

# F.A.W.U. Bulletin

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## Farm Workers Says SA Land Belongs To Them

During more of the portfolio committee’s public hearings two weeks ago, a group of farm workers said that the country’s land is theirs. The group stated that they were not in favour of farm equity schemes and shares but would much rather insist on ownership of about 70 -100 percent of South Africa’s land.

These statements came shortly after the government released the moratorium on farm equity schemes and announced the review of the 30 percent target set for land redistribution.

FAWU’s Gafieldien Benjamin shared the union’s sentiments on farm equity schemes. Cde Benjamin said that while everyone has the right to stay in South Africa, we cannot continue the situation in which the majority of the land is in the hands of a few. He added that there were good farmers but there are also crooks. We should expose the crooks.

One farm worker claimed he was tired of meeting and caucuses. He said that they were constantly told that they simplify and generalize the problem farm workers are experiencing and does not know how to convince the state that they are really struggling.

[[www.rapport.co.za](http://www.rapport.co.za), 19/03/11]

## **Agri-SA warns tenure bill could lead to unintended consequences**

In their submissions to the Portfolio Committee on rural development and rural reform, the farmers' organization, Agri-SA warned last Thursday that legislation to secure tenure for farm workers could lead to unintended consequences such as job losses.

The employers' body contended that the government appears to want to balance the rights of several parties on one piece of land. The organization is also of the opinion that the Draft Tenure Security Bill addresses very few shortcomings although it admits that the draft bill has noble intentions.

## **Walmart Hearing Postponed To May**

Various government departments requested the Competition Tribunal to postpone the hearings into Walmart/Massmart merger to May 9-13 2011 as they have only recently realized that the two merging parties appeared to hesitate to make concrete commitments with regard to procurement and small businesses, particularly BBBEE. There were also concerns for employment and competition. In addition, the government stated that they had not yet received all necessary information from the merging parties as it had requested in October 2010.

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, economic development and trade and industry felt that they should participate in the hearings as issues of "significant public interest" were being raised.

In an affidavit, the two merging parties felt that the postponement should not have been granted since government has not made a strong case against or for the merger or requested relief.

Meanwhile the Anti- Walmart Coalition which includes COSATU unions SACCAWU, FAWU, NUMSA and SACTWU plans to gather at the Tribunal this Tuesday to demand that the body reject the merger or set out specific conditions to protect workers, suppliers and the wider South African community. Cosatu wants Wallmart to source 75% of goods locally, offer better remuneration to its employees and adhere to local labour laws. Earlier in March, the General Secretary of COSATU, Zwelinzima Vavi, said that this campaign must be about life or death. The Anti- Walmart Coalition has also solicited the help of international unions and experts such as the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), FAECYS in Argentina and CONTRACOPS in Chile of which some would testify at the Tribunal against the Wallmart/Massmart acquisition.

## **Squid Industry Meeting**

**FAWU** has now decided to pull out of the statutory council of the Easter Cape Squid Fishing industry since it has failed the union for various reasons. FAWU has lobbied other unions, such as the South African Fishermen Trade Union (SAFTU) to do the same and the statutory council will now have no labour component, with only the presence of business. This means it will cease to exist. The statutory council failed the union in the sense that it could not manage to obtain a minimum agreement on working conditions for workers in the sector. The previous agreement has expired in April 2010. FAWU Fishing co-coordinator Mthunzi Mhlakane, says that it is of no use to have such an agreement without addressing the issue of workers' wages, over which the Statutory Council has no jurisdiction.

FAWU has met with the employers' organization last Thursday and the meeting was unsuccessful.

FAWU has now written a letter to the Minister of Labour, Mildred Oliphant to request an intervention or facilitation of the current dispute in the squid fishing industry. In a letter by the FAWU General Secretary, the unions demand that the Ministry either turn the Squid Fishing Statutory Council into a fully-fledged bargaining council so as to get negotiations on wages as well. The letter by the General Secretary, reads "...we are of a view that the promulgation of Sectoral Determination in the sector and the ratification of the 2007 International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention on the worker in the fishing sector could begin a process of addressing the appalling working and living conditions facing fishers, such as the Eastern Cape fishers in the squid fishing industry.

## Western Cape PEC

The Western Cape held its Provincial Executive Council (PEC) on 24 -25 March 2011 at the Strand Towers Hotel in the Cape Town CBD and discussed a range of issues.

**Politics:** The comrades discussed various issues among which the candidate lists of the ANC in the Western Cape. Minister Marius Fransman addressed the PEC and comrades wanted to know whether the ANC does not think it a problem if the party does not adhere to the needs of the people. They are of the opinion that this will create an even bigger problem as it will negatively influence voting for the ANC. According to provincial chairperson, Timotheus Ncwana, the comrades were unsatisfied with the answer given by cde Marius Fransman when the house requested to know on which merits the selection of candidates were based. The PEC strongly pronounced that it thinks Tony Ehrenreich, the Provincial Secretary of COSATU Western Cape were a suitable candidate for the position of mayor in CapeTown. It was also stated that the nomination of comrade Tony came as a surprise to many ANC members and even COSATU members as they were not aware of this prior to the public announcement.

**Recruitment:** Another serious issue came to light that some shop stewards in I& J were actually organizing another union and is fighting with cde Jackie Breda ( 1<sup>st</sup> deputy president, Western Cape) instead of assisting to build our own union. The POB's were mandated to look into this issue.

**Membership:** The province decided to update its membership database as it has to wait too long for the head office to get updated figures. BOB's, particularly treasurers and the provincial treasurer, were mandated to communicate with each other to keep record and correct membership information.

**Branches:** The Worcester branch reported that it has four members from the same plant –Rainbow Chickens- and the house thought it was unfair towards other companies not to have representation in the same branch. The PEC mandated the POB'S to have a bilateral on this issue as well as other issues. The chairperson cde Ncwana said "... if need be we need to amend the constitution to prevent this from happening as the constitution is not clear on this."

**Buildings:** Comrades in the PEC also felt that the Paarl office should be renovated as it reflects the history and the beginning of the Food and Canning Workers' Union and should be treated as a heritage site of FAWU. They believe the building should be done with renovations in time for the anniversary celebrations of FAWU in October 2011. Comrades also mentioned that many visitors go there and we should feel proud instead of ashamed at the condition of the building.

**Education:** The house also reflected on the need for a political school for workers and decided to approach cde Educator, cde Mike Ntutela. A guiding document regarding the elections and functions of "full-time shop stewards" was also endorsed by the PEC. The document will be available on our website ([www.fawu.org.za](http://www.fawu.org.za)) for perusal.

**FAWU Development:** Comrades raised questions about the current development project at the FAWU head office, at its cost and posed the question as to how it will benefit workers to which the president, cde Atwell Nazo responded that it cost 1, 5 million so far and that it will benefit workers in the long run since the income expected to be generated from this development will help keep subscription costs lower and provide money to FAWU when it is needed.

**Basebenzi Investments:** The PEC pronounced that it felt that cde General Secretary, Katishi Masemola should continue to function as CEO of Basebenzi as it will be a cost-cutting measure instead of employing someone from outside.

**Provincial Leadership:** At the end of the PEC, comrade Timotheus Ncwana from Parmalat were elected unopposed as chairperson of the province. He will now move from his former position as Provincial Treasurer to make way for cde Mark Oliver from SAB. Comrade Liwellyn Koeries was chosen as NEC delegate.

## **Francis Baard Building Unveiled- Free State**

The Free State /Northern Cape unveiled its new provincial office on Saturday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2011 in Third Street in the centre of Bloemfontein. The building, which is called “Francis Baard” will be aptly named after one of FAWU’s heroines, someone who has sacrificed most of her life to help build the union into what it is today. Cde Francis Baard started her involvement with trade unionism in the fruit canning factories in Port Elizabeth. She was the first person to be elected as organizing secretary for the African Food and Canning Workers’ Union in Port Elizabeth. She subsequently had to leave her work at the factory and started full-time union work in the office based in Korsten. At this time, the AFCWU worked very closely with THE South African Council of Trade Unions (SACTU). Many of cde Francis Baard’s family members attended the naming ceremony at a pleasant function arranged by the Free State/ Northern Cape Provincial Office. The audience was addressed by the FAWU General Secretary, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Deputy President, the Provincial Secretary, and the chairperson, cde Ishmael Kubisi as well as a comrade of the ANC in Free State.

## **Farm workers may be shareholders**

16 Mar 2011

The ban on Farm Equity Share Schemes (FESS) has been lifted opening the way for emerging farmers and farm workers to share in the ownership and profits of a commercial farm. It is expected that land redistribution programmes will benefit from the lifting of this ban.

In terms of current legislation, land redistribution is based on an entire farm being purchased and then handed over to a community to run. The FESS system relies instead on participation in the profits of an existing farm to increase community wealth and to provide them with a stake in the profit commercial enterprise.

The government's land redistribution programme has lagged well behind the initial targets primarily because of stumbling blocks that relate to the willing-buyer-willing-seller principle. Farmers have been accused of demanding too much money for their properties and government has been accused of trying to buy land at a fraction of its true value.

Last Friday the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform, Gugile Nkwinti announced that the ban on FESS projects would be lifted after attending a conference on how FESS could contribute to achieve agricultural reforms and de-racialisation within the rural economies of [South Africa](#). Agri West Cape's Carl Opperman has welcomed the announcement saying that the FESS initiative would provide a win-win situation for all people keen to transform the agricultural sector and provide workers with a stake in the agricultural production of this country.

In terms of the scheme, government will purchase shares in a commercial farm for farm workers or will pay for workers who want to buy shares in a successful commercial venture.

The scheme will involve a negotiated contract in which farmers and workers become joint shareholders in the farm and its production. Opperman says that the FESS system is the only way to improve prospects and empowerment of farm workers in the [Western Cape](#).

*[www.property24.com/articles]*

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