

Dept cautions non-compliant farmers

PRETORIA: The Department of Labour says action will be taken against employers who do not comply with the new sectoral determination for farmworkers.



(Image: GCIS)

Earlier this week, Labour Minister Mildred Oliphant announced the new wage determination for farmworkers, which will take effect next month.

The new minimum wage, as of 1 March 2013 to 28 February 2014, has been pegged at R105 per day (up from the current R69 a day) for employees who work nine hours a day - or R11.66 per hour, R525 weekly or R2 274.82 per month.

The new sectoral determination will be promulgated for a three-year period. During year two and three, wages will be increased by CPI (Quintile 1) plus 1.5%.

Chief Director of Labour Relations at the department, Thembinkosi Mkalipi, on Thursday said the sectoral determination gave the minister powers to regulate the farming industry.

"In this regard, action will be taken against farmers who do not comply with the new sectoral determination," Mkalipi said.

The minister has offered struggling farmers an option of a reprieve from the new wage increase. Mkalipi said so far, the department has not received any applications of exemption from farmers.

He urged farmers wishing to take up this option to contact the department.

"This means they will have to show their books and the department will advise them accordingly," he said.

Mkalipi noted, however, that the sectoral determination does not include benefits.

The new wage determination was triggered by violent strikes by farmworkers in the Western Cape in November last year. Farmworkers were demanding R150 per day as a minimum wage.

On 15 November, the department published two notices in the Government Gazette announcing its intention to cancel the sectoral determination and also announced the start of a process to review the minimum wages in the agricultural sector.

Among other things, the sectoral determination prohibits employment of any person under the age of 15, making it vital for employers to verify the age of farmworkers by requesting a copy of the identity document or birth certificate.

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