NAMIBIA NATIONAL FARMERS UNION(NNFU)

Axali Doeseb St. 4
P.O. Box 3117
Windhoek, Namibia
Tel: (+264) 61 271 117
Fax: (+264) 61 271 155
Email: info@nnfu.org.na
Website: www.nnfu.org.na

PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT

By

Mr Adolf Muremi

The President of Namibia National Farmers' Union

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The Impact of Poor Communal Livestock and Grain Marketing: Challenges and Solutions. Press Aggravated by the Current Foot and Mouth Crisis South Veterinary Cordon Fence

Greetings dear farmers, members of the media, all guests and fellow Namibians. On behalf of Namibia National Farmers' Union (NNFU) allow me to share our deep concerns about the crisis facing our sector, and the solutions we propose. While sharing our concerns, I would like firstly to appreciate the good work our government has done. Similarly, I would like to extend our gratitude to all agricultural industry players who have contributed to the development of the agriculture sector. However, the concerns that have been piling up are threatening livelihoods. We are already in crisis, and we demand urgent attention.

To start off, allow me to briefly introduce the NNFU. The NNFU is a national federation of farmers' unions. We are comprised of 14 Regional Farmers Unions, and 128 Farmers Associations (FAs) aligned to country's 14 administrative regions and constituencies respectively, although some are further divided by district. Although NNFU membership is open to emerging and commercial farmers who make up about 20 percent of our current membership, 80% of NNFU members are communal farmers. The NNFU is the only farmers' union in Namibia that represent communal farmers, which makes us bona fide representative of communal farmers in Namibia. We represent about 250 000 individual farmers, each representing a household. To

put this in context, the 2014, the agricultural census recorded 907 714 people engaged in communal farming. These are the masses affected by issues I will share shortly.

As you may be aware, agriculture contributes an average of about 4% to Namibia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for more than two decades. While its direct GDP contribution remains modest, the sector is deeply woven and critical into the country's socio-economic fabric, employing over 16% workforce. While the GDP contribution from agriculture is not segregated by communal and commercial, there are many aspects that indicates critical role communal farmers play.

The last official Agricultural Census (2014) showed that 81% of cattle in Namibia are owned by communal farmers. The 2018 statistics showed that the NCA owned 1,738,211.00 cattle, which was 64% of the national herd (Meatboard 2017/18 Statistics Report). Similarly, the 2024 statistics showed NCA owned 1,190,480 (43%) of the National herd (DVS, 2024). It is important to note that the NCA is 100% communal, hence all these statistics of the NCAs are accounted by communal farmers. Our communal farmers SVCF also hold significant number of cattle. Although the statistic does not segregate between communal and commercial within SVCF, our estimate is that more than 40% of cattle within SVCF belong to communal farmers. This is why the official NSA agricultural census of 2014 found that the combination of communal cattle from NVCF and SVCF constituted more than 80% of the national herd.

Equally, the goats and sheep are not segregated between communal and commercial farmers SVCF, but they do distinguish between NCAs and SVCF. The 2024 DVS Livestock Statistics shows that 55% of the total national goats' herd is in the NCA, while sheep only constitute 7% from the NCA. This tells us that goats' statistics is similar to one of cattle which highly dominated by communal farmers while sheep is unclear in terms of the ratio between communal and commercial SVCF. Sheep farming could be highly led by commercial farmers.

In terms of crop, nearly 1.8 million people's livelihoods in Namibia directly dependent on crop production for their livelihoods, particularly the highly densely populated NVCF highly dependent for crop production as staple food. Although the yield production per hectare is higher for commercial farmers compared to communal farmers due to access and utilization of irrigation equipment and better technology, communal farmers still plant the larger share of the grain hectares which is staple food for our largest population. As per Namibia Statistics Agency, (2018) communal occupy about 35% hectares of agricultural land in Namibia. The 2023 Population and housing Census statistic shows that 90 percent of people who produce food for their own consumption live in rural areas. This is an important linkage to the country's food security. Top regions producing food for their own consumption are Omusati,

Ohangwena, Oshikoto, Oshana followed by the two Kavango regions. Production in these regions are 100% under communal production.

In terms of employment, Agriculture sector is the highest employer based on the Population and Housing Census (2023) employing 13% work force out of the total national employees of 546, 805. In terms of the linkage to communal, the statistic clearly shows that 34% of the agricultural employment is happening in the rural area compared to 2.8% in the urban area. According to the Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2015/2016, subsistence farming accounts for 10.6% of household income, far surpassing the 0.3% from commercial farming. These figures show the critical role communal farmers play in supporting, and sustaining livelihoods and food security across the country. Communal farming therefore remains an important driver of the agricultural economy despite the hardship and comparable disadvantages it faces.

The above background provides the significant contribution, and massive potential the communal farmers possess to help double the agriculture sub-sector output potential. However, despite all their contribution and potential, communal farmers face all sorts of discrimination, hardship, policy and structural limitation that make it very difficult to operate optimally. With the recent FMD outbreak SVCF being a straw, the grain market crisis has added to the significant burden in the NCAs. Although we remain hopefully, it's doubtful that the agriculture sector will achieve its NDP6 targets of doubling the sub-sector's GDP if communal farmers continue to be sidelined and excluded from key interventions and decision-making processes.

SECTION A: MATTERS OF CONCERNS AND SOLUTIONS FOR THE SVCF

Communal farmers SVCF are the most affected by the current FMD outbreak despite the cause of the outbreak was never from the communal. Notably is the long-standing notion that portray communal areas as the highest FMD risks areas and threats to the European (EU) and Norway lucrative markets, which is the reason communal areas have been excluded from direct access to these lucrative markets. This FMD outbreak has proved that such perceptions and exclusion criterion incorrect. Highly worrisome is that the interim marketing arrangement through the Veterinary Public Notices (VPNs) continues to exclude communal farmers under the guise that they are the highest FMD risk areas. This unbearable and discriminatory of the highest order. The unique deliberate setup of representation in the livestock sub-sectors is unfair, discriminatory and unjust in our views. Below are specific concerns:

- No communal marketing since 23 September 2026, while abattoirs and retailers' full shelves of meat from feedlots and commercial farms. Communal farmers could wait six months or longer for without market opportunities.
- Although this appears to be a necessary short-term arrangement, it perpetuates exploitation as communal farmers may remain dependent on commercial farmers and feedlot operators who hold isolation camps.
- If the current situation persists beyond the initial 3 months period, the same current developed marketing arrangements may continue to apply, which will deprive communal farmers access to markets, even after post recovery.
- The current model extends existing 90/40 days marketing arrangement and rules, under a different administration framework, since both require communal farmers to sell to a third party at a lower price, who then resells at a high price.
- VPNs so far limited considerations for the communal farmers access to the market. Instead, it appears to be tailor made to benefit the established commercial farmers and large-scale commercial businesses.

The consequences of the FMD outbreak and 2026 VPNs to communal farmers SVCF areas include:

i. **Hunger and Poverty** rural and communities face severe economic collapse, loss of household income, and an inability to sustain daily living costs.
ii. **The economic value chain** has been abruptly brought to a halt.
iii. **Control of livestock movement** has become unmanageable and a nightmare
iv. **Law enforcement** is likely to face revolts at roadblocks as violations increases.
v. Crimes related to stock theft, shoplifting, domestic violence, and unpaid farm labour are increasing.
vi. **Dry season and drought mitigation costs** are constantly eroding cash flow.
vii. **Livestock mortalities** are increasing as some farmers can no longer afford water, feed, licks and vaccines.
viii. **Grazing pressure** is being felt as stocking rates exceed carrying capacity due to newborn livestock being added to herds that cannot be sold.

- *"Planning for us without us".* Draft proposals are discussed and develop in the background before scheduling a meeting with NNFU to present a document. In such situation, no sufficient time is given to provide useful inputs while limiting NNFU constituent consultation time frame.

- NNFU has noted proposals for communal areas that, in our view, were known not to be workable. They appear to show that communal farmers are considered, yet no single livestock has been purchased from the communal areas under such proposals since the restriction were imposed.
- Funding from the LLPBN for the de-bushing along the Namibia-Botswana fence border was cancelled influenced by some commercial identities. Yet NNFU contribute to the levies under the LLPBN. This is one of the main reasons NNFU objected the proposal for FMD Special levy knowing it will mostly benefit others. NNFU cannot continue supporting a system where its members equally contribute financially while the fund allocation is influenced by others.
- The actual cause of the outbreak remains a mystery to the greater public. Investigation appears to be shielded from public scrutiny. Had this happened in communal area, this could have been already with threat of lawsuit and additional restrictions for communal on top of the existing 90/40 days residency rule.
- NNFU agrees with one of the concerns shared by Presidential Task Force on Economic Recovery media release regarding the ongoing debate. The release states that *"The ERTF welcomes debate on whether FMD free without vaccination remains the most sustainable long-term strategy and stands ready to contribute. With agriculture already fragile and the wider Namibian economy under strain, the country can barely absorb one FMD outbreak; a second could prove the final straw".* NNFU considers this as a critical observation. Namibia can no longer afford to rely on one dominant strategy hence there a need to consider long term social and economic sustainable solutions which are not reliant on a few markets segment with stringent measures.
- The proposal to rely on South Africa as a single market to focus is not supported. This can create a monopoly. Although the EU, Norway and China markets made economic sense all along, Namibia should have developed other alternative markets. Namibia is now paying a heavy economic price for reliance on few selected markets.

INTERIM SOLUTIONS

Emergency Marketing Relief Measures

- Slaughter-ready livestock from communal areas be marketed directly to abattoir in sealed trucks, with each communal area classified as a single Epi Unit.
- The Farmers' Associations (FAs) should be assisted to establish and register feedlots as isolation camps. Some Regional Farmers' Unions (RFUs), such as Omaheke and Otjozondjupa, have already identified the facilities needing funding support under the OMAHETJO project.
- DVS should allow at least one marketing day at each site.
- Interested farmers can then register with the FAs and RFUs for DVS to conduct random animal testing against FMD at registered farmers' or villages.

- GRN to open the government and other auction pens for use as isolation holding facilities and feedlots.
- FAs and RFUs should sign pre-delivery contracts with Meatco for a premium price, and Meatco should contribute pre-finance for the feed cost of the first batch of the animals' intake. Meatco should be supported by GRN to continue with operation but must not exclude communal farmers in their procurement.
- Recommend that Namibia to explore market diversification to various possible and relevant markets i.e. RSA, Angola, Ghana, Mauritius, Lesotho etc.
- Temporary measure, internal localise livestock marketing should be permitted. Communal farmers should be allowed to buy and sell livestock to one another and then be able to move them within the same establishment / village with DVS movement permit. These will stimulate the local economy without dependency on external actors.

Emergency Food Relief Measures

- Her Excellency, Dr Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, the President of the Republic of Namibia, to consult and invoke Article 26 of the Namibian Constitution in order to save lives and prevent the collapse of communal farmers SVCF. Communal land is State land with FMD being a State controlled disease, therefore only GRN can free the communal farmers from the resultant looming poverty and hunger. NNFU partly fear that DVS may has been captured by other interests that compromise its credibility and independence.
- The Central Bank Policy Relief Measures for farmers affected by FMD and El Nino are good measures but better suited for commercial and well-off farmers. Most poverty-stricken communal farmers are not covered by the current relief. We recommend relaxations like those used in drought relief, to include the poorest of the poor. NNFU therefore requests for food relief, fodder and monetary incentive vouchers to sustain livelihood and livestock.
- Finance and Social Grants Minister, Hon. Ericah Shafudah through cabinet to consider extending current NAMRA's amnesty and introduce payment holiday for farmers with 24 months, to recover from the FMD and El Nino shock.

FMD Control Measures

- The suspended de-bushing funding between Namibia - Botswana reinstated.
- The international border fence should be repaired as soon as possible.
- FMD infected containment zone be constructed as soon as possible.
- A southern border fence be constructed to reduce FMD risk incursion from SA.
- Thorough investigation on the cause of the recent FMD outbreak in Namibia. Should the wrong-doing if found, appropriate punitive measures should be applied. The GRN and the people of Namibia are paying economic heavy price including life threatening consequences.

Inclusiveness and Coordination Measures

- NNFU to be involved in any preliminary consultations to develop proposals affecting the livestock sub-sector and seeks equal participation in decision making processes. Where committees are established to develop recommendations, NNFU expects that neutral entities like DVS and LLPBN to facilitate and coordinates the process in a fair manner.
- Industry sub committees' participation should be balanced, with communal farmers adequately represented.
- NNFU request for 6 seats on the National FMD Task Force. NNFU only hold one seat while some other entities holding more than one, some holding five or more through multiple entities that belong to one family. This is the result that DVS has been influenced to serve the commercial farmers' interest.
- If a DVS and/or LLPBN senior official is a commercial farmer and not able to declare his/her interest and act objectively, we suggest that he/she step aside in favour of those able to act inclusively and fairly.
- NNFU proposes an inclusive national dialogue on sustainable and inclusive market diversification strategy to move away from a single monopoly risky model. Any further FMD outbreak in Namibia, the country may not be in a position to recover and sustain single model.

Sustainable Solutions

- GRN, LLPBN, FMD Fund and any other stakeholders should avail funds without discrimination.
- Subzones to be established both SVCF and NVCF, on the key condition that they are considered as establishments in which communal and commercial livestock having the same status under the 90/40 rules for the SVCF.
- The primary focus should be rehabilitating existing internal fences to be considered sub-zones, which offers faster, manageable sand will avoid length consultations on new fence routes.
- Equally important is establishing isolation facilities in the subzones. The Ministry of Agriculture should purchase at least two resettlement farms per subzones for use as isolation camps/ quarantines facilities.
- Alternatively, GRN to avail part or whole of their research stations in each region for the quarantine camps.
- GRN should support the establishment of communal fodder production initiatives and feedlots.

SECTION B: MATTERS OF CONCERNS AND SOLUTION FOR THE NVCF

The main issue for the livestock sub-sector NVCF is lack of market due to the animal health classification and the restrictions attached to the VCF. Because of poor markets NVCF, the prices i.e. livestock prices are very low for the NVCF compared to counterpart SVCF. In the case of cattle, the price difference is more than N$10.00 per kg. This frustration by farmers is often blamed on the existence of the VCF.

The government initiated several interventions include Commodity-based trade (CBT) approach, equalization fund, FMD Free Zones for NVFC, Code of Good Practice and searching for international markets. However, there is little success for most of these interventions as most of them are at infant stage or undermined by setback of the market arrangement NVCF. The current cartel groups benefiting from the current situation, continue to sabotage the effort aimed at correcting the situation. In some instance, responsible ministry lack implementation despite most of the directive are from the cabinet. Below are specific concerns and proposed solutions for the NCA.

FMD AND VCF CONCERNS

The manner in which the existing VCF has been applied appears to be a double standard and as an economic tool to discriminate against NVCF farmers. When the FMD outbreak occurs NVCF, farmers, businesses and their communities NVCF are subjected to restrictions alone. However, following the recent FMD outbreak SVCF, restrictions were imposed including NVCF. Although the restriction was lifted after few days of complaints, the situation revealed the risky arrangement the northern farmers were exposed to over decades. The unrestricted movement of livestock and large volumes of commercial meat from the south to north has created high risk for disease transmission. This raises concerns about the vulnerability of the northern farmers. We have also noted with concern that the restrictions from south to north was superficial. Since occurrence of the FMD outbreak, there is no dipping of vehicles happening at the entry and exist points. We would like to request clarity whether consideration was mainly to protect farmers and meat operators SVCF who continued to have access and supply Meat to the NCA while farmers in the NCA are left out.

We proposed the development and implementation of the NCA Meat Market Share Promotion Scheme which is a quota system allowing a controlled quantity of livestock and meat products from SVCF to enter NVCF based on the informed needs of the NCA market. This will serve both control measures for disease while regulating the quantity of livestock and meat products to the NCA. This will give NCA farmers a fairer share of their own market. However, opposing factions have hindered this from happening. The current outbreak of FMD situation SVCF has now clearly demonstrated that both sides of the country face FMD risk, and that the current arrangements are of a double standard, disadvantaging NCA farmers and its local business communities only. However, the continued unequal treatment cannot be allowed to persist. Both north and south livestock farming communities require

economic development and protection of their livelihoods and markets. We therefore propose that if the restrictions associated with the VCF are to remain in place, they should be applied fairly in both directions or the VCF has to be removed this time.

The other form of discrimination is also a creation of the "National FMD Fund" where the industry is pledging contribution, but there is no substantial expenditure for the NCA despite presenting it as a national fund.

NNFU have also repeatedly requested the implementation of the FMD Free sub-zones VCF in line with the resolutions of the 2nd land conference. Studies for NCA sub-zoning were undertaken and approved including environmental impact assessments were obtained in 2021, but no implementation has taken place to this effect. The same request was approved through the Cabinet Decision of the 16th Cabinet of 2024. However, despite clear directives and decisions, the NCA sub-zones remain unimplemented.

SOLUTIONS:

- Apply restriction both sides of the gates or remove the VCF
- The NCA Meat Market Share Promotion Scheme must be implemented.
- Provision and implementation of Sub-zones NVCF and SVCF.

NCA Equalization Funds Concerns

This matter was exhausted with MAFWLR, yet no implementation despite promises done two years ago. It was elevated to Her Excellency on two occasions. The cabinet approval of 2024 (Cabinet Decision No. 11th/09.07.24/012), and subsequently allocation of 100 million NAD and transfer of funds by Ministry Finance to MAFWLR for the financial year of 2025/2026. However, no payment was made to the farmers. We were made to understand that such funds were diverted to the purchase of land resettlement reform program. Secondly, MAFWLR budgeted for the NCA Equalization Fund for 2026/2027 financial year and there was indication that it was reduced from 100 million NAD to 50 million NAD. Yet, we have not received any justification for this reduction, and the funds have, to date, not been released to the intended beneficiaries.

SOLUTIONS

- Immediate release of the equalization fund to NVCF to NCA farmers through Meatco NCA subsidiary. No, third party.
- Since Meatco holding is Mothballing operations due FMD, which will affect the operation of Meatco NCA. We propose that the NCA equalization fund be divided into two, 50% to Meatco NCA operation while 50% for the payment of equalization fund to farmers.

- We urge that MAFWLR to commit itself to honour the Cabinet directive of the 100 million NAD not a 50 million NAD.

Relocation of Mobile Slaughter Unit Abattoir to Kunene and operation of Oshakati abattoir.

The Rundu Abattoir has been in operation since 2023, while the Mobile Slaughter Unit (MSU) abattoir is still located in the same region of Kavango East unutilized. Meanwhile, regions such as Kunene region do not have a single abattoir leaving farmers limited with access to formal livestock markets. On the other hand, the Cabinet (Decision No. 6th /09.05.23/005) directed MeatCo to operate the Oshakati Abattoir. However, only the Katima Abattoir and Rundu Abattoir in the NCA were operational in the last 5 years. The current situation significantly disadvantages livestock marketing participation for the farmers in Kunene and central north.

SOLUTIONS

- MSU Abattoir to Kunene region without delay.
- Oshakati abattoir to be operated by Meatco

Lack of Grain Market (Mahangu and Maize) for the NCA

The lack of markets for grains in the NCA is a major concern that NNFU has repeatedly raised with MAFWLR, without receiving a response. The situation became worse in 2026, following the recorded bumper harvest by NCA farmers amid very limited market opportunities. Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) has availed N$40 million for AMTA to facilitate grain procurement which was appreciated by farmers. What is disappointing is that AMTA started receiving grains from farmers in the first week of September 2026, yet farmers remain unpaid to date. We understand the Ministry of Finance and MAFWLR have meddled in the process by intercepting that the funds are administered the Ministry of Finance, instead of allowing AMTA to administer. This arrangement has resulted in nonpayment exceeding two months.

The situation is demoralizing for farmers who have worked tirelessly to produce this bumper harvest. Equally threatening is El Niño for the 2026/2027 agricultural season. If the government fails to assist farmers with marketing their current harvest, farmers will be placed in the worst position during the upcoming season as they will have no financial reserve to cope through the hardship which pose an additional threat to farmers livelihoods and food security.

SOLUTIONS

- MAFWLR should request NAB to avail sufficient funds to AMTA so that AMTA is in a position to procure grains from farmers.
- Funds mobilized by the OPM should be administered by AMTA for efficiency.

CONCLUSION

As I conclude, I would like to appeal to the GRN to be inclusive and protect all its people rather than being part of those perpetuating divided rules and discrimination that have long affected communal farmers. The current FMD outbreak, made worse by inconsiderateness embargo from DVS has devastated effects on the livelihoods of the communal farmers and communities at large. The GRN might realize this when it is too late. It is high time that discriminatory agenda brought about colonial era be addressed rather than sustained. A unity of purpose, regardless of communal or commercial status, is urgently needed.

I would like to emphasize that the communal has huge potential to double the agriculture GDP, significantly increase employment opportunity and secure food security. The land under communal administration is serving the masses of this country. At least more than 70% of cattle and goats in this country belong communal. I would like to indicate that the biggest hindering factor for livestock in the communal is the market while in the crop sub-sector encompasses both production and marketing issues.

Furthermore, discrimination and deliberate sabotage is one of the nonnatural factors contributing to the setback of the communal farmers. We believe the ocean is big enough for all of us to swim without sinking one another.

I would like to indicate that NNFU has reached the limit of the burden we cannot carry. If the situation persists with no one to our rescue, we have no choice but to take the next step.

I thank you all.

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