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## Rural Safety

Submission to the Portfolio Committee of Police  
Parliament

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Chairperson, members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation extended to Agri SA to be part of this meeting and discussions. We welcome the fact that government views the safety and security of the rural community as well as that of farmers and farm workers as a priority.

## INTRODUCTION

Agri SA, a federation of agricultural organisations, was established in 1904 as the South African Agricultural Union and consists of nine provincial, 26 commodity organisations and 41 corporate members. Essentially Agri SA, through its affiliated membership, represents a diverse grouping of individual farmers regardless of gender, colour or creed and members in the agricultural value chain within the structures of Agri SA.

Agri SA represents at least 28 000 farmers and their farmworkers which is approximately 750 000.

The organisation has always had a constructive relationship with the South African Police Service, especially in relation to matters of safety and security. A good example of this relationship is Agri SA's involvement with the implementation of the Rural Safety Plan since 1997 and, more recently, the National Rural Safety Strategy since July 2011. Therefore, it is not only a matter of co-operation and a good relationship, but more about mutual trust between the two organisations. Agri SA also played a role in finalising the revised reservist policy. In addition to operational co-operation, Agri SA serves on the JOINTS Priority Committee for Rural Safety and members of SAPS are represented in Agri SA's Committee for Rural Safety. We also welcome the national commissioner and his management team taking part in our Rural Safety meeting on Monday where he shared his turnaround vision and the way forward. The Human Rights Commission also emphasised the good relationship, which exist between Agri SA and the SAPS.

## EFFECT OF CRIME IN AGRICULTURE

Farmers worldwide are subjected to crime. In South Africa the difference is that the farming community must also contend with farm attacks – something farmers in the rest of the world does not experience. Agri SA is concern about the ongoing brutality during farm attacks and farm murders – this is unacceptable.

In a recent study conducted by the Bureau of Market Research on behalf of Agri SA, it was found that 70 % of farmers participating in the study, experienced one or other form of crime during 2017.



The study reveals the magnitude, impact and trends of agricultural crime in an analysis of types of crime, the average and total number of agricultural commercial units affected and severity in provinces.

**The percentage of victims affected by crime categories in 2017 is:**

Theft of livestock, which tops the list with 39,74 %;  
Theft of farm infrastructure (37,21 %);  
Theft of farm tools and equipment (34,74 %);  
Theft of game and illegal hunting (28,51 %); and  
Robbery contributing 25,05 %

The study further reveals the following:

- That 32 % of farmers experienced an increase in crime over the past three years.
- Total direct cost of crime was R5,45 billion.
- Total replacement cost due to agricultural crime was R2,28 billion.
- Total crime related cost for agriculture was R7,7 billion.

The report reveals the reality of South Africa's commercial farmers being repeated victims of various crimes. Crimes affecting commercial farming, not only poses a threat to stability in the rural farming areas, the country as a whole, but also puts food security at risk.

Issues relating to rural safety are critical within the farming community and therefore dialogue and strategic engagements are imperative in addressing the challenges faced by farmers, farm workers and members of the rural community.

The continued attacks on farmers and farm workers, high levels of stock theft and the levels of farm infrastructure destruction, requires an effective strategy to deal with these issues, Agri SA believes that the Rural Safety Strategy can be such a strategy.

## REVISED NATIONAL RURAL SAFETY STRATEGY

Agri SA welcomed the opportunity to make presentations to the police on the revised strategy and would like to emphasised the following aspects of the strategy for the effective implementation thereof:

- The successful implementation of the revised Strategy and Implementation Plan will rely largely on the dedicated attention by all commanders and the Nat Joints to see to it that it is fully implemented with the support of our farming community.



- A well-functioning Priority Committee system is needed to support and guide the implementation of the Strategy, with participation by relevant state departments.
- A rapid police reaction capacity should be introduced at Priority Rural Clusters to respond to incidents in the rural community as well as a plan to execute Joint Crime Prevention Operations, for example white- blue light patrols.
- The establishment of dedicated Task Teams that should focus on the combatting of rural crime and to establish the possible involvement of organised crime, should be established. These Task Teams should be supported by a well-functioning Intelligence System to pro-actively prevent acts of violence in rural areas.
- To make a significant impact on the crime situation, a well-functioning reservist system, which is the backbone of the Rural Safety Strategy, should be fully implemented and capacitated with the necessary resources to assist the police. Reservist should be supported with the necessary training and the recruitment process must be enhanced.
- Rural Safety co-ordinators play an important role in assisting in the implementation of the strategy and should not be burden with other tasks and functions.
- Shortages of vehicles and other resources such as cell phones and radio's used in rural safety, may inhibit the successful implementation of the strategy by the police and rural safety co-ordinators. This aspect should be dealt with as a priority in achieving the successful implementation of the strategy.
- It is recommended that a yearly training session be done by provinces at cluster-level to provide training on the implementation of the strategy.
- While violent crimes and murders on members of the farming community are of great concern to Agri SA, the increase in property- and infrastructure related crimes and stock theft has become a burning issue for agriculture. The Rural Safety Strategy is an excellent overarching strategy to deal with rural crimes, but it is further recommended that a **sub-strategy** be developed to deal especially with violent- and property related crimes in farming areas.
- There is a definite need for a standardised “scorecard” or evaluation tool to evaluate the implementation of the Strategy in order to ensure that feedback whether by SAPS or Organised Agriculture is done in the same manner and according to the same criteria. This “scorecard” must be based on the implementation tools as mentioned in the National Rural Safety Strategy.
- It is important to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy on a continuous basis. This can be done by means of an annual work session between the SAPS and relevant role-players at all levels to ensure that the Strategy stays relevant, is effectively executed and updated when required for example in the Free State the pro-active of the implementation of the existing strategy resulted in the pro-active prevention of 55 farm attacks during the past three years.



## CONCLUSION

Agri SA believes that dedicated attention by the NAT Joints and top police management as well as other Commanders, on a continuous basis, will ensure that the status of the Priority Committee for Rural Safety as well as the implementation of the revised National Rural Safety Strategy and Implementation Plan (NRSS), at provincial, cluster- and local level is dealt with as a priority and with concomitant dedication by commanding officers. We are also convinced that only a focused attention to the implementation of all NAT Joints instructions pertaining to the strategy, as well as the effective functioning of Priority Committees, can achieve the objectives of the NRSS

As an organisation, we support the revised Rural Safety Strategy and would like to thank the police for the work done in this regard as well as for the opportunity to assist in developing the strategy.

Thank you for this opportunity.