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SIGMA

The FSGLTA sets out balanced path for gambling growth

The Free State Gambling, Liquor and Tourism Authority has set out a clear position on the future of gambling in the province, saying lawful industry growth must be matched by firm oversight, consumer protection and responsible gambling measures.

In a recent interview, Acting CEO Mr O. Seseane said the Authority's priorities over the coming years would be shaped by stronger regulation, better public service and closer work with industry and government partners.

"My key priorities are to strengthen regulatory compliance in the gambling and liquor sectors, enhance stakeholder engagement, and ensure the Authority delivers efficient and transparent services to the public," he said.

The Authority also intends to support tourism growth, improve organisational performance and strengthen governance and financial sustainability, while using partnerships to contribute to economic growth and job creation in the province.

Growth, but not at any cost

Gambling regulators in South Africa and elsewhere are facing growing pressure from technology, illegal operators and new digital gambling models. The FSGLTA's position is that growth in the sector should be supported where it takes place within a strong regulatory framework.

"The Authority recognises that a sustainable and thriving gambling industry can only exist when it operates responsibly and within a strong regulatory framework," Seseane told SiGMA News.

He said the Authority would support industry growth through "fair regulation, innovation, and investment" while also strengthening responsible gambling awareness and compliance with the law.

"The gambling sector plays an important role in the Free State economy through investment attraction, job creation, enterprise development, and revenue generation," Seseane said.

He added that, as a regulated industry, gambling supports both direct and indirect employment and contributes taxes and levies that can support broader socio-economic development.

Protecting consumers and tackling illegal operators

Illegal operators are now among the Authority’s sharpest concerns, with online platforms testing the limits of South Africa’s current enforcement system.

“One of the most significant regulatory challenges facing the gambling industry in South Africa is the growth of illegal and unlicensed gambling activities, particularly online platforms that operate outside the country's regulatory framework,” Seseane said.

Other concerns include responsible gambling compliance, protection of vulnerable consumers, money laundering, illicit financial flows and the speed of technological change.

The Authority’s stance is not to restrict lawful gambling as far as possible, nor to pursue expansion without limits.

“The FSGLTA believes that effective gambling regulation is not about prohibiting lawful gambling activities, nor is it about pursuing growth at any cost,” Seseane said.

The regulator’s aim, he said, is to maintain licensing, compliance monitoring, consumer protection and responsible gambling measures while allowing the industry to contribute to economic development.

Technology and the remote gambling debate

Technology is now one of the main questions facing regulators. Digital betting, fintech-enabled services and prediction markets are forcing authorities to look closely at licensing, jurisdiction, tax, data security and anti-money laundering controls.

“Technology is transforming the gambling industry at a rapid pace, creating both opportunities and regulatory challenges,” Seseane said.

He said South Africa’s framework must remain responsive, warning that “innovation does not outpace oversight”.

On remote gambling, the Authority said any effective framework should include clear licensing requirements, robust player protection, strong anti-money laundering controls, age verification, data security, responsible gambling interventions and regulation of advertising and marketing.

For the FSGLTA, the aim is to create a stable and predictable environment for legal market growth while channeling consumers away from unregulated operators.