretoria.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

Effective communication in the agricultural sector

Dr Pieter Vervoort, veterinarian and managing director of the National Animal Health Forum, emphasised the value of effective communication. "The disconnect in conveying information effectively can largely be attributed to different methods of communication. The National Animal Health Forum aims to remedy this in the agricultural sector through collectively addressing pressing matters and discussing problem areas with relevant parties."



Dr Pieter Vervoort, veterinarian and managing director of the National Animal Health Forum

Economic growth hinges on biosecurity

Wandile Sihlobo, chief economist at Agbiz, gave a general overview regarding growth in the agricultural sector, focusing specifically on biosecurity. "The agricultural sector has seen steady growth over the last few years. Approximately 837,000 people are currently employed within the sector. However, biosecurity plays an important role in ensuring continued growth."

According to Sihlobo, the foreseeable growth within the agricultural sector will be export-led. "On average, we export about 49% of what we produce. Therefore, a halt in exports can impact farmers and overall production significantly."

Sihlobo added that a lack of diversification in export markets regarding certain agricultural commodities emphasises our need for optimal animal health. "In the wool sector, about 70% of our output is exported to China which stresses the importance of implementing biosecurity measures. If there is a halt in wool exports it places a significant strain on the local market."



In the front, from left to right, is Wandile Sihlobo, chief economist at Agbiz and Dr Pieter Vervoort, veterinarian and managing director of the NAIH. Standing behind them is Andries Wiese from Hollard Insurance.

Mitigating risk

Dr Vervoort added that although we have seen progress in respect of meat exports following this year's foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in Limpopo, there is still more work that needs to be done.

Andries Wiese from Hollard Insurance said that the greatest global risk we are currently facing, can be found in the food arena. "Seeing as meat and animal products make out 50% of our country's food intake and agricultural production, it would be short-sighted not to invest in food safety."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claudi Nortjé, Flaas Media is author at AgriOrbit.