

CCMA offers to intervene in farm workers' strike

The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) has offered to intervene in the strike by farm workers in the Western Cape over wage increases.

"We have the authority to intervene and the skills and experience to mediate a solution," executive director Nerine Kahn said in a statement on Saturday (12 January).

"We have offered our services -- which we are empowered to do in matters of public interest -- and trust that the parties will respond positively to our offer," she said.

The CCMA said it was in a position to mediate a binding short-term agreement while the parties wait for a sectoral wage determination by the Labour Department.

Farm workers in De Doorns in the Western Cape want their minimum R69 daily wage increased to R150. The dispute began in August last year but was called off in December pending a review by the Labour Department. The strike resumed early in January.

Police spokesman Warrant Officer November Filander said the situation in De Doorns had calmed down after a hijacking on Saturday (12 January).

"At 6am today [Saturday] three suspects hijacked a truck while the driver was waiting for farm workers he had to pick up," Filander said.

"They took the truck to the Stofland informal settlement where they set it alight. No one was injured and no arrests were made."

The men were wearing balaclavas and have not been identified. Filander said police were monitoring the area.

The public hearings review relating to the farm workers dispute is expected to start next week for revisions from 1 April.

"If we can reach a collective agreement soon, it will restore calm and ensure workers can go back to work," Kahn said.

"It [the agreement] could also form the basis for a recommendation to the Minister of Labour and the Employment Conditions Commission."

Kahn called on organised business and labour to consider their offer to use the mediation services.

"We believe the interests of employers, workers and farming communities will be best served through a mediated and negotiated outcome," she said.

On Friday (11 January), the Western Cape Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu) said town-by-town discussions with farmers in the province were progressing well.

Cosatu provincial secretary Tony Ehrenreich said workers were willing to compromise to around R110 per day.

The individual farmers agreed to a meeting organised by Cape Orchards Company chairman Gerhard de Kock. The company represents 12 farms in the De Doorns Hex River Valley, which together produce about three million boxes of table grapes a year.

Source: *Sapa* via I-Net Bridge

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>