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South African lawyer develops world's first illustrated contract for farmworkers

10:00 (GMT+2), Thu, Thursday, July 21, 2016



Fruit picker Lerato Thokwe, signs the illustrated contract developed by Robert de Rooy.

Photo: ANB Investments

By Wilma den Hartigh

Clemengold mandarin supplier and packer, Indigo Fruit Growers, has introduced a 'picture' contract to help fruit pickers better understand the terms of their employment contracts, thereby improving communication between farmworkers and their employers.

The illustrated contract, known as a 'Comic Contract', is the first of its kind in the world. It was developed by Robert de Rooy, legal representative for Clemengold.

"I was hoping that this idea could perhaps make a small positive contribution to better relationships in South Africa, especially between farmers and farmworkers," he said.



The 'Comic Contract' was recently presented at the International Contract Simplification Conference in Switzerland where it was favourable received.

According to De Rooy, he wanted to develop a contract for farmworkers who cannot read well, are illiterate, or struggle to understand the language in which employment contracts are written.

Faan Kruger, farm manager of Indigo Fruit Growers, said farmworkers who were signing the illustrated contract for the first time responded positively.

They had many questions about the new approach, but none requested a conventional written contract.

Elize van der Westhuizen, senior manager of labour relations at Agri SA, praised the fruit company for its innovative approach to helping workers better understand their contractual rights and obligations.

"This is one of the best initiatives I've seen," Van der Westhuizen said.

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