

Poultry body backs march over 'unsafe' poultry imports

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A single bag of frozen chicken can consist of pieces from as many as five different countries, which is not only confusing for consumers but can have serious health implications.

This is because SA has no laws ensuring the effective traceability of imported poultry products and its safety, accord-

ing to the South African Poultry Association, which has thrown its weight behind this week's planned march to Parliament by the Food and Allied Workers Union (Fawu), which wants legislators to push for stricter regulations for poultry imports.

The union's members package the chicken that arrives in frozen block form by ship from Brazil, the US and other countries and have raised concern

Moleko Phakedi, the deputy general secretary of the South African Federations of Trade Unions, to which Fawu is affiliated, told Business Day the issue was one of many challenges brought on by SA's lack of food sovereignty, saying it demonstrated the country could not rely on imported food.

The government had to support and invest in domestic producers, Phakedi said.

about "relabelled expired frozen chicken" that is then sold in SA.

The association's CEO, Charlotte Nkuna, said the issue with the labelling of imported chicken was that the origin of the product was not clear as it was imported in bulk and reworked into small packages.

"They mix products from many sources when they repack. That is the reason why you see packs with product

Fawu has said that Agoa led not only led to the threat of job insecurity in the local poultry industry but also resulted in vulnerable South Africans consuming product whose origins and safety they are unsure of.

"Major retailers usually do not compromise on quality," Phakedi said. "It is consumers in the lower end of the economy who end up buying these products," he said.

from as many as five countries sometimes. It also makes traceability of product difficult and food safety also becomes an issue," she said.

While Fawu says the issue has been a challenge for years, it evidently worsened after SA agreed to the tariff-free importation of 65-million kilograms of American chicken as part of the US African Growth and Opportunity Act (Agoa).

The march to Parliament was aimed at putting pressure on legislators and raising awareness among consumers, Phakedi said.

The government's reluctance to deal with these matters was concerning in the face of occasional disease outbreaks such as avian flu, which almost wiped out SA's poultry industry recently, he said.

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