

# Farmers urged to invest in their workers

Farmers in the Western Cape have been urged by Labour Minister Membathisi Mdladlana to invest in their workers and treat them with respect.

The minister was speaking on the first day of his imbizo at Voorentoe Farm in Porterville on Monday, 14 April 2008.

“It is important for employers to value their workers and not to treat them as tools, but with dignity for their own good,” the minister said after leading an inspection on occupational health and safety compliance.

Voorentoe farm grows and exports grapes, citrus fruit, wine grapes, and figs to local and international markets.

It has a total of 144 workers with 125 of them being seasonal workers.

The farm was on the brink of bankruptcy for three years since 2004 partly due to strong currency exchange rate.

It was saved by the intervention of the National Productivity Institute in 2007.

The Minister praised the owner, Kosie van Niekerk for “making use of government resources to save 100's of workers from retrenchment.

“This is a good model to be emulated by others, farming is a complex and complicated business, one needs to tread carefully.”

He further called upon other farmers who are battling to keep their enterprises going, to make use of available state resources to save them, and thereby save jobs.

The minister later addressed a community meeting in Potterville.

He reiterated his contention on labour brokers that they be registered and subjected to taxation.

“All our research points to a need for a legislation to regulate the labour brokers,” he said.

He added that the department's National Jobs Database currently being piloted at selected labour centres, will help employers further as workers will be screened through this process.

The minister's imbizo is a forerunner to a calendar that will culminate to the Occupational Health and Safety day in Port

Elizabeth on 9 May.

The minister is Tuesday expected to proceed to George where he will visit the Sawmill Timber factory before addressing the community at a nearby Thembaletu location.

Sawmill Timber has a staff complement of 708.

He will also visit a garment assembly plant sponsored by the department, but initiated by Trade Link Textile Services.

600 people will be employed on completion of the training programme that is currently underway.

***Article published courtesy of [BuaNews](#)***

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