****

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 2563/ NW2975E**

**MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES:**

**Mr N Paulsen (EFF) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:**

**QUESTION**

Whether, with reference to the recently released documentary, Bitter Grapes, which shows the alleged levels of abuse that farmworkers are subjected to on some farms, his department has done any investigation into the alleged levels of abuse, the living conditions of such farmworkers and the rate at which land owners evict farmworkers; if not, why not; if so, what are the (a) relevant details in this regard and (b) circumstances of farmworkers in the country?

**REPLY**

Although the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) has learnt with grave concern about the “Bitter grapes” documentary, it has to be stated that DAFF did not conduct any investigation due to the fact that the matters raised by honourable Paulsen falls outside its ambit. Living conditions of farm workers falls within the mandate of the Departments of Labour and Rural Development and Land Reform.

The plight of farmworkers is a serious concern to the sector at large and goes beyond the scope of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and even that of government. In trying to remedy this predicament, the Vulnerable Workers Interdepartmental Forum was instituted and different role players were allocated responsibilities falling within their scope to come up with interventions that would mitigate the plight of the vulnerable workers.

The main Departments serving on the Forum are:

* Department of Labour which is responsible for working conditions of vulnerable workers,
* Department of Health which is responsible for social determinants,
* Department of Rural Development and Land Reform which is responsible for security of tenure and
* Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries which is the lead Department also responsible for empowerment and training of vulnerable workers together with the two sister departments of Higher Education and Training and Basic education.