

FAWU BULLETIN

Newsletter For Members and Staff
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Cnr. NY1 & NY 110, Gugulethu, 7750

Reg. Nr LR2/6/2/ 1348 Tel: 021 637 9040 Fax: 086 508 6065
E-mail: dominique-fawu@telkomsa.net



Farmer Steals Worker's Livestock

FAWU member and farm worker Jacob Eksteen, alleges that a neighbouring farmer, Mr Rene Durandt, has stolen some of his live stock while grazing on a piece of his current employer's land. The incident took place on Thursday, 30 July 2009 in Upington when the worker went to feed his sheep and goats and found Durandt and FM Safari's general manager's son on the land chasing some of his livestock over to Durandt's camp.

The next day, comrade Eksteen reported the matter of theft to the local SAPS, but they had a lacklustre response saying that they needed to speak to the accused party first. Although a charge of theft was laid, no further investigation was done. The SAPS promised it would accompany the comrade to Durandt's farm but this also never happened. Instead, they now want proof that the livestock belongs to the farm worker while these documents are available. This therefore reaffirms what we've been saying all along that farm workers are not treated the same as farmers in their respective communities. We believe if the situation was reversed, the employee would have been harassed and the stolen livestock returned to their rightful owner.

Comrade Jacob is quite able to identify his stolen livestock from those of Durandt's as these cattle are marked. The comrade is in possession of a written document in which his employer, FM Safaris permits him to use a piece of unused land to keep his livestock for grazing purposes for a period of two years. The neighbour, Durandt and the son of the general manager,

Rolan Kriel thus had no business on the land. Comrade Jacob is currently involved in a dispute with FM Safaris over his unfair dismissal. On two occasions, the employer made the worker sign documents whereas they are well aware of the fact that he could not read or write. One has to conclude that the employer is trying to get back at the worker for taking the company to the CCMA.

FAWU supports comrade Jacob fully and has approached Lawyers for Human Rights for assistance as the employer now wants to evict the cattle from the land he has been using.

Cold Chain Workers On Strike

About 800 workers and members of Fawu employed by the Cold Chain in seven provinces have embarked on a national strike on Tuesday, 18 August 2009 as a result of a wage deadlock on 12 August 2009.

The union demands a 12 percent wage increase while the company offers 6.2 percent plus 1.9 percent based on the company's formula of the highest minimum. The Cold Chain thus wants to pay an 8 percent across the board and not address the wage gap closure to which the union is vehemently opposed.

The union demands an affordable medical aid plan for all workers while the company wants them to join the current expensive medical aid plan.

Workers wants a severance package of four weeks for each year of completed service but the Cold Chain prefers to respond to each Distribution Centre as was recently the case with Durban.

Other areas of disagreements:

Union	Company
Agency Shop: Current agreement states that this comes into practice once majority members at DC's are established.	Disputes that fawu has the majority members at distribution centres
Fulltime shop steward: Union demands a full time shop steward based at the plant	Company agrees to the concept but want to pay salary and benefits only and NOT

	for other expenses e.g. attending meetings.
Stock-taking allowance	Removal of R100/R 165 status quo
Cash allowance	Removal of cash allowance when working overtime
Transport after 18h00: Current arrangement	Wants to drop off workers at nearest taxi and bus pick-up points only
Two year wage agreement	Wants to negotiate wages in 2010 because of World Cup “logistical reasons”

FAWU is convinced that the company wants to do away with all the benefits workers have gained over the last decade.

In an attempt to provoke strikers, the company called in police during an ordinary picketing demonstration outside the City Deep plant, which is the company's head office and the biggest plant nationally. This led to several workers being shot at and some ended up injured and had to go to hospital.

FAWU and Women on Farms Sit- in At Agri Wescape

Several farm worker organisations staged a sit in about two weeks ago at the Paarl office of Agri-Wescape.

Fawu and Women on Farms were among organisations which staged the sit-in in response to the agricultural body's cancellation of an appointment which took long to set up.

FAWU and the other farm worker representative organisations wanted to address the many cases of illegal evictions in the province. The situation got out of control when some in the crowd burst into the offices of Agri- Wescape without permission.

The employer body initially wanted to press charges of assault but after a follow-up meeting with the parties involved, appear not to want to pursue the matter. Provincial educator, Gafieldien Benjamin, vehemently denies that any assault took place.

The follow-up meeting was productive to the extent that a task team comprising of business, labour, NGO's and government was established to address the problems experienced by farm workers, especially labour brokering on which public hearings will be held on 25-26 August in Cape Town. FAWU, through COSATU will be making submissions in this regard.

Black women farm workers are facing a new form of oppression – labour brokers.

This was the message from the Centre for Rural Legal Studies and the Women on Farms project, who told Parliament's labour portfolio committee yesterday that labour brokers needed to be regulated.

The two bodies did a study on farm workers, labour brokers and farmers on fruit farms in Grabouw, 100km outside Cape Town.

They found that male former farm workers and supervisors were becoming labour brokers and were importing black women from Eastern Cape for temporary work.

The study showed that none of the 107 workers interviewed earned the legal minimum wage of R1 041 a month. Only five percent had written contracts with the brokers.

Some earned as little as R480 a month and did not have access to UIF after the season ended because the brokers did not deduct UIF from their wages.

Colette Solomon of the Women on Farms project said the workers did not use brokers out of choice but "out of desperation".

Sharron Marco-Thyse of the Centre for Rural Legal Studies said farm work had also become racialised, with so-called coloured men being permanent workers and black women workers from Eastern Cape earning far less as temporary workers.

Solomon said the women became indebted to the brokers because they had to borrow money from them.

The study found that farmers preferred migrant workers because "locals are more likely to know their rights".

The bodies stopped short of calling for labour brokers to be banned, as Cosatu has done.

They said they feared a ban might end up being challenged in the Constitutional Court.

Anna Majavu-Sowetan

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