PLANT PROTECTION POLICY FOR LESOTHO

FINAL DRAFT

PREPARED BY THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

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FOREWORD

Lesotho's land area is roughly 30,055 km² or 3 million hectares, of which 9% is arable (280 000 ha). This land is important as a life form support for both cultivated and wild plants. Agriculture plays an important role in the economy of the country. However, land available for agriculture is rapidly declining due to factors such as land degradation or desertification and encroachment of settlements on agricultural land. For Lesotho to achieve food security there is a need to increase crop production at the household and national level. This involves the use of high-quality seeds and fertilizers. However, Lesotho does not produce seed or manufacture fertilizers necessary for improved crop production. Therefore, there are high volumes of seeds and fertilizers imported from the Republic of South Africa. As a result, if proper phytosanitary measures are not taken, the risk of introducing injurious plant pests in the form of plant diseases, weeds, and insect pests are increased.

Crop production in Lesotho has been declining in recent years. This is attributable to such factors as injurious plant pests, increasing poverty across the livelihood categories in the country, and- unpredictable weather patterns. Because of the declining crop production and productivity, there is always a need to import food in the form of grains and vegetables. There are also many imports of seed, seedlings, and other planting materials by individual farmers to improve crop production. This further increases the risk of the introduction of alien pest species.

Improving agricultural production targeting both local and international markets can help to improve the economy of the country. The Government of Lesotho is advocating for commercialization of agriculture so that the available arable land is put under intensive crop production. Entry into the international market requires the implementation of phytosanitary measures so that plants, plant parts, and plant products intended for the international markets are not a means of introducing plant pests to those markets. There is therefore a need for a dynamic Plant Protection Policy as an effort to increase plant health measures so that both imports and exports of plants, plant parts, and plant products do not carry along unwanted or quarantine plant pests.

Several efforts by the Ministry of Agriculture that target the export market can be futile if no phytosanitary measures are implemented. The development of this policy and its subsequent implementation is a complementary step to the Ministry's initiatives of improving agricultural productivity and the development of opportunities for access to export markets.

Development of the Plant Protection Policy was a consultative process among different sectors, both private and government departments affected by the absence of the plant protection policy. I am confident that the implementation of this policy will provide an avenue for these different sectors to work together to achieve its objectives.

Honourable Litšoane Simon Litšoane (MP)

Minister of Agriculture and Food Security

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAC:	Codex Alimentarius Commission.
CBD:	Convention on Biological Diversity
CPB:	Cartagena Protocol on Biodiversity
DAR:	Department of Agricultural Research
DFS	Department of Field Services
DMA:	Disaster Management Authority
DOC:	Department of Crops Services
DPPA:	Department of Planning and Policy Analysis
FAO:	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
IPM:	Integrated Pest Management
IPPC:	International Plant Protection Convention
ISPMs:	International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures
LAC:	Lesotho Agricultural College
LENAFU	Lesotho National Farmers Union
LRA:	Lesotho Revenue Authority
MAFS:	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
M&E:	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFRSC	Ministry of Forestry Range and Soil Conservation
MoU:	Memorandum of Understanding
MTI:	Ministry of Trade, and Industry,
NES:	National Environment Secretariat
NCC:	National Coordinating Committee
NPPA:	National Plant Protection Authority
NPPO:	National Plant Protection Organization
NUL:	National University of Lesotho

OIE:	World Organization for Animal Health
PRA:	Pest Risk Analysis
SADC:	Southern African Development Community
SPS:	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
WTO:	World Trade Organization
WTO-SPS:	World Trade Organization Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Alien species: a species that has been intentionally or unintentionally introduced to the location, area or a region where it has not occurred naturally

Invasive alien species: species that have established and spread and which causes or has the potential to cause harm to the environment, economies, human health, or plant health.

Commodity: A type of plant, plant product or other article being moved for trade or other purposes

Consignment: A quantity of plants, plant products and/or other articles being moved from one country to another and covered, when required, by a single phytosanitary certificate (a consignment may be composed of one or more commodities or lots)

Entry (of a pest): Movement of a pest into an area where it is not yet present, or present but not widely distributed and being officially controlled

Establishment: Perpetuation, for the foreseeable future, of a pest within an area after entry

Introduction: The entry of a pest resulting in its establishment

IPPC: The International Plant Protection Convention, as deposited in 1951 with FAO in Rome and as subsequently amended

Pest: Any species, strain or biotype of plant, animal or pathogenic agent injurious to plants or plant products.

Phytosanitary measure: Any legislation, regulation or official procedure having the purpose to prevent the introduction and/or spread of pests

Phytosanitary certificate: an official document issued by the plant protection organization of the exporting country to the plant protection organization of the importing country, which attests to the phytosanitary status of any consignment affected by phytosanitary regulations

Plant products: Unmanufactured material of plant origin (including grain) and those manufactured products that, by their nature or that of their processing, may create a risk for the introduction and spread of pests.

Plants: Living plants and parts thereof, including **seeds** and **germplasm**

Quarantine pest: A pest of potential economic importance to the area endangered thereby and not yet present there, or present but not widely distributed and being officially controlled

Quarantine: Official confinement of **regulated articles** for observation and research or further **inspection**, **testing** and/or **treatment**

Regulated articles: Any plant, plant product, storage place, packaging, conveyance, container, soil and any other organism, object or material capable of habouring or spreading pests, deemed to require phytosanitary measures, particularly where international transportation is involved

Regulated non-quarantine pests: A non-quarantine pest whose presence in plants for planting affects the intended use of those plants with an economically unacceptable impact and which is therefore regulated within the territory of the importing contracting party

Spread: Expansion of the geographical distribution of a pest within an area

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the government of Lesotho to establish effective and efficient plant health regulatory structures and systems, characterized by appropriate technologies and standards that will help prevent introduction, spread and establishment of pests (insects, diseases, weeds, and nematodes) into the country in order to enhance crop productivity and food security. This can be implemented through stakeholder involvement and in line with other relevant national, regional and international policies and standards.

Key Policy Objectives

Objectives of the Plant Protection Policy are:

- To guide the development of plant protection legislation and related subsidiary regulations;
- To develop an effective, efficient and sustainable plant health regulation system capable of preventing and controlling the introduction, spread and establishment of quarantine pests of plants;
- To protect the natural environment from the harmful impact of invasive plant pests;
- To promote the use of environmentally friendly and sustainable plant protection strategies to maximize agricultural productivity;
- To promote strategic partnerships and linkages with all stakeholders and institutions at national, regional and international level;
- To promote public awareness and the role of stakeholders in protecting plants from pests.
- To strengthen the existing Plant Health System that will gradually evolve to a fully-fledged National Plant Protection Authority (NPPA) to oversee the entire system.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Plant health has become more important in agricultural commodities and products in domestic, regional, and international trade. This is due to the inherent risk of the introduction and spread of harmful biotic agents associated with increased trade and travel. The situation has been worsened by climate change that favours certain pest species, thereby promoting their multiplication, virulence as well as adaptability.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security through the Departments of Crops, Research, and other stakeholders have initiated work to develop the Plant Protection Policy for Lesotho to comply with International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures. These standards are important measures to safeguard importing countries against the introduction of plant pests through imports of plants and plant products.

Lesotho has the potential to produce high-quality products that can be traded in the regional and international markets. However, if proper measures are not taken to control plant pests, these can affect the quality of plant products from Lesotho thereby denying them access to international markets and hence impede trade.

The policy introduces the concept of plant health or phytosanitary system including monitoring of pathways through which pests can be introduced either intentional or unintentional. For plant health measures to be effective, these pathways have to be targeted so that necessary phytosanitary measures can be implemented to ensure that plants, plant parts, and plant products do not introduce unwanted plant pests. The current situation is analyzed here so that obstacles towards the implementation of the policy can be overcome and opportunities ceased.

Stakeholder involvement, assessment of beneficiaries, and the related national legislative and regulatory framework are discussed in the policy. It is important to analyze the stakeholders relevant in the implementation of phytosanitary measures and how these measures will benefit different sectors of the community. The policy identifies a specific legislative framework relevant to the Plant Protection Policy (annex 1). It is important to understand how the Plant Protection Policy will complement the already existing policies.

1.0. PREAMBLE

1.1. Background

The discipline of plant health has taken centre stage in agricultural commodities and products for domestic, regional, and international trade. Plant health has become increasingly important because of the inherent risk of the introduction and spread of harmful biotic agents due to increased trade and travel. Plants, plant products, and regulated articles are capable of harbouring quarantine pests that can endanger Lesotho's agricultural, forestry, and natural ecosystem. The situation has been worsened by climate change that favours certain pest species, hence promoting their multiplication, virulence as well as adaptability.

Due to the introduction of pests, several pest control methods are employed that may have devastating effects. These include the use of pesticides which may have both food safety and environmental concerns due to excessive use. Inappropriate use of pesticides may render some agricultural commodities unacceptable in both local and international markets. For this policy, plant health management entails the application of scientific knowledge, logic, and innovation to administer the regulatory systems to achieve good standards of life and health for plants, (cultivated and uncultivated, unmanaged, wild flora, habitats and ecosystems). Pests can destroy plants and reduce farm incomes, and pose risks to humans or animals, as well as the environment. Two categories of plant pests are directly subject to regulation, being; quarantine pests and regulated non-quarantine pests.

There are several pathways through which pests can be introduced into the country. These introductions can be intentional or unintentional, as well as authorized or unauthorized. Therefore if pests are not detectable or managed then they spread and establish and become pests of economic importance long after their introduction.

It is because of these risks that plant health and quarantine measures need to be put in place to address the threat of unknown or alien pest species associated with the movement of agricultural commodities or products. The importance of an efficient plant health

system is therefore vital to the improvement, expansion, and sustainability of the agricultural sector and natural ecosystem, attainment of food security, and the national economy improvement.

The kingdom of Lesotho is a party to the World Trade Organization Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO-SPS Agreement), and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). These international treaties speak to the rights and obligations embodied in the respective agreements and the national capacities that should be in place for the country to meet its obligations and thus fully realize the benefits under these agreements. The importance of an effective plant health regulatory system is therefore critical for the country to ensure compliance with international plant health obligations and responsibilities in the interest of ensuring free, safe, fair, and sustainable trade and the desired expansion and sustainability of the agricultural and forestry sectors.

1.2. Features of the Sector

Agriculture is faced with a lot of challenges that lead to the failure of the sector to realize its full productivity potential. Plant health is one of the major contributing factors. The discipline of plant health has not received full attention and recognition, for a long time, it was not guided by policies and other regulatory means to foster its smooth implementation. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security to put suitable measures for the plant health system to function well. Although plant health has received attention both at the international and regional levels, Lesotho is still lagging. Plant health does not only entail measures that manage pests but also addresses issues of environment, food safety, human and animal health as some of the pest management measures may negatively impact on them.

1.2.1. Existing Situation

The task of protecting Lesotho's agriculture is becoming increasingly challenging, as national borders are now under pressure from the volumes of international traffic. The pressure is compounded by the fact that there is the ease of movement of goods and services between the countries through the establishment of Free Trade Areas of which

Lesotho is party to. Lesotho has also signed the Southern African Development Community memorandum of understanding (SADC MoU) on harmonized seed regulations which makes the movement of seed between SADC countries easier. Despite regional efforts to improve seed security, Lesotho lacks a formal seed production sector which exposes the country to influx of uncertified seed.

The movement of plants, plant parts, plant products, and other regulated articles between Lesotho and other countries to supplement local production has increased, hence posing more pest risks. Continental countries with land borders have always had difficulties monitoring and controlling the movement of pests across their borders, and Lesotho is no exception. These challenges are also compounded by limited financial and human resources to safeguard these borders against unwanted pest introductions, a situation that contributes significantly to the decline in agricultural production.

The phytosanitary sector in Lesotho is still in its infancy. There is no regulatory framework enforcing the implementation of phytosanitary measures. As a result, the ever-increasing movement of plants and plant products into Lesotho puts the agricultural sector under threat by introducing new plant pests. Many plant pests have been introduced and spread through the import of plants, plant parts, and plant products because no phytosanitary measures are implemented. If no proper phytosanitary measures are put in place, more pests will be introduced through the trade of plants, plant parts, and plant products.

1.2.2. Institutional Arrangements

There are two departments in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security mandated to address issues of plant protection in Lesotho. These are the Department of Research (DAR) and the Department of Crops Services (DOC). To undertake this mandate the two departments collaborate with the Department of Field Services (DFS). However, there is limited staff and funds to undertake the attached responsibilities.
The duties of both departments are listed below:

Department of Crops Services

The department trains and offers assistance to Extension staff and farmers in developing suitable strategies for the control of plant pests.

The Crops Department conducts countrywide surveillance and monitoring of pests population dynamics and advises accordingly on measures to be undertaken to prevent the spread of pests. However the department has inadequate resources, and staff to achieve its mandate.

Department of Agricultural Research

The department provides plant health diagnostics, conducts research and issues Phytosanitary certificates and Plant Import permits to prevent and regulate the introduction of plant pests. However, there is no legal framework that supports the issuing of phytosanitary certificates apart from regional agreements and international conventions and treaties as the basis. The department has inadequate laboratory facilities, equipment, and expertise to achieve its mandate.

Besides the two departments, other departments/institutions deal with plants, plant products, and their protection. However, there is no clear coordination between such stakeholders and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

1.2.3. Stakeholders' Involvement

The Government institutions involved in the movement of plants and plant products include the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, Ministry of Trade, and Industry (MTI), Ministry of Small Business Development, Cooperatives and Marketing (MSCM), Department of Environment and the Disaster Management Authority. MTI is responsible for issuing of traders' licenses which is the document that determines the quantity of plants and plant products allowed to be imported into Lesotho for trade. The Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA) is responsible for the collection of revenue on all products imported into the country under the laws of Lesotho.

Besides these government institutions, there are other stakeholders such as farmers and Input traders who are the major importers and exporters of plants, plant parts, and plant products including nursery stocks. They are also involved in the movement of these products within the country.

The major training institutions such as the Lesotho Agricultural College (LAC) and the National University of Lesotho (NUL) also move plants and plant products for research. NUL is involved in pest diagnostic services. These institutions are also involved in curriculum development that also addresses plant health issues. They are therefore an important component of the phytosanitary system as they are responsible for training extension workers and future Plant health inspectors.

The stakeholders are involved through participation in the established National Coordinating Committee (NCC) that addresses both Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) issues as guided by the World Trade Organization (WTO). The NCC plays an advisory role on issues regarding the implementation of the standards developed by the three standard-setting bodies governing trade. The committee attends to all trade-related issues governed by international, regional, or national agencies to facilitate implementation of the SPS Trade Agreement. The three standard-setting bodies namely; International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), guide all the trade-related issues to promote safety to human, animal and plant life and health.

1.2.4. Assessment of Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiary of this policy is the farming community whose livelihoods have for years been compromised by the importation and introduction of substandard agricultural inputs in the form of pest-infested seeds imported by some farmers and some unqualified traders. Blocking the importation of the sub-standard inputs will ensure higher returns from agriculture thereby improving farmers' livelihoods. Also recently, information on the usage of adulterated fertilizers has been recorded and this is of concern as it negatively impacts on the plant's ability to withstand attack by pests. The implementation of this policy will have a positive impact on both the household and

national food security as it will help stop the erosion of farmer's income by blocking the importation of sub-standard inputs that may harbour pests.

Phytosanitary legislative framework will facilitate the implementation of appropriate preventative measures and provide farmers and the government with higher returns on investments made in food security. This will be achieved through having measures, structures, and resources for reducing the entry and spread of pests into the country. At the same time, the functional phytosanitary legislative framework will enable farmers to export their products to neighbouring countries as a result of compliance with international standards brought by the implementation of phytosanitary measures.

Secondary beneficiaries of this policy are the agricultural input traders. Implementation of this policy will ensure imports and exports of good quality inputs and produce. Trading with good quality commodities or products will foster trust between trading partners and customers. The adherence to implementation of phytosanitary measures will promote good human health, as most commodities would comply with food safety standards hence suitable for consumption.

The development and implementation of this policy framework is a critical step towards achieving key SADC goals for harmonizing agricultural policies and regulatory frameworks. Lesotho's efforts towards harmonizing her regulatory frameworks with the rest of SADC and ultimately the international community have been impeded by the absence of the national phytosanitary policy and legislation.

1.2.5. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

Many policies and legal frameworks have been developed in Lesotho by different ministries over the past few years and these are related to this Plant Protection Policy. These policies are:

- National Seed Policy of Lesotho,2016
- Lesotho Food Security Policy, 2005
- Subsidy Policy, 2003
- National Environment Policy, 1998

- Environment Act no 80 of 2008
- National Forestry Policy, 2008
- Weed Eradication Act, no 18 of 1969
- National Biosafety Policy for Lesotho (draft), 2005)
- Stock Disease Proclamation No10 of 1876
- Importation and Exportation of Livestock and Livestock Products Proclamation No 57 of 1952.
- Agricultural Marketing Act, 1967 (Act No. 26 of 1967)

These policy frameworks are silent on plant health measures. It is therefore envisaged that the Plant Protection Policy will complement the existing policies and legislations in making Lesotho realize her goals while on the other hand protecting the agricultural sector and the environment from economic pests while engaging in fair trade practices. A comprehensive list of these policies and legislative framework and their relevance to the Plant Protection Policy is attached as annex 1.

2.0. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND ANALYSIS

Lesotho lacks appropriate regulatory framework upon which to regulate trade and movement of plants, plant parts, and plant products to reduce phytosanitary risks. This increases the risk of introduction of invasive pest species. Managing introduced pests is a challenge and a costly exercise to both farmers and the government. The government's efforts of improving agricultural productivity and attainment of food security are greatly compromised due to unregulated trade and movement of plants and plant products.

National borders are not manned to deal with increased trade and travel. This makes the task of protecting Lesotho's agriculture increasingly challenging. This has warranted the need for phytosanitary measures.

Many pests have been introduced into the country through seed importation because most seed material is still sourced from foreign supplies. In such a scenario, pests are introduced and human health is also put at risk due to the absence of mechanisms to check whatever comes into the country. On the other hand, not all foreign suppliers have

been honest in their trade with farmers in Lesotho. Incidences in which low quality and pest-infested seeds have been imported are currently on the increase; farmers and the country incur as a result of serious economic losses.

The responsibilities of handling phytosanitary issues are carried out by the Department of Agricultural Research and the Department of Crops Services. The roles of other stakeholders need to be clearly defined for improved coordination and collaboration. Other challenges include lack of personnel at the ports of entry to check imports of plant commodities and products that may introduce unwanted plant pests. If the consignment is suspected to harbour pests of quarantine importance, the technical knowhow for identification and the facilities to carry such tasks are not well capacitated and accredited. Limited financial resources compound these challenges.

The Lesotho Government, therefore, has an important role to play in the protection of the country's plant health by avoiding the potential negative impacts of plant pests on the agricultural sector and the environment. The importance of an efficient plant health system is therefore vital to the improvement, expansion, and sustainability of the agricultural sector, attainment of food security, and the national economy improvement.

3.0. POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1. Purpose

The Government of Lesotho, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, has identified the need to develop the Plant Protection Policy and legislation that will help enforce measures to prevent the introduction of plant pests through regulating the trade of plants, plant parts, and plant products at the borders as well as regulating the import of pesticides into Lesotho. The policy intervention was made necessary by the recent introduction of plant pests through the importation of plants, plant parts, and plant products, the situation that contributed significantly to the declining crop production and productivity. The policy is therefore intended to guide the development of effective strategies to control the introduction of plant pests for improved agricultural production and to motivate for improved legislation and effective implementation thereof.

3.2. Goal

To develop a sound plant protection system that prevents the introduction, establishment and spread of plant pests as well as promote the importation of environmentally safe crop protection products following international standards to enhance improved agricultural production and promote fair trade.

3.3. Objectives

Objectives of the plant protection policy are to:

- To guide the development of plant protection legislation and related subsidiary regulations;
- To promote strategic partnerships and linkages with all stakeholders and institutions at national, regional and international level;
- To promote the use of environmentally friendly and sustainable plant protection strategies to maximize agricultural productivity;
- To protect the natural environment from the harmful impact of invasive plant pests;
- To promote public awareness and the role of stakeholders in protecting plants from pest

3.4. Key Policy Areas

The following key policy areas were identified as critical for the proper functioning of the plant health system:

- Quarantine capacity
- Diagnostic systems
- Surveillance systems
- Pest control systems
- Scientific support
- Emergency response for pest outbreaks
- Public education and awareness

3.5. Guiding Principles

In pursuant of key policy areas above it is important to keep in mind some guiding principles to ensure successful implementation of the Plant Protection Policy. These are:

- Precautionary approach (Pest Risk Analysis)
- Education and public awareness
- Border control/ inspection and quarantine measures
- Exchange of information
- Cooperation, including capacity building
- Intentional introduction and unintentional introduction
- Mitigation of impacts
- Eradication
- Containment
- Control

4.0. POLICY OPTIONS AND STRATEGIES

4.1. Quarantine Capacity

4.1.1. Rationale

Quarantine plays a pivotal role in protecting the country from the possible entry and spread of exotic pests and invasive species. As such, there is a need to build quarantine capacity through training an adequate number of staff in appropriate disciplines and to develop appropriate infrastructure. The quarantine capacity must include the establishment of structures and facilities for containment of pests while assessing the risks associated with pest introduction, establishment, and spread.

For quarantine activities to be effective, there should be a functional National Plant Protection Authority (NPPA) in place. Decisions made by NPPA must be supported by scientific information and research in pest biology, surveillance eradication, control, and remedial measures from pest risk analysis.

Under the WTO-SPS Agreement, countries must provide scientific justification through pest risk analysis regarding phytosanitary measures that are imposed, while exercising more rigorous monitoring, inspections, and control at the borders and ports of entry.

4.1.2. Objectives

- To establish a functional National Plant Protection Authority (NPPA)
- To improve the plant quarantine capacity in Lesotho
- To develop structures and facilities that will facilitate the containment of pests of quarantine importance.
- To improve and strengthen border and inland inspections for plants, plant products and other regulated articles

4.1.3. Policy statement

The government of Lesotho undertakes to strengthen Lesotho's Plant Quarantine Capacity and ensure that the area is adequately staffed and equipped with the relevant skills to conduct the various disciplines. In this regard, the NPPA will establish a functional Pest Risk Analysis Unit with a full cadre of professional staff to undertake pest risk analysis. The NPPA will endeavor to train staff locally and regionally in surveillance, inspection, certification, etc.

4.1.4. Strategies

- Engage plant health inspectors at the designated ports of entry and other inland/ strategic areas/points.
- Develop an institutionalized training program in the various areas of plant protection and plant health.
- Provide staff with adequate training to undertake quarantine activities based on sound scientific principles.
- Provide adequate resources, including quarantine facilities to undertake pest management, control, and quarantine.
- Establish a PRA unit with relevant skills, equipment, and knowledge.

4.2. Diagnostic Systems

4.2.1. Rationale

The availability of scientifically sound and timely diagnostic services is critical and provides the basis for the design of appropriate pest management/eradication programs. The improvement of Lesotho's diagnostic capacity is critical for accessing regional and international markets, especially of developed countries where major exports are concentrated. Upgrading and modernization of plant diagnostic laboratories with adequate equipment and facilities is critical for rapid and timely pest identification.

At present, there is a limited number of professionals dealing with diagnostics. The laboratories are currently not equipped to perform diagnostic tests such as molecular tests, which are necessary for the changing global trade environment. This is compounded by the fact that laboratories providing plant diagnostic services are not even accredited to produce reliable results. The country will, therefore, risk losing lucrative markets, as it will not be able to meet the requirements of the importing countries.

4.2.2. Objectives

- To improve the capacity of professionals and technical staff dealing with diagnostics.
- To improve and upgrade plant diagnostic laboratories.
- To improve diagnostic services for timely and proper management of pests.

4.2.3. Policy statement

Lesotho Government undertakes to improve plant diagnostics structure and systems through increasing the cadre of professionals in plant protection discipline (weed science, entomology, plant pathology, nematology, etc). The Government will also upgrade and modernize the diagnostic laboratories in the Plant Protection Units (Ministry of Agriculture) with adequate equipment and facilities critical for rapid and timely pest identification. Lesotho Government will also ensure that the relevant laboratories are accredited and that all laboratories are subject to an independent audit that accredits laboratory management systems and processes or testing protocols.

4.2.4. Strategies

- Develop national capacity and recruit relevant and qualified staff to work in pest diagnostic services.
- To identify the national laboratory needs to facilitate diagnostic services.
- Construct new and upgrade existing plant diagnostic laboratories.
- Regularly provide laboratory consumables, materials, and supplies.
- Accredit laboratories to international bodies to meet international standards.

4.3. Surveillance Systems

4.3.1. Rationale

The International Plant Protection Convention requires countries to report on the occurrence, outbreak, and spread of pests to communicate immediate or potential danger. NPPOs have the responsibility and obligation to collect pest information by surveillance and to verify pest records thus collected. Pest reports should contain information such as the identity of the pest, location, pest status, and nature of the immediate or potential danger. The provision of reliable and prompt pest reports confirms the operation of effective surveillance and reporting systems within countries. An effective surveillance and monitoring service is necessary to provide scientific and technical justification for claims of pest-free areas and to support emergency pest response systems.

Currently, there is no systematic surveillance operating in the country to deal with plant pest surveys for detection, delimitation, and monitoring of newly introduced and established pests.

4.3.2. Objectives

To establish an effective surveillance program and monitoring system to deal with plant pest survey activities for timely detection of pests.

4.3.3. Policy Statement

Lesotho Government recognizes that surveillance and monitoring are key to sustainable plant health systems, as they provide a scientific basis and support for decision-making. In this regard, the Government will ensure that an efficient and coordinated system of surveillance is established for the consistent and frequent collection and monitoring of

information on pests. This should also cover the entry points into Lesotho. The Government will continue to undertake ongoing field surveillance for pests of quarantine importance that pose an immediate threat to Lesotho. The information should be captured in a system that can input and be retrieved.

The Government will improve the capacity of extension officers to undertake general surveillance activities through training and development of improved methodologies. The Government will broaden pest surveillance activities to incorporate information gathering on the geographic distribution of pest organisms and the development of surveillance protocols to underpin surveillance activities. Lesotho Government will proper administration and coordination of the Plant Health Surveillance and Pest Response System is adhered to.

4.3.4. Strategies

- Establish a surveillance and monitoring system for consistent and efficient collection and monitoring of information on pests.
- Provide necessary resources for surveillance and monitoring of pests.
- Improve the capacity of extension workers to undertake surveillance, monitoring, and using reporting mechanisms.
- Establish data management system.

4.4. Pest Control System

4.4.1. Rationale

Excessive use of agricultural pesticides on crops has a high potential to impact negatively on the environment in the form of contamination of water sources, soil, and air. Indiscriminate use of pesticides can also result in the reduction of the natural enemies of pests and lead to pest resistance. High pesticide residues on agricultural commodities also bear a negative effect on human and animal health as well as trade. A systems approach should be implemented by using integrated measures for pest risk management. This provides an alternative to using pesticides as a single measure to address the phytosanitary risks.

4.4.2. Objectives

- To promote the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies to combat pests while preserving the environment.
- To improve pest control systems to promote the judicious use of pesticides.

4.4.3. Policy Statement

Lesotho Government will promote the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques by farmers and provide continuous training in this regard. The Government will also promote the use of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) as well as organic agricultural techniques to reduce the levels of pesticide use in agricultural production. Furthermore, farmers and relevant stakeholders and policymakers will be trained in proper pesticide use and management.

4.4.4. Strategies

- Train farmers, extension workers, relevant stakeholders, and policymakers on the judicious use of pesticides.
- Train farmers and extension workers on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques.
- Promote the use of good agricultural practices and organic farming as a way of reducing reliance on pesticides.
- Conduct awareness-raising on pesticide use and risk management.
- Establish a pesticide registration committee to ensure that all pesticides are registered.

4.5. Scientific Support

4.5.1. Rationale

The synergies between the NPPO, appropriate research institutions, and other stakeholders need to be strengthened to provide adequate, timely, and scientific support for phytosanitary concerns. NPPA will find means of sourcing out scientific information locally, regionally, and internationally.

4.5.2. Objectives

To enhance scientific support through promotion of collaboration between NPPO and relevant stakeholders including laboratories and libraries

4.5.3. Policy Statement

The government will promote and support collaborative arrangements with the NPPO, appropriate research institutions, and other relevant stakeholders to enhance coordination and collaboration of plant health issues. The Government will facilitate the acquisition of information by subscribing to journals, universities, international institutions, etc, to make scientific information readily available.

4.5.4. Strategies

- Upgrade laboratories to back up scientific justification.
- Establish a good working relationship between NPPA and relevant stakeholders.
- Acquisition of science-based information from appropriate sources.
- Develop linkages and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between national, regional, and international organizations.
- Decentralization of laboratories (regional).
- Capacitate and increase personnel deployment of well-capacitated border control inspectors.
- Develop a roster of experts.

4.6. Emergency Response for Pest Outbreaks

4.6.1. Rationale

Contingency planning for the elimination of serious pests is not routinely practiced. As a result pest outbreaks precipitate into emergencies. Contingency planning is important especially if there is a need for international or regional cooperation. Phytosanitary treatments identified must be the least restrictive to trade and must be supported by robust monitoring. Where pest outbreaks may occur, the selection of treatments or control strategies must be the least disruptive to the environment.

4.6.2. Objectives

To create an enabling environment for timely and proper response to pest outbreaks.

4.6.3. Policy statement

In the event of pest outbreaks, the Lesotho Government will implement treatment and/or control strategies that are least disruptive to the environment, human and animal health.

4.6.4. Strategies

- Develop a Contingency plan for pest outbreaks.
- Identify pests that are likely to cause an outbreak.
- Regional and international collaboration.
- Identify appropriate methods for the management of pest outbreaks.
- Training of extension officers and the public on the identification of pest outbreaks and proper reporting channels for timely response.
- Creation of awareness in pest outbreak areas.
- Early warning/forecasting systems.

4.7. Public Education and Awareness

4.7.1. Rationale

The public is aware of the importance of plant pests and their impact on agriculture productivity and production. However, there is a need to create public knowledge on the proper identification of pests and good agricultural practices. There is also a need to create public knowledge on the correct use and management of pesticides to discourage the indiscriminate application of pesticides.

The public also has to be made aware that importation of plants, plant products, and other regulated articles can introduce plant pests into the country.

4.7.2. Objectives

- To create awareness and public education on plant health issues.
- To educate farmers and the public on plant pest identification and control for increased agricultural production.

4.7.3. Policy Statement

Lesotho Government will raise public awareness with specified information to specific target groups about the impacts of illegal importation of plants, plant parts, plant products, and other regulated articles.

Lesotho Government will undertake public education and awareness campaigns to alert the public about the pest outbreak being experienced by the country in that period and to facilitate timely and correct reporting of the pest outbreak.

4.7.4. Strategies

- Prepare policy and regulatory briefs for policymakers about the importance of implementing phytosanitary measures.
- Conduct public education and awareness campaigns for specific target groups about phytosanitary measures.
- Conduct public education and awareness campaigns about pest outbreaks being experienced, reporting procedures and the control strategies.
- Involve the general public in pest control strategies in pest outbreak areas.
- Follow up and feedback program.

5.0. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

5.1. Institutional Arrangements

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security shall be the custodian of the Plant Protection Policy. The Government of Lesotho will establish a National Plant Protection Authority (NPPA) as an official entity to handle all plant health issues. The authority will be the contact point for the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and serve as the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO). Board of Directors will administer the NPPA. The board will be comprised of the following institutions: Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation (MFRSC), Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), Ministry of Small Business, Cooperatives and Marketing (MSCM); Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC), Lesotho National Agricultural Farmers Union (LENAFU), Lesotho

Council of Non-governmental Organizations (LCN), and National University of Lesotho (NUL)-Faculty of Agriculture. The Chairperson of the Board will be the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. The board will form sub-committees as need arises.

The government will review the mandate of both the Department of Crops Services as well as the Department of Agricultural Research with a view of examining the structure, human resource capacity, remuneration of staff and financial resources required to carry out their operations effectively and efficiently. In this regard, the Government will ensure that the restructuring of these agencies to form an NPPA, will result in an optimal delivery of plant health services.

The NPPA will collaborate with other stakeholders in the implementation of this policy. Such institutions include the National SPS Committee. This committee comprises of stakeholders, government officials that meet to discuss, and advice line ministries on national issues covering sanitary and phytosanitary.

5.1.1. Responsibilities of the National Plant Protection Authority (NPPA)

i. Inspection of growing plants, areas under cultivation (including fields, plantations, nurseries, gardens, and greenhouses), of plants and plant products in storage particularly to report the existence, outbreak and spread of plant pests and of controlling those pests;
ii. Inspection of consignments of plants, plant parts, plant products and other regulated articles during transit, importation and exportation;
iii. Disinfestation or disinfection of consignments of plants, plant parts, and plant products and their containers, storage places, or transportation facilities of all kinds employed;
iv. Issuance of permits and certificates relating to phytosanitary condition and origin of consignments of plants and plant products;
v. Sharing of information regarding pests of plants and plant products and means of their prevention and control;
vi. Research and investigation in the area of plant protection;

vii. Provides the national plant protection contact point;
viii. Participates in the negotiation of new markets;
ix. Conduct pest risk analysis for the development of phytosanitary measures;
x. Conduct diagnostics and quarantine services;
xi. Drafting of the national regulations/ standards based on international standards;
xii. Undertake training and awareness;
xiii. Participation in different bilateral, multilateral, regional, and international agreements that address phytosanitary issues.

5.2. Legal Framework

This policy will require the enactment of the plant protection legislation for its implementation and application. The Government will therefore develop the legislation that will give way for the establishment of an NPPA to implement the objectives of this policy. The legislation will enable the implementation of the phytosanitary systems to manage transit, import and export processes. The legislation will be developed based on the regional and international efforts to harmonize phytosanitary measures.

5.3. Financing arrangements

Funds allocated to Government departments (DOC, DAR) responsible for the provision and delivery of plant health services have been insufficient to adequately carry out their mandates. There is a need for the procurement of equipment, maintenance of facilities, staff training and improvement of infrastructure. These departments are faced with increased workloads in addition to participating in emergency response for pest outbreaks. These departments are also required to fulfill their responsibilities following international standards hence improving the phytosanitary capacity is critical.
The government of Lesotho will provide or source funding to the NPPA for its activities including increasing initiatives to improve the technical capacity of persons involved in the delivery of plant health services through training and participation at all plant health forums and improvement of soft and hard infrastructure.

Core funding for the NPPA will come from the government of Lesotho. Also, the NPPA will mobilize financial resources from donors and cooperating partners for the

implementation of specific projects. It is further proposed that cost recovery mechanisms using a revolving fund be a source of funding to ensure some level of sustainability for the NPPO.

6.0. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

6.1. Rationale

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will develop a 5-year Strategic Plan in consultation with all relevant stakeholders and organizations. This will involve the identification of projected targets, setting of priority activities, and measurement indicators for each policy objective. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will conduct evaluations annually.

The Lesotho Government through the NPPA will sub-contract an M&E expert firm to conduct the monitoring and evaluation of technical aspects of plant health issues for the NPPA bi-annually.

6.2. Objectives

- To monitor the progress in the implementation of the policy and provide feedback to the Government of Lesotho and key stakeholders.
- To review and strengthen the implementation strategies based on the monitoring and evaluation results to ensure effective implementation of the Plant Protection Policy.
- To make recommendations for appropriate policy and legislative review and appropriate actions to be taken.

6.3. Strategies

- Establish a multi-stakeholder technical committee to monitor progress made in the implementation of the Policy.
- Establish and maintain a monitoring and evaluation system in consultation with relevant stakeholders;
- Develop appropriate national indicators to monitor progress on the attainment of set policy objectives;

- Where necessary provide recommendations for appropriate policy and legislative review

7.0. LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

Once the National Legislation on Plant Health is in place, it will be reviewed every five (5) years through facilitation by the Legal Office of the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders and other organizations. This is to ensure compliance with the WTO-SPS Agreement and IPPC. The review should also provide guidelines for accrediting relevant institutions to provide complementary plant health services under the NPPA.

8.0. POLICY REVIEW

The policy will be reviewed every five (5) years by the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to determine its relevance and the necessary adjustments that need to be made to the policy.

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DOCUMENT INFORMATION

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ANNEX 1

Relevant Policies

1. The National Seed Policy of Lesotho, 2016

The policy addresses issues of seed production in Lesotho and aims to provide an enabling environment for an industry that is capable of producing and supplying high-quality seed both for local and international markets. It clearly states the intention of the Government concerning the adoption and application of phytosanitary measures. The plant protection policy will, therefore, fulfill some of the objectives of the seed policy that are primarily for preventing the importation, establishment, and spread of pest-infested seed.

2. Lesotho Food Security Policy, 2005

The policy highlights, the prevailing situation of food insecurity in Lesotho, and ways and means of promoting food security in the country. In particular, it identifies the promotion of agricultural production as one of the ways through which food security can be promoted. According to this policy, agricultural production can be enhanced, among other things by improving input supplies. The plant protection policy will therefore assist to enhance the implementation of this policy hence help promote food security in Lesotho.

3. Subsidy Policy (2003)

The Subsidy Policy is about providing subsidies in the agricultural sector. The main focus is to make agricultural inputs more affordable and accessible to farmers so that agricultural output per unit area can be improved. However, the input market and particularly the seed industry in Lesotho is still at its infancy, all improved seeds, and other inputs are purchased from outside the country. The policy does not say anything about phytosanitary issues and the imported plants and plant materials are likely to create phytosanitary risks. These risks can be curbed with the establishment of a regulatory framework in plant health issues.

4. National Environment Policy, 1998

One of the objectives of this policy is to put comprehensive environmental regulatory measures in place to stimulate sustainable economic and social development. The plant protection policy will assist in protecting wild flora, including protected plants from pest attack by ensuring that imported plants and plant products do not introduce plant pests into Lesotho, which can be injurious to protected plants

5. Environment Act no 80 of 2008

Under the provisions of this Act, the Director of the Department of Environment in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, must, first, initiate or commission research on the effects of water pollution on flora. Secondly, he/she must prepare guidelines for the management of major pests infestation or another intrusion of alien species on flora. Lastly, he/she must prohibit or control the introduction of alien species. The Plant Protection Policy will complement this act by preventing the introduction of alien pest species through the borders

6. National Forestry Policy, 2008

This policy is essentially meant to govern the management, conservation, development, protection, and ownership of forests and forestry resources. Clause 3.3.1.7 of this policy is, to some extent, relevant to the protection of forests against plant pests. It recognizes the need to support the introduction of appropriate measures to protect forests from destructive insects and diseases. This policy will work hand in hand with the plant protection policy in protecting the introduction of forest pests into Lesotho.

7. The Weeds Eradication Act, No.18 of 1969

This Act provides for the eradication of injurious weeds. It places a duty on some government officials including the chiefs to eradicate or ensure that injurious weeds are eradicated in their respective jurisdictions.

8. National Biosafety Policy

The goal of the National Biosafety Policy is to ensure the safe use of biotechnology to protect human health and ensure the well being of the environment while maximizing the benefits of biotechnology.

9. Importation and Exportation of Livestock and Livestock Products Proclamation no 57 of 1952

The goal of this proclamation is to control the movement of livestock and livestock products to ensure that these are not the means of introducing livestock pests and diseases into Lesotho or to the country intro which Lesotho exports.

ANNEX 2

International Agreements and Treaties Governing Plant Health

There are various international agreements and treaties which address certain issues about PLANT HEALTH. These include:

1. World Trade Organization Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO-SPS)

The agreement provides a multilateral framework of rules and disciplines to guide the development, adoption, and enforcement of sanitary and phytosanitary measures to minimize their effects on trade. This is a legally binding instrument and Lesotho is a signatory to the WTO since 1995; as a result, the country is obliged to comply with the provisions of the WTO SPS Agreement. The plant protection policy will, therefore, form a concrete basis for the implementation of phytosanitary measures as per SPS agreement in the WTO text.

2. International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

The purpose of the Convention is to secure common and effective action to prevent the spread and introduction of pests of plants and plant products and to promote appropriate measures for their control.

The IPPC provides a framework and forum for international cooperation, harmonization and technical exchange between contracting parties dedicated to these goals. Even though Lesotho is not a member of the IPPC, it is obliged to implement these measures as a guiding tool to trade in agricultural products. Therefore becoming a party to the convention will benefit the country by contributing to the potential to realize the goal of food security through proper plant protection systems.

3. Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)

The commission is responsible for promoting coordination of all food standards work undertaken by international, governmental, and non-governmental organizations. To assist Governments in meeting their obligations of ensuring food safety, the Commission

has developed a series of guidelines on food safety and outlined working principles for risk assessment, management, and communication concerning health risks related to food commodities. Lesotho is a member of Codex and it is hoped that, while adhering to Codex codes of practice, plant health will be at minimal risk.

4. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992

The CBD is the foremost international convention obliging its contracting parties to take action on invasive alien species. The convention addresses the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. CBD requires contracting parties to prevent the introduction, control, or eradicate alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats, or systems.

Lesotho ratified the CBD on the 10th of January 1995.

5. Stockholm, Basel and Rotterdam Conventions

These three conventions are multilateral environmental agreements, which share the common objective of protecting human health from hazardous chemicals and wastes, of which Lesotho is a signatory. These agreements are assisting countries to manage chemicals at different stages of their life-cycle.