

Agri SA

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Agri SA on farm attacks and murders at the World Farmers Organisation

Agri SA's Executive Director, Omri van Zyl, today shared the South African farmers' situation regarding farm attacks and murders with the international farming community including delegates from the United Nations and the Food and Agricultural Organisation during a presentation on this issue at the World Farmer's Organisation's General Assembly held in Zambia. Over the past 15 years South African farmers have had more than 8 065 farm attacks and more than 924 farm murders. "This is clearly an unacceptable statistic in any part of the world", Van Zyl remarked.

We cannot allow members of farming communities to be murdered and fear installed – this situation has reached extreme proportions in South Africa. Most of the provinces in South Africa are affected by these atrocities. Human Rights and the right to life and liberty enshrined in the South African constitution, is imperative to the future of our country. Clearly, we still have a long way to go to adhere to this noble principle.

The levels of violence and criminality remains unacceptably high. Of great concern to Agri SA, is the brutal nature of farm murders. Farmers are also subjected to house robberies, aggravated assault, malicious damage to property, theft of crops, farm produce as well as livestock. Approximately 55 000 head of cattle and 85 000 sheep gets stolen each year – clearly this has become an endemic problem for farmers and rural communities alike.

Agri SA, has always had a constructive relationship with the South African Police Service, especially in relation to matters of safety and security. A good example of this relationship is Agri SA's involvement with the implementation of the Rural Protection Plan since 1997 when farm attacks were firstly prioritise by government and the police and, more recently, the National Rural Safety Strategy since July 2011. Agri SA also played a role in finalising the revised reservist policy. The re-confirmation by the acting National Commissioner of Police that farm murders and attacks will still receive priority status, is welcomed. Agri SA will continue to participate with the police in developing the necessary action plans and processes to deal with the rural crime situation.

The Agri Securitas Trust Fund has made a big difference to the security situation at farm level by investing in security equipment, telecommunication infrastructure, funding of provincial security desks, counselling sessions etc. "We still need to do a lot more at farm level to protect our farmers, farm workers and their families, and to this end we need funds and expertise from all spheres", said Van Zyl in closure.

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