

# Launch of Interprovincial Stock Theft Prevention Forum between the NC and FS

The Interprovincial Stock Theft Prevention Forum between the Northern Cape and the Free State was launched on Thursday, 2 March 2017, in Bloemfontein. The forum will be known as the Gariep Interprovincial Stock Theft Prevention Forum.



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Delegates from the Red Meat Producers Organisation (RPO), Free State Agriculture (the VKB/FSA Safety Desk), Agri Northern Cape, the SAPS's Visible Policing, Stock Theft Units, Organised Crime (Hawks) and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) from both provinces were present. The goal of the Forum is to pro-actively prevent stock theft in the two provinces as well as improve the ability and interaction of all role players to fight stock theft.

The second strategic focus area of the Forum is to strengthen relationships between farmers and all role players within the Criminal Justice System to reach the following goals:

- A decline in stock theft in both provinces, taking into account the fact that farmers report stock theft to a lesser extent.
- Monthly monitoring of stock theft cases in certain geographical areas in terms of the border between the provinces, especially where arrests took place as well as monitoring the progress of such cases in courts.

## Under-reporting on stock theft

Perceptions under producers and organised agriculture of both provinces are that the Criminal Justice System (CJS) does not impose adequate sentences for stock thieves; that cases are inadequately investigated, that cases are unnecessarily delayed by courts and that cases are dismissed and thrown out of courts without adequate reasons provided.

All of the mentioned reasons and many others can be identified as contributing factors of why farmers do not report stock theft cases. In 2016 it was found that the under-reporting figure for stock theft in the Free State can be 67%, which makes it very difficult for the SAPS to launch crime prevention operations/patrols based on correct crime pattern analysis.

Statistics SA found in their 2016 Community Survey that the non-reporting figure for certain crimes exceeds 80%. This means communities, including agriculture communities, have lost trust in the CJS. The above-mentioned reasons are contributing factors to the establishment of the Forum to create the correct image in terms of stock theft proactively and reactively in both provinces. The Forum will also, in cooperation with all role players in the CJS, communicate successes in terms of operations and successes to producers.

## Sharing information

Another goal of the Forum is to share crime information by means of WhatsApp groups as fast as possible so that the reaction time of role players can contribute to successful arrests. The establishment of Stock Theft Information Centres (STIC), where crime information in terms of criminal involvement in stock theft will also be given through to detectives/investigators and cases followed up on by the NPA, will also be established in certain geographical areas.

It is a given that criminals are also getting smarter, and their fear of detection makes it easier to operate over provincial borders. Offset areas/markets in terms of livestock can also be found in other provinces. Another aspect that is very successfully addressed by a Forum, is that auctioneers and farmers can assist the SAPS at auctions to proactively identify livestock that could be sold illegally. The Forum's goals will also include improvement of communications between provinces, as well as coordinating crime prevention operations in interprovincial high crime areas.

The Forum will continuously communicate any changes to applicable legislation to producers, as well as information in terms of workshops that will be launched in cooperation with the SAPS. Training of visible policing of detection of stock theft in terms of removal certificates and transport permits is also planned for this year.

The Interprovincial Stock Prevention Forum between the Free State, Gauteng, North West and Mpumalanga, which was revived in 2015, delivers good results and successes. The establishment of the Gariep Interprovincial Stock Theft Prevention Forum contributes to this success. A cross-border forum will be established between South Africa/the Free State and Lesotho soon.

*The RPO and organised agriculture, including FSA and Agri Northern Cape, requests all farmers who want to become involved in these forums, to contact their provincial safety representatives. The management of the Gariep Interprovincial Stock Theft Prevention Forum is:*

*Johann Stadler – chairperson (082 774 8813)*

*Joe Scholtz – vice-chairperson (082 324 9600)*

*Dirk Krapohl – secretariat (082 604 1320)*