

Transport, freight bodies call on government to heed lessons from Beitbridge chaos

The Federation of Eastern and Southern African Road Transport Associations (FESARTA) and the South African Association of Freight Forwarders (SAAFF) - key players in the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), have called on government for a public-private partnership (PPP) to prevent future disasters similar to the chaos that recently took place at the Beitbridge border post on the Zimbabwe border.

“Government did not consult with industry bodies: it took a unilateral decision to impose stringent Covid-19 testing at the border posts, which resulted in more than 20km queues on both sides of the border. They only took heed of our proposals once the situation became dire,” says FESARTA CEO Mike Fitzmaurice.

The cost to South Africa so far has been five deaths and losses of up to R2bn. “These tragic consequences followed after our warnings and advice on what could be done to avoid congestion were ignored. The need to work together is essential to ensure that this does not happen again,” says Fitzmaurice.

AfCFTA a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity



Dr Juanita Maree, chairperson, SAAFF

SAAFF chairperson Dr Juanita Maree says that in preparation for the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) commencing in less than a week, action needs to be taken urgently to

ensure the smooth flow of goods and people through all borders under this treaty and Beitbridge in particular. “The agreement is a phenomenal, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to bring 30 million people out of extreme poverty and to raise the incomes of 68 million others who live on less than \$5.50 per day.

Municipalities, government agencies and departments, as well as the private sector on both sides of the border, need to collaborate to create capacity and efficiencies to ensure that there are no bottlenecks at the border so that much-needed economic growth can take place and trade and business can flourish.”

“Trade facilitation measures that cut red tape and ease movement in a secure environment to simplify customs procedures in the AfCFTA framework will help drive \$292bn of the \$450bn in potential income gains,” she explains.

“A well-established PPP will prevent similar disasters in the future given the critical role the trucking and freight industry play in facilitating AfCFTA’s infrastructure development and trade with transport is the ultimate enabler,” Maree concludes.



Mike Fitzmaurice, CEO, FESARTA