

Strike hurts fruit and veg retailers

While farmers are counting millions of rands in losses incurred during the farmworkers' strike in Western Cape, the effects of the protests could soon hit consumers.



At least one major South African retailer has admitted it is battling to get fresh fruit and vegetables from farms to replenish its stock.

Farmworkers in the table grape-producing Hex River Valley went on strike last month, demanding R150 a day in wages. The strike soon spread to 15 farming towns, where some of the vineyards were torched.

This week, Pick n Pay food and merchandise director Peter Arnold said the retail giant had been hit hard by a shortage of apples, pears, stone fruit and table grapes from the "conflict-affected farms in the Western Cape".

"The problems being experienced in Western Cape have led to us having less of this type of fruit in our stores. Pick n Pay only sources produce from farmers who are ethical employers," he said.

"We are concerned about the impact of the current action on workers who are losing out on wages. We are also concerned about the impact of these problems on the export market, which could lead to farmers being unable to meet their export commitments. The export market is an important one for the South African economy."

Arnold said Pick n Pay had hoped the strike would be resolved soon.

His sentiments were echoed by Woolworths, which said: "There were labour disputes at four of our supplier farms in the Western Cape."

"We engaged other suppliers to help maintain a steady supply of nectarines, peaches and apples," the company said.

The Shoprite group said yesterday it had not experienced any noticeable impact on sales and deliveries thanks to its supplier network that stretches beyond Western Cape.

Source: *The Times* via I-Net Bridge

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