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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**ISSUES RAISED BY FOREST COMMUNITIES INCLUDING INVESTIGATIONS INTO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AND VICTIMIZATION OF WORKERS AND TENANTS BY FORESTRY COMPANIES**

1. **Current situation**

The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries during their extended public hearings on the National Forests Amendment Bill urged communities to raise any other related issues even if they were outside the scope of the bill. The Portfolio Committee committed to submitting the issues to relevant committees in Parliament. Some of the issues that were raised required the attention of other government departments and forestry organisations such as the Forestry Sector Charter Council.

1. **Purpose**

The purpose of the presentation is to provide responses to issues raised by forest communities including investigations into allegations of abuse and victimisation of workers and tenants by forestry companies.

1. **Main issues**

The issues raised by communities and stakeholders ranged from non-compliance to labour law by forestry companies, participation of communities in management of State forests, non-compliance of companies to the Forest Sector Charter, outstanding worker pensions and shares.

1. **Solutions/Actions**

In responding to the issues the Department took some initiatives to involve other government Departments and the Forest Sector Charter Council to assist in resolving the challenges raised during the consultative sessions. The presentation also outlines the commitment by competent authority (Department of Labour) in investigating the alleged transgressions by Forestry Companies. In addition, a task team comprising of DAFF, Department of Public Enterprises, SAFCOL, MTO (Pty) Ltd and the Western Cape Forestry Sector forum was established to deal with issues of workers’ pension payouts and shares. The Department is engaging with the Financial Sector Conduct Authority (FSCA) to rope in their resources and expertise in resolving the matter.

1. **Intended impact**

The involvement of the Department of Labour will result in a competent authority being involved in carrying out objective investigations against the companies on the alleged transgressions and non-compliance to labour laws of the country. Resolving these issues will result in a more harmonious working environment for the workers, an improvement in their well-being in general, thereby increasing productivity and sustaining the jobs and economic opportunities created by the sector.

1. **Assessment of intervention efficiencies and associated impact**

The Department of Labour and the FSCA are competent authorities to deal with Labour related matters and issues of pensions respectively. Their involvement and their approaches will ensure that the problems identified are dealt with at the root cause and appropriate remedial action will then be recommended. Their interventions should be able to resolve the majority of issues identified.

1. **Conclusion**

The DOL has committed to conduct investigations and compliance audits estimated to be completed by the end of the month of May 2018. The DAFF will ensure that it is kept informed regarding the progress and developments of the audits to be conducted by the DOL.

A report will compiled once the Department and the FSCA have finalized the engagement with affected workers regarding the pension payout s and shares.