



Agriculture launched Phytosanitary Border Inspection: Compliance with Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures

On 10th January, 2019 the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security launched the Phytosanitary Border Inspection where the plants and plant related consignments will start to be examined by checking the relevant documentation which are necessary for their imports and exports as well as visual inspection where necessary. The event was carried out as a way of sensitizing the traders, stakeholders and the public about the importance of Phytosanitary measures for the welfare of our plants system as well as for trade facilitation.



Above: The Phytosanitary Inspection awareness during World Food Day, October 2018

Lesotho has the potential to produce high quality agricultural products especially horticultural produce that can be traded into the regional and international markets. However, without proper compliances with Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreements, Lesotho's ability to trade internationally is compromised especially for export markets. Engaging the Phytosanitary (Plant Health) Inspectors at the borders ensures that the Ministry is protecting the agriculture and biodiversity against possible introduction and spread of pests and also meeting its obligation under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement. Lesotho has been a member of WTO since 1995 and further joined the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) in 2013. By accepting WTO Agreement, Governments agreed to be bound by the Rules of all

Multilateral Trade attached to it, including Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement. The SPS Agreement encourages governments to adopt and harmonise the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures to protect human, animal, and plant life or health. The Lesotho Phytosanitary policy which is in its final stage will assist the sector by giving a direction on sanitary and phytosanitary issue. Implementation of border inspection is one of the Phytosanitary measures that the government uses to ensure plant health for domestic, regional and international markets. Until now the Ministry is compliant with sanitary measures where only the Animal Health Inspectors are already present at the borders. Towards, meeting these obligations for the Phytosanitary measures the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security through the Department of Agricultural Research requested funding support from EU-SADC Economic Partnership Agreement for upgrading SPS in Lesotho. The overall objective of the project is to enable the five EU - SADC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) Member States, including Lesotho, to be compliant with, and meet international best practice technical regulations, standards and SPS requirements for access of their products into EU markets. This project has therefore funded the recruitment of the border inspectors and equipment needed for the plant pest diagnostic services for provision of the certification and inspection services to facilitate smooth trade.

These sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures can take many forms, such as;

- i) Requiring agricultural commodities and products to come from a disease-free area before entering the country;
- ii) Inspection of commodities and their products.
- iii) Specific treatment or processing of products, and many more.
- iv) Issuing the relevant documentation for compliant agricultural consignments

While the SPS measures are the mandate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security being



responsible for controlling the import and export of plants, plant material and animals, and trans-boundary diseases and implementation of Good Agricultural Practices; there are other role players involved in the Food Safety chain such as i) *Ministry of Health*, charged with inspection activities on Food Safety and the *Ministry of Trade and Industry*, responsible for the development of standards and food testing laboratories for quality assurance. Other role players include other government departments and institutions such as *Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of Environment, Tourism and Culture, Ministry of Small Business Development, Cooperatives and Marketing, Lesotho Revenue Authority, the Academic institutions* etc. Therefore for full implementation of the SPS measures and the success of inspection services, the Ministry is determined to work harmoniously with all stakeholders.



Above: the logo to be encountered at the borders representing Phytosanitary Inspection



Above: Department of Agricultural Research Staff during Border Phytosanitary Launch

PHYTOSANITARY PROTECTING LESOTHO'S AGRICULTURE AGAINST INTRODUCTION AND SPREAD PESTS

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