

Govt promotes fair labour practices on wine farms

PRETORIA: Government, labour and farmers are united in supporting a programme to fast-track the implementation of fair labour practices on wine farms.

By Nthambeleni Gabara 1 Jun 2012



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Steve Galane, the communications director at the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, said the fair labour initiative envisages the creation of an 'ethical seal' that will ensure reasonable working conditions, based on rigorous and closely monitored qualification criteria.

"The department notes and supports this very important development in the wine industry that will acknowledge and accredit wineries and farms that follow ethical practices; that will address the abuse of human rights in the longer term and will recognise that the ethical treatment of workers is both a moral and legal obligation," he said.

Galane said only those producers who meet the criteria set by Wine Industry Ethical Trade Association (WIETA) will be entitled to use the seal on their wines.

"It is anticipated that the first seals will be granted later this year to currently compliant producers. The fully traceable seal was being modelled on South Africa's sustainability seal developed to promote awareness the production integrity followed at every stage of the supply chain from vineyard to bottle," he said.

The WIETA code of good practice is premised on the base code of the International Labour Conventions Ethical Trading Initiative and also incorporates South African labour legislation.

It precludes the use of child labour, asserts that employment should be freely chosen and that all employees should have the right to a healthy and safe working environment.

Galane said amongst the conditions it sets is that workers should have the right to freedom of association, living wage and be protected from unfair discrimination. Worker housing and tenure security rights should also be respected.

According to Galane, the ethical programme will be fast-tracked and implemented in three phases, starting with the simultaneous training of workers, owners and management in labour law and the WIETA code of trading principles.

