

Agriculture sector unites against attacks on foreign nationals

PRETORIA: The agriculture sector has shown its support for efforts to combat attacks on foreign nationals...



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Stakeholders on Wednesday met with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to share ideas on what can be done to address the recent attacks on foreign nationals.

The meeting, chaired by Deputy Minister Bheki Cele, was part of the outreach programme currently taking place countrywide. Ministers and their deputies are meeting with communities to find ways to put an urgent stop to the violence and also to discuss the country's migration policy.

At Wednesday's meeting, stakeholders in the agriculture sector sought to find ways to prevent the violent attacks from spreading to farming communities, where foreign nationals are also employed.

The meeting highlighted the root causes of the attacks, some of which are based on the perception that immigrants take jobs and do not contribute to the economy of the country.

Phile van Zyl of ZZ2 farms disputed the perception that farmers employ foreign nationals for cheap labour. He said the farm employs a diverse group of workers and promotes the attitude of consideration of all groups of people.

Deputy Minister Cele condemned the attacks on foreign nationals.

"It's embarrassing, it's dehumanising and it's humiliating. It doesn't matter how much pain we feel as South Africans but we

can't act this way [towards other humans]. We can't do what our people did to foreign nationals..."

Deputy Minister Cele commended the deployment of the South African National Defence Force to the affected areas. He said the courts must do all they can to ensure that justice is served.

Stakeholders and the department agreed on resolutions to be implemented jointly.

The resolutions include the organisation of a summit, which will gather other government departments and stakeholders to further discuss issues related to labour, working conditions, the employment of foreign nationals and other issues in the farming sector.

It was also resolved that the department must deliver on the Agricultural Policy Action Plan (APAP) and the National Development Plan (NDP) to fast track job creation and help prevent bad perceptions about foreign nationals.

The meeting also resolved that Rural Development Programme must be revitalised to stimulate employment in the sector.

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