

New Plant Health Act to boost agricultural trade and biosecurity

The South African government has taken a significant step to improve agricultural trade and biosecurity with the signing of the Plant Health (Phytosanitary) Act, 2024 (Act No. 35 of 2024). Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, welcomed the new legislation, which was approved by President Cyril Ramaphosa.



Source: [Freepik](#)

The South African government has taken a significant step to improve agricultural trade and biosecurity with the signing of the Plant Health (Phytosanitary) Act, 2024 (Act No. 35 of 2024). Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, welcomed the new legislation, which was assented to by President Cyril Ramaphosa earlier this week.

Minister Steenhuisen expressed his satisfaction with the signing of the Plant Health (Phytosanitary) Bill into law, emphasizing that it marks the repeal of the Agricultural Pests Act, 1983 (Act No. 36 of 1983).

Phytosanitary measures and the control of pests

The Act provides for phytosanitary measures to prevent the introduction, establishment, and spread of regulated pests in South Africa and to control regulated pests. It also regulates the movement of plants, plant products, and other regulated articles into, within, and out of the country.

The new law aims to address challenges in the current phytosanitary system, including constitutional issue alignment with international requirements, and export regulations, in light of the needs of South Africa's major trading partners and its commitments under international agreements.

Key provisions in the new act

Among the notable changes in the new Act is the establishment of the National Plant Protection Organisation of South Africa (NPPOZA), which will oversee the development of regulations to facilitate exports, in transit and re-export of plants and plant products, as well as the creation of pest-free areas and areas of low pest prevalence. These measures align with South Africa's obligations under the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

The Act also emphasises the importance of collaboration between all spheres of government in managing pests and diseases within the country.

A boost for SA agriculture

Minister Steenhuisen highlighted that the new Act will serve as a biosecurity measure to safeguard South African agriculture from plant pests and diseases, ensuring an effective phytosanitary regulatory system. This system is crucial for supporting trade-driven growth in the agricultural sector, including market access, regional economic integration, and the protection of natural resources.

He further stated, "It, therefore, aims to support the South African Government's objectives and priorities, such as sustainable management and use of natural resources, the provision of effective national regulatory services and risk management systems, as well as the increased contribution of the sector to the country's economic growth and development, job creation, and food security."

Positioning SA in global trade

The new Act is expected to enhance South Africa's capacity to maintain existing markets and enter new export markets for plants and plant products, thereby having a positive impact on the country's economy.

"This Act will position South Africa as one of the key roleplayers that will provide a more coordinated phytosanitary surveillance programme, preparedness, and quarantine pest prevention systems to maintain and expand its competitive position in the global trade arena," Minister Steenhuisen concluded.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>