

Strike goes on at Coca-Cola

Food and Allied Workers Union (Fawu) members of Coca-Cola Beverages SA (CCBSA) operations in five provinces, including the Eastern Cape, are pushing ahead with a protected strike. This comes after wage and other negotiations with the soft drink giant ended in a deadlock during annual wage negotiations which began in July.



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At Perseverance in Port Elizabeth, workers protesting at one of the two Coca-Cola facilities in the city vowed to continue their strike until their demands were met. The company confirmed the strike action, saying it involved workers who belonged to Fawu.

In South Africa, Coca-Cola Fortune, ABI Bottling, Appletiser SA, Coca-Cola Canners of Southern Africa, Waveside and Coca-Cola Shanduka Beverages SA, were all consolidated into Coca-Cola Beverages South Africa.

CCBSA spokeswoman Wendy Thole-Muir said the dispute was with Fawu in its representation of the bargaining unit of the former Coca-Cola Fortune part of the South African operations. "The strike applies only to the legacy of Coca-Cola Fortune workers and affects only sites where this bargaining unit is represented - mainly in the Eastern Cape, Free State, Limpopo, Northern Cape and parts of Mpumalanga."

The dispute arose as the company and Fawu were unable to reach agreement during the annual wage negotiations. "The matter was referred to the CCMA last month " and Fawu was issued with a certificate for a protected strike," she said.

Thole-Muir was unable to confirm how many workers were involved in the strike. But at the Perseverance plant, where about 70 people were protesting, Fawu provincial organiser Zolile Langa said at least 300 employees were involved. The other Bay operation is in Harrower Road, Holland Park.

"Fawu is demanding a 12% across-the-board increase and the company, which initially offered 3%, is now offering 7%, but with conditions," Langa said.

"We are willing to negotiate on the 7%, but without conditions. The conditions are that should the workers be given the 7% rise, they will agree to being paid a normal day wage when they work on weekends and public holidays," he said. "We cannot accept that."

Fawu members, who also had other points of contention, had embarked on the strike on 12 October, after reaching the deadlock in negotiations, he said.

"We'll continue with the strike action until we reach an agreement, or our demands are met."

Decisions offered by the firm would be decided by the union at a national level, Langa said.

Source: Herald

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