

Ceres Fruit Growers, union set to return to negotiation table

By Jenna Etheridge

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CAPE TOWN: Ceres Fruit Growers (CFG) and the union representing most of its employees, are set to return to the negotiation table over wage demands.



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The Food and Allied Workers Union (Fawu) confirmed it would be meeting with the company on Wednesday, 23 September, for a closed meeting.

The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) would facilitate, Meshack Ntechane, Fawu's interim provincial head of operations, said on Tuesday.

"We said to the CCMA that our position is very clear - that our doors of negotiation remain wide open and our intention is to resolve the impasse."

The strike entered its third week on Tuesday.

The union apparently represented around 80% of some 1,180 workers striking at the storage and packing facility. Fawu

wanted a 12.5% wage increase and a profit-sharing scheme for workers.

But representatives for the company said they believed the offer of 7.5% and other increased benefits was fair, "given the economic environment in South Africa to ensure a sustainable future for all".

The union indicated it was prepared to revise its demand to 10%, but "could only do so at the table".

Ntechane said at least 1,200 people, from the union and the community, took part in a protest march on Tuesday.

He felt the march was "successful and historical".

CFG managing director Francois Malan said he had accepted a memorandum from striking workers.

"While the strike is not over, and we remain at a standstill, we do have agreement to meet in the next days to negotiate together with the support of the CCMA."

Last week on Wednesday, part of the CFG factory was gutted after being set alight. The police arrested a number of people on charges of public violence and arson.

Malan said it remained difficult to calculate the financial impact of the strike, although damage to their facility totalled "millions of rands".

Source: [News24](#)

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