

## **Extra vigilance needed during festive season**

The Free State is in mourning after two farmers were killed in the province within 24 hours.

Jakkals le Roux, chairman of Free State Agriculture's Rural Safety Committee, expressed his sincere condolences to the next of kin of Christian van Tonder (Lindley) and Johan Prinsloo (Koppies). Prinsloo's attacker was fatally wounded by the police, while apparently no suspects have yet been arrested for Van Tonder. "Any murder is one too many!" says Le Roux.

With the festive season upon us, Le Roux is seriously appealing to farmers to be extremely alert and make sure safety plans are in place. "Criminal activities are unfortunately escalating at this time of year and especially agricultural communities must be very alert and attentive to any suspicious persons or vehicles."

Free State Agriculture once again reminds farmers of the following aspects to improve safety during the festive season:

Engage with the safety structures created between the local SAPS, farmers and other role players in your area. Attend regular monthly meetings, get involved in white / blue light patrols, rehearsals twice a year and get in touch regularly with safety coordinators from both the SAPS and organized agriculture in your area;

Engage in farm guard structures in your area and ensure that your relationship with your neighbours and workers is healthy;

Get radio communication, be connected to the local radio network, avoid being without communication when cell phone networks are down due to, for example, load shedding;

Regularly test radio communications with your safety network / coordinator and neighbours;

Become part of "WhatsApp" groups that proactively pass on information regarding suspicious vehicles / persons in your area – especially with camera networks and monitoring;

Perform regular and ongoing exercises on your own contingency plan, that include handling firearms, together with your workers and where possible provide radios after hours;

Acquire an additional cell phone that can be placed in a strategic place indoors (always charged) in order to be able to call for help if your existing cell phone is stolen. Familiarize yourself with security / emergency signals on your smartphone that can also be connected to an existing safety network;

Continuously pass on information to safety coordinators of agriculture / police that is of utmost importance to act proactively;

Contact details / emergency numbers of neighbours, police and security coordinators must always be on hand or loaded on cell phones;

Attempt to install a UPS especially with regard to possible load shedding in your area during the upcoming festive season;

Do not simply bring in or hire additional workers for a season until you have ascertained whether or not they have a criminal record;

Be alert, prepared and attentive and report any snippet of information to the rural safety coordinator of the SAPS in your area, especially with regard to possible observation points of criminals, as well as the security representative of the organized agricultural structure in your area.

Le Roux expresses his gratitude to the police who, despite difficult working conditions, continue to strive to support and assist agricultural communities.