

GOVERNANCE IN THE MIDST OF FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE IN NAMIBIA

1. INTRODUCTION

The confirmation of Foot-and-Mouth Disease ("FMD") in Southern Africa presents more than an animal health challenge, it represents a governance crisis that tests the effectiveness of leadership, oversight, accountability, stakeholder management and risk governance across Southern African's livestock value chain. For Namibia, whose livestock industry contributes significantly to rural livelihoods, food security, and export earnings, the governance response to FMD is as important as the veterinary response itself.

FMD has the potential to disrupt livestock movements, reduce slaughter throughput, limit export opportunities, undermine producer confidence and expose institutions and livestock producers to significant financial and reputational risks. Consequently, those charged with governance within the Meat Corporation of Namibia ("Meatco"), the Livestock and Livestock Products Board of Namibia ("LLPBN"), and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform ("MAFWLR") must adopt a structured, mandate-driven governance approach that complies with applicable Namibian legislation while aligning with the corporate governance principles.

2. GOVERNANCE MATRIX

Before considering governance responses, it is important to understand the distinct mandates of each institution. An FMD outbreak fundamentally alters operating conditions across all three institutions. FMD should be viewed not merely as an operational event but as a strategic governance event requiring heightened oversight and accountability. Governance structures should seek continuous assurance over compliance rather than relying solely on management representations. FMD should be reflected as a principal risk within risk registers and strategic planning processes.

Focus	Meatco	LLPBN	MAFWLR
Mandate	Meat Corporation of Namibia Act, 1 of 2001 indicates that the mandate of the corporation is to: - to serve, promote and co-ordinate the interests of producers of livestock in Namibia, and to strive for the stabilization of the meat industry of Namibia in the national interest; - to erect, rent, purchase or otherwise acquire, stabilize, optimally utilize and maintain abattoirs and other meat factories in the public interest; - to rationalize abattoir and related factory activities and conduct and manage such business in an orderly, economical and efficient manner; and - to market products within Namibia or elsewhere to the best advantage of the producers of livestock in Namibia.	The Livestock and Livestock Products Act, 12 of 1981 indicates that the mandate of the board is to: to promote the interests of the livestock and livestock products industry of Namibia in Namibia and elsewhere.	The Ministry carries the ultimate statutory responsibility for: - National animal health management. - Veterinary services and disease control. - Disease surveillance and containment. - Enforcement of animal health legislation. - Protection of international trade status. - Safeguarding national food security.
FMD Impact	An FMD outbreak directly threatens Meatco's ability to fulfil its Mandate through export restrictions, reduced slaughter volumes, increased compliance obligations and financial pressures.	During an outbreak, LLPB becomes a critical coordinating body between government, producers, processors, exporters, and trading partners.	Its role extends beyond operational disease control to strategic governance of national economic and agricultural resilience.
Change in Conditions	Reduced throughput, export restrictions, supply chain disruptions, reputational risk and financial pressure.	Increased surveillance requirements, heightened regulatory scrutiny, industry coordination pressures and market confidence risks.	National emergency response environment requiring rapid decisions, resource mobilisation and international engagement.
Governance Impact	The outbreak creates immediate operational disruption, threatens export revenues, affects producer supply chains, and places pressure on working capital and liquidity.	The outbreak challenges the integrity of certification systems, traceability mechanisms, and industry confidence while requiring enhanced regulatory oversight.	The outbreak is a national crisis requiring containment, enforcement, communication, resource allocation and management of international relationships.
Governance Approach and Considerations	Strong board oversight, liquidity management, operational continuity planning, compliance with veterinary directives and stakeholder communication.	Independent oversight, regulatory enforcement, industry coordination, assurance over certification integrity and traceability systems.	National leadership, policy implementation, enforcement of disease controls, stakeholder engagement and protection of Namibia's trade status.

3. GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

The governance response to FMD should be measured against three fundamental questions:

3.1. Are We Complying?

Every institution (Meatco, LLBPN and livestock producers) must demonstrate full compliance with:

- Animal Diseases and Parasites legislation.
- Veterinary directives.
- Movement restrictions.
- Export certification requirements.
- Industry regulations.

3.2. Are We Managing Risk?

Boards and governing authorities should regularly assess:

- Biosecurity risks.
- Financial risks.
- Operational risks.
- Reputational risks.
- Trade and export risks.
- Stakeholder risks.

3.3. Are We Protecting Long-Term Value?

The true test of governance is not merely surviving an outbreak but ensuring the resilience of Namibia's livestock industry after the outbreak. This requires:

- Maintaining trust in Namibia's disease-control systems.
- Protecting export market access.
- Supporting livestock producers.
- Preserving critical processing capacity.
- Strengthening future preparedness.

4. GOVERNANCE RESPONSE MATRIX

Although the King V Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa is not formally applicable in Namibia, it provides a more recent and integrated governance framework through which governance responsibilities can be assessed. King V consolidates and modernises many governance concepts reflected in the corporate governance code for Namibia ("NamCode"), making it a practical lens for evaluating governance responses during complex crises such as a FMD outbreak.

The focus on Principles 2, 3, 8, 9, 10 and 13, discussed below, is particularly appropriate because these principles address the key governance issues arising during an outbreak, namely ethical leadership, strategy and sustainable value creation, risk governance, compliance with regulatory requirements, information and technology governance, and stakeholder relationships. Together, they provide a comprehensive framework for assessing whether institutions are responding effectively, transparently and responsibly to the challenges posed by FMD.

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King V Principle	Governance Questions		
	Meatco	LLPBN	MAFWLR
Principle 2: Ethics: The governing body governs the ethics of the organisation in a way that enables an ethical culture and responsible corporate citizenship. NamCode: C1-2, C1-3, C2-4, C2-5.	- Are all FMD-related incidents being reported truthfully and timeously? - Has management prevented procurement from non-compliant livestock sources? - Are stakeholders receiving accurate information regarding operational impacts? - Are commercial pressures influencing compliance decisions?	- Are inspections and certifications being conducted independently? - Is there evidence of regulatory capture or undue influence? - Are disease reports and industry communications objective and transparent?	- Are outbreak reports being disclosed fully and promptly? - Are disease-control measures applied consistently across all regions? - Is government maintaining transparency with producers and international trading partners?
Principle 3: Strategy, Performance and Sustainable Value Creation: The governing body ensures that the organisation's purpose, strategy and business model support performance that creates sustainable value within the organisation's economic, social and environmental context. NamCode: C2-2, C2-15.	- What is the financial impact under various outbreak scenarios? - Is the business continuity plan functioning effectively? - What operational capabilities must be retained to enable rapid recovery? - How will producer confidence be preserved throughout the crisis?	- How are disease-control strategies supporting long-term industry sustainability? - Is Namibia's export certification system remaining credible? - What interventions are required to maintain market confidence?	- Does the national FMD response adequately protect food security? - Is sufficient funding available for surveillance and containment? - What long-term reforms are needed to strengthen national biosecurity systems?
Principle 8: Risk: The governing body governs risk in a way that enables the organisation to sustain and optimise its strategy and objectives. NamCode: C2-7, C3-8, C4-2, C4-3, C4-4, C4-5, C4-6, C4-7, C4-8, C4-9, C4-10.	- Has FMD been identified as a principal risk, with clear risk appetite and escalation thresholds? - Are outbreak scenarios incorporated into liquidity, procurement and business-continuity planning? - Are management controls adequate to prevent infected or non-compliant livestock entering the supply chain? - Does the board receive timely assurance on biosecurity, export, financial and reputational exposures?	- Is there a current industry-wide FMD risk assessment covering surveillance, traceability and market disruption? - Are emerging risks and control failures escalated promptly to the board and relevant authorities? - Are certification, inspection and traceability controls independently tested for effectiveness? - Are contingency arrangements sufficient to coordinate producers, processors, exporters and auction houses?	- Is the national FMD risk assessment current and supported by credible surveillance data? - Are roles, escalation protocols and decision rights clear across national, regional and border authorities? - Are adequate people, funding, vaccines, laboratories and logistics available for containment? - Are residual risks to food security, trade status and rural livelihoods monitored and reported?
Principle 9: Compliance: The governing body governs compliance with applicable laws and adopted policies, non-binding rules, codes and standards in a way that promotes ethics and responsible corporate citizenship. NamCode: C2-9, C6-1, C6-2, C6-3, C6-4.	- Is Meatco complying with all veterinary directives, movement restrictions and export certification requirements? - Are procurement, quarantine, slaughter and record-keeping procedures aligned with applicable requirements? - Are suspected breaches investigated, escalated and remediated promptly? - Does the board receive independent assurance on compliance across the livestock supply chain?	- Are inspections, permits and certifications administered consistently with legislation and veterinary directives? - Are regulated parties informed promptly of changing compliance obligations and control measures? - Are non-compliance trends, enforcement actions and remediation measures reported to the board? - Is there assurance that traceability and certification records are complete, accurate and auditable?	- Are statutory disease-control measures, movement restrictions and reporting obligations being enforced consistently? - Are Namibia's regional, international and trading-partner notification obligations being met timeously? - Are exemptions, permits and enforcement decisions properly authorised, documented and reviewable? - Does senior leadership receive reliable compliance reporting and assurance on corrective action?
Principle 10: Data, Information and Technology Governance: The governing body governs data, information and technology in a way that enables the organisation to sustain and optimise its strategy and objectives. NamCode: C2-8, C5-1, C5-2, C5-3, C5-4, C5-5, C5-6, C5-7	- Can livestock origins be fully traced? - Are movement permits and slaughter records complete and accurate? - Are management reporting systems providing real-time information on risk exposure?	- Are surveillance databases reliable and current? - Can traceability systems support rapid disease containment? - Are exporters receiving timely and accurate information?	- Are national disease-monitoring systems producing accurate information? - Is information being shared effectively between veterinary authorities, border agencies and industry stakeholders? - Can government produce evidence-based decisions using available disease data?
Principle 13: Stakeholder Inclusivity: The governing body adopts a stakeholder-inclusive approach in the execution of its duties in the long-term best interests of the organisation within its economic, social and environmental context. NamCode: C2-11, C2-24, C8-1, C8-2, C8-3, C8-4, C8-5, C8-6.	- Have producers been informed of procurement changes? - Are customers receiving accurate market updates? - How is employee confidence being maintained? - Have lenders and insurers been engaged proactively?	- Are producers, auction houses, exporters and abattoirs receiving coordinated guidance? - Are stakeholders participating in industry response mechanisms? - How is confidence in Namibia's livestock sector being maintained?	- Are farmers receiving sufficient support and guidance? - Have trading partners been informed appropriately? - Are regional and international obligations being met? - How is Namibia protecting its international reputation and export markets?

5. CONCLUSION

FMD is ultimately a governance challenge as much as a veterinary challenge. While the MAFWLR is responsible for national disease control and LLPBN is responsible for industry oversight and coordination, Meatco must protect its operational sustainability and fulfil its public-interest mandate to livestock producers.

Viewed through the lens of King V Principles 2 (Ethics), 3 (Strategy, Performance and Sustainable Value Creation), 8 (Risk), 9 (Compliance), 10 (Information and Technology Governance), and 13 (Stakeholder Inclusivity), the governance response should be characterised by ethical leadership, evidence-based decision-making, transparent stakeholder engagement, and strategic resilience.

The governing bodies of Meatco, LLPBN and the MAFWLR should therefore approach FMD not as a temporary operational disruption, but as a strategic national risk requiring coordinated governance, effective oversight and a commitment to safeguarding the integrity and sustainability of Namibia's livestock sector for the long term.