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Farm attacks receive high-level attention

The incidence of farm attacks and the murder of farmers and farm workers recently received considerable attention at government level and during a debate in Parliament in the past week. “Agri SA welcomes the condemnation of this serious crime by various government officials. There seems to be a new wave of condemnation of farm attacks and widespread acknowledgement of this as a problem, adding new momentum to efforts at government level to find solutions in this regard. The test is ultimately whether government will act decisively and fully implement existing policy and the Rural Safety Strategy to combat farm attacks,” said Pierre Vercueil, President of Agri SA.

Agri SA also welcomed the announcement by Deputy President David Mabuza that a meeting would be scheduled on Friday with the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Land Reform and Agriculture to discuss and seek solutions regarding the recent increase in farm murders and violent attacks. “We also welcome the Deputy President and Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development’s condemnation of farm attacks and their acknowledgement of the important role that agriculture plays in the economy,” said Vercueil.

The Minister of Police yesterday visited the Normandien district after the double murder during the weekend, where he met with role players and the farming community. According to Kwanalu, an affiliate of Agri SA, farmers and farm workers had an opportunity to share their concern over farm attacks with the minister. The minister said he would be back in two weeks’ time to assess the progress made. The community also intended to hold a prayer meeting this morning.

The chair of the Portfolio Committee for Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Inkosi Mandela, said in Parliament that farm attacks undermine food security, job creation and the national economy and that farmers and farm workers were particularly vulnerable because of long distances from essential services and therefore required the necessary police protection. Agri SA agrees with his views and therefore it is important that farmers and farm workers should receive the necessary protection. According to Vercueil, agriculture is one of the economic sectors with whom the most fellow citizens have a daily appointment with around the table and ensures that we have sufficient food.

“The importance of protecting farmers and farm workers as an asset for the country because of their contribution towards national stability, cannot be disputed. To this end, Agri SA will work with the police to ensure full implementation of the Rural Safety Strategy and the creation of an agriculture-friendly reservist system.” With reference to the call by Police Portfolio Committee Chair Tina Joemat-Pettersson that police should protect rural areas, Tommie Esterhuyse, the chair of Agri SA’s Centre of Excellence: Rural Safety, said “Agri SA has already held discussions with the police and looks forward to further cooperation within the agreed-upon task teams in this regard”.

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