

Aviation authority reviews use of gyrocopters in crop-spraying

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The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has confirmed that it is reviewing the use of specific gyrocopters in crop-spraying operations across South Africa.



Image source: www.pixabay.com

This comes after the recent findings of an investigation into a fatal accident in which French national Marco Martino, 23, was killed while crop-spraying with a gyrocopter on the outskirts of Patensie in 2015.

The final report, which was released earlier this week, recommends that SA Civil Aviation director Poppy Khoza reviews procedures on the use of Magni M16 gyrocopters for crop-spraying.

The report stated the gyrocopter crashed due to a rotor blade striking a tree - while flying low - causing Martino to lose control and crash into the side of a mountain.

Martino died in a Port Elizabeth hospital hours later of severe burns.

CAA spokesman Kabelo Ledwaba said they were aware of the report and discrepancies which had been highlighted.

"The findings contained in the report highlight some of the safety concerns relating to the low-level flying and low speed during crop-spraying," he said.

"This, according to the report, goes against the manufacturer's recommendation that this type of aircraft must not be flown below 500 feet [152.4m] at speeds slower than 65 knots [120.4km/h]."

According to Ledwaba, there have been three crashes involving Magni M16 gyrocopters during crop-spraying operations since 2015 alone.

"The SACAA is currently conducting a review and analysis of the use of the Magni M16 gyrocopter in crop-spraying operations in the light of the safety recommendation."

Source: Herald

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