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## **Urgent action needed to curb farm attacks**

The deciduous fruit industry body, Hortgro, has called on the Government to immediately put actions in place to protect farmers and rural communities from the spate of violent and barbaric attacks experienced in recent days.

This comes after another horrific farm attack on a Bonnievale fruit farmer, Tool Wessels and his wife, Liezel. The couple was reportedly attacked when they were about to leave for choir practice. Mr Wessels passed away as a result of the attack, while his wife managed to escape and alert the police. She is currently being treated in hospital. Their two daughters, both students at Stellenbosch University, were not present during the attack.

In recent weeks several disturbing incidents were reported on nationally, amongst others also in De Doorns and Grabouw, where the N1 and N2 were closed for extended periods of time linked to intimidation, violence, looting, and destruction of property.

Hortgro Chairman, Nicholas Dicey, said that the industry was concerned about what appears to be a new wave of violent crimes. "We have to find strategies and resources to protect our rural communities. Farmers, farm workers, communities and civil society cannot do this alone. We need decisive action from the Government to find and prosecute perpetrators. There needs to be a serious focus on creating and providing capacity and resources at ground level for the police and community safety institutions to be able to do more than is currently the case. It is not just farmers that are being attacked, farm workers and other inhabitants in our rural communities are equally vulnerable. These crimes not only have a serious psychological impact on the victims and survivors of these attacks but the broader communities which in turn have a devastating effect on our economy, food security and job security – thereby destabilising our country. In essence, this is equal to sabotage of civil society and must be tackled immediately."

Hortgro also called on farming communities to be vigilant and well-organised, with early-warning systems in place to prevent incidents and adequate follow-up response strategies in case something happens.

- Issued on behalf of Mr Nicholas Dicey, Hortgro Chairman.
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## **Plaasaanvalle benodig daadwerklike optrede**

Die sagtevrugtebedryfsorganisasie, Hortgro, het die regering versoek om daadwerklik op te tree om boere en landelike gemeenskappe te beskerm teen die vlag van gewelddadige en barbaarse aanvalle wat die afgelope tyd ondervind is.

Dit kom na nog 'n ontstellende plaasaanval op 'n Bonnievale-vrugteboer, mnr. Tool Wessels en sy vrou, Liezel. Die egpaar is na bewering aangeval toe hulle op pad was na 'n kooroefening. Mnr. Wessels is tydens die aanval oorlede, terwyl sy vrou kon ontsnap en die polisie ontbied het. Sy word tans in die hospitaal behandel. Die egpaar se dogters, albei studente aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch, was nie op die plaas tydens die voorval nie.

In die afgelope weke is verskeie voorvalle van ontwinging en geweld op nasionale vlak gerapporteer, onder meer ook by De Doorns en Grabouw, waar die N1 en N2 vir lang tye gesluit is weens intimidasie, geweld, plundering en vernietiging van eiendom.

Mnr. Nicholas Dicey, voorsitter van Hortgro, het gesê die bedryf is bekommerd oor wat blykbaar 'n nuwe golf van geweldsmisdadigheid is. "Ons moet strategieë en hulpbronne vind om ons landelike gemeenskappe te beskerm. Boere, plaaswerkers, gemeenskappe en die burgerlike samelewing kan dit nie alleen doen nie. Ons benodig beslissende optrede van die regering om misdadigers te vind en te vervolg. Die regering moet erns neem met die skep en voorsiening van kapasiteit en hulpbronne op grondvlak, sodat die polisie en gemeenskapsveiligheidsinstellings meer kan doen as wat tans die geval is. Dit is nie net boere wat aangeval word nie, plaaswerkers en ander inwoners in ons landelike gemeenskappe is ewe kwesbaar. Hierdie misdade het nie net 'n ernstige sielkundige impak op die slagoffers en oorlewendes van hierdie aanvalle nie, maar ook op die breër gemeenskap. Daarbenewens het dit 'n verwoestende uitwerking op ons ekonomie, voedselsekureit en werksekuiriteit wat ons land destabiliseer. In wese is dit gelyk aan sabotasie van die burgerlike samelewing en verg daadwerklike optrede."

Hortgro het ook boerderygemeenskappe gevra om waaksaam en goed georganiseer te wees, met vroeë waarskuwingstelsels in plek om voorvalle te voorkom en voldoende opvolgstategieë in plek te hê, in geval van aanvalle.

- Uitgereik namens mnr. Nicholas Dicey, Hortgro Voorsitter.

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