

# F.A.W.U. Bulletin

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## Farm Workers Get Annual Wage Increases

The South African Department of Labour has released the minimum wage increases according to the sectoral determination act for farm workers on 9 February 2011.

According to this, workers will be receiving a 4.5 per cent increase which was calculated by using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus one percent.

For farm workers this means an increase of:

**Per hour: R 6.74 to R 7.04;**

**Per week: R 303.84 to R 317.51;**

**Per month: R 1 316.69 to R 1 375.94**

In an online interview, as reported by Siphwe Nyathi, Provincial spokesperson for the Food and Allied Workers Union, Nelson Semenya, said the increase was "an insult to the workers. Some farm workers are earning R150 per week on commercial farms. "The increment doesn't even make a difference because most farmers do not comply with the law, they just apply for exemption claiming they have financial problems or that production was poor," he said. He urged the department to ensure farmers do not submit fraudulent applications for exemption and to penalize those who do.

Nelson Semenya said the increase was "an insult to the workers." Some farm workers are earning R150 per week on commercial farms".

"It will take many years for farm workers to live a decent life and send their children to tertiary institutions. Some of them can't even bury their loved ones with dignity because they cannot afford funeral insurance."

Page Boikanyo, the DOL spokesperson, also said that farmers, who could not afford these increases, could apply for exemption, provided they could show that they are in a financial crisis by showing the necessary documents. He was quoted, "The exemption will take place as an outcome of an agreement between the employer and the employees. The applications will then be assessed by the department. Based on the assessment of these documents, the department will then be in a position to either give or deny permission for exemption," he said.

*[Reported by Government Communication and Information Systems / South African Government News Service online at 7thspace.com]*

## County Fair Workers To Go For Conciliation

More than hundred and thirty workers employed by County Fair in Epping went to the CCMA on Friday, 18 February 2011 for conciliation between the company and the union. The workers, who are all permanent, went on a wildcat (unprotected) strike late December in protest against the company's refusal to give them bonuses. They are also unhappy over wage disparities among workers. The company normally awards bonuses using their discretion, but this year management simply said that there were no monies for bonuses. "They have money to do renovations and other things but they don't have money to give us bonuses. My child always looks forward to that bonus at the end of each year", said a disappointed worker in front of the CCMA this morning.

The organizer, cde Welcome Mashiyi, met with the company this morning at the CCMA. The union wants reinstatement based on the company's inconsistencies in terms of dealing with different employees. The company however rejected this and said that they did not want the workers back. Workers were visibly upset when they were informed of this and some said they needed to go to the Provincial office as they need more clarity on the issue.

# 'Agri-villages' 'will not give workers security'

Institute warns government planned agricultural villages could lead to guaranteed cheap labour for farmers

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**G**OVERNMENT plans to establish agricultural villages will not ensure security of tenure for farm dwellers and could be a recipe to deliver guaranteed cheap labour for farmers, the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (Plaas) at the University of the Western Cape warned yesterday.

The proposal for agricultural villages is contained in the draft Land Tenure Security Bill, promulgated in December last year with only two months given to civil society and interest groups to comment — a tight deadline rejected by civil society structures and Free State Agriculture. The parties have called for an extension to give sufficient time to debate the socio-economic implications of bill.

Free State Agriculture has complained that the bill is a radical departure from common law principles of property law and would most likely create general, and seemingly unlimited, rights for a very wide category of people in competition with the rights of landowners.

The body said in a statement that the bill's point of departure was that everyone on a farm (landowner and worker) had equal rights and that this applied only to agricultural land, while communal land and mining land were excluded.

Plaas senior researcher Ruth Hall said she disagreed that the bill gave unlimited rights to farm dwellers, as the farmers' organization feared, and it did not extend substantially rights contained in the Extension of Security of Tenure Act, a law dating back to 1997, which itself had been poorly implemented.

"If anything, the establishment of agricultural villages could facilitate a new model of 'evictions and resettlement', since the new proposal focuses on 'off-site settlement' in new areas that could become rural slums if services are not delivered and if people do not have opportunities to generate economic activities of their own," she said.

The villages would have major financial implications for municipalities, which already have huge backlogs in infrastructure development and basic services. She cautioned that most people

would have only temporary permits, according to the bill, and it was unclear how this would address security of tenure, though the intentions seem noble.

In their presentations, **Moleko Phakedi of the Food and Allied Workers Union** argued that the village concept would "guarantee" their members "shelter and social security instead of being perpetually at the mercy of employers".

According to Statistics SA figures, total employment in agriculture in November fell to 618000 after the sector lost about 100000 jobs between 2009 and last year.

This means the bill's proposal could lead to millions being moved to the proposed agricultural villages.

Others have cautioned against the establishment of Tanzanian President

Julius Nyerere's Arusha Declaration — a development blueprint published attempted to address the need for an African model of development and

that formed the basis of African socialism called Ujamaa.

However, Ms Hall argued that Mr Nyerere's Ujamaa policy was quite

different to SA's proposal.

[Article appeared in the Business Day - Online: 16 February 2011]

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## Cosatu To Have Radio Station

Plans to launch a COSATU based radio station are underway. The station will be named "Radio Cosatu".

The initiative to launch its own radio station came as there was a general belief that written materials such as *The Shopsteward* and *COSATU Today* did not reach the majority of workers, especially those in the rural areas.

It is hoped that the radio station will increase the circulation of “The Shopsteward” and “COSATU Today”.

Funding for the first year has already been acquired through the Media Diversity and Development Agency (MDDA) who will sponsor about R1,7 million rand. Other donors have also been contacted to fund other additional costs such as salaries.

## **COSATU Goes Digital With Live Broadcasts**

The Cosatu Central Committee taking place between 28 and 31 March 2011, will be broadcast live from the federation’s website at [www.cosatu.org.za](http://www.cosatu.org.za).

Local government elections coverage will also be broadcasted as a podcast.



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