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Media Release

South African National Standard that focuses on the welfare of chickens

The South African poultry industry is estimated to be worth R1.7 billion annually, with several large commercial enterprises and hundreds of local small-scale farmers making up the sector. The Poultry Master Plan that was announced during the State of the Nation Address expressed the commitment of government to drive local production, grow export growth and to implement regulatory reforms in the industry. As part of the efforts to support the industry, the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS), through its Technical Committee (TC) has developed a draft South African Standard (DSS) 1758 that focuses on the welfare of chickens. This locally developed draft standard is currently at the public enquiry stage and comments close on 31 March 2021.

“Chicken is one of the most consumed proteins in South Africa and it is important that there are national specifications that guide the breeding, rearing and production practices of chicken farming, especially in commercial enterprises. The health and welfare of chickens’ leads to more sustainable agricultural practices that will ultimately result in greater food quality and sustainable food security for South Africa,” says Jodi Scholtz, Lead Administrator of SABS.

Scholtz explains that the draft standard: “SANS 1758 provides guidelines for the adoption of good agricultural practices, quality management of the chicken through its life stages and is cognisant of the contribution that the poultry industry makes towards food security. The SABS foresees that once the standard is published, where the welfare of the chickens becomes a priority – then the risk for disease, injury, pain and suffering of the poultry reduces”.

The draft standard, is a 53-page document that covers the following:

- Production performance against breed standards
- Condition of the chicken (behaviour, body and plumage condition, eggshell condition, mortality and morbidity rates, bone and foot problems, genetics, chicks and hatcheries)
- The environment of the practice
- Management practices
- Daily care of the poultry
- Euthanasia
- Live bird sales
- Health controls

The draft standard was developed by Technical Committee 1094, which is responsible for the drafting of standards regarding the welfare of all livestock. The public is welcome to review the draft standard and submit their comments via the SABS website www.sabs.co.za. All comments will be reviewed and considered before the draft standard is published. The publication date of the standard will be dependent on the volume and nature of the comments.

Ends

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