

Unions want government to force Agri-SA to negotiate

Government should compel Agri-SA to return to the negotiating table with farmworkers, unions said in Cape Town on Friday (4 January)



The unions, which include the Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu), the Food and Allied Workers Unions (Fawu) and Sikhula Sonke, announced that farmworkers would resume their strike on 9 January.

Last year's violent strike action was suspended after it was decided that workers' representatives would enter negotiations with individual farmers.

"There's been no progress that's been significant in the negotiations with Agri-SA or with the government," Cosatu Western Cape secretary Tony Ehrenreich said.

He said workers had resolved to continue to strike until their demands were met.

"The two main issues will be the R150 a day that workers are demanding and a coherent land reform programme that sees workers who are historical inhabitants of many sections of the land reinstated on the land, in partnership with many of the farmers who currently own it," said Ehrenreich.

Fawu gave their backing to farmworkers, adding it was not too late for farmers to break the deadlock. "Those farmers who want to co-operate and have [been in] negotiations with us, we don't have any problems with that," said Fawu organiser Sandile Keni.

The announcement of the strike follows a meeting between the unions and labour department director-general Nkosinathi Nhleko.

"The Labour DG said he was concerned that while unions said they had made progress in their negotiations with [some]

individual employers over the holiday season, there were reports of a 'hardening of attitudes' among others," the department said in a statement.

Nhleko also met with representatives from Agri-SA on Friday (4 January).

Source: *Sapa* via I-Net Bridge

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