



Women on Farms Project

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SOUTH AFRICA

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MEMORANDUM TO:

1. **Minister Thoko Didiza**
2. **Deputy Minister Mcebisi Skwatsha**

FARM EVICTIONS AND WOMEN'S ACCESS TO LAND

As we celebrate Women's Day on 9 August 2020, the human rights of thousands of women South African farm workers and dwellers are routinely violated as they face escalating evictions from farms. Evictions in many municipalities have reached crisis levels that cannot be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. For example, the Drakenstein Municipality has more than 1,200 eviction cases pending on the court roll, which the Municipality estimates will lead to the eviction of 20,000 people when these evictions are effected.

Due to the various impacts of COVID-19, including the ban on the transportation, export and ban of alcohol sales, thousands of farm workers, especially women seasonal workers, face imminent job losses. Job losses will inevitably lead to greater numbers of farm evictions. Since municipalities have been unable or unwilling to deal with pre-COVID farm evictions, evictions arising as a result of COVID-19 will lead to the creation of more slums by rural municipalities. Without a coherent housing framework in place, including the acquisition of adequate land, evicted farm workers and dwellers who are at the bottom of municipal housing waiting lists, will end their days in over-crowded, crime-ridden informal slums, such as New Rest, in poor quality houses, and inadequate water and sanitation, after years of working on farms and enriching farmers.

The issue of farm evictions cannot be de-linked from the fundamental issue of redistribution of land, specifically farmwomen's access to productive land. COVID-19 presents an opportunity for all levels of government, with its civil society partners, to urgently address structural transformation of the rural landscape. To this end, farmwomen demand:

- The **Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DARDLR)** support the call for a permanent moratorium on farm evictions, given the precedent set by the current moratorium in place for the duration of the COVID-19 lockdown;
- The **DARDLR** convene an urgent meeting with all relevant government departments and municipalities, and its civil society partners, to address the crisis of farm evictions and chart a coherent housing strategy for farm workers and dwellers within an integrated spatial framework;
- Processes around Land Expropriation without Compensation be accelerated;
- Farmwomen's access to productive land must be expedited so that women can generate independent, sustainable livelihoods;
- Convene Special Summits, hosted by government and civil society, to look at restructuring the agricultural economy and the food system, including moving away from industrialised, export-oriented agriculture.

Women farm workers and dwellers cannot celebrate Women's Day in a context of ongoing farm evictions, a lack of basic services such as dignified housing, and access to productive land.



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On behalf of:

Women farm workers and dwellers:

Sent to **DALRRD**
