

Press Release



South Africa's Leading Research and Policy Organisation

For immediate release

26 January 2011

Media Contact: Marius Roodt
Tel: 011 482 7221 extension 2012
E-mail: mroodt@sairr.org.za

Number of farmworkers plummets

The number of people employed on commercial farms has dropped by 271%, according to the latest *South Africa Survey*, published by the South African Institute of Race Relations in Johannesburg this week.

Between 1993 and 2007, the number of people employed on commercial farms dropped from 1.1 million to 796 806. The data, which was sourced from Statistics South Africa, showed that all provinces, with the exception of Gauteng, saw a decrease in the number of people working on farms. In Gauteng the number of people working on farms in 1993 was 34 302, increasing to 34 936 in 2007, or by 2%. In 2007 farmworkers in Gauteng accounted for only 4% of all commercial farmworkers in the country.

The biggest drop in the number of farmworkers was in Mpumalanga, where it declined by 45%. The number of farmworkers declined by 39% in both the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal between 1993 and 2007.

A similar phenomenon was seen with regard to the number of farms, which declined from 57 987 in 1993 to 39 982 in 2007, a decrease of 31%.

All provinces saw a decline in the number of farming units. The biggest decline was in Limpopo, which saw the number of farming units drop from 5 053 in 1993 to 2 657 in 2007, a decrease of 47%. The smallest drop was in Gauteng. In that province the number of farming units decreased from 2 500 in 1993 to 2 378 in 2007, a decline of 5%.

A researcher at the Institute, Marius Roodt, said that the change in the number of employees on farms and the decline in the number of farms, was probably an indication that agriculture was becoming more specialised, with successful farmers having to be highly skilled. 'It is likely that there is increasing mechanisation on farms leading to a decline in the number of farmworkers. Economies of scale leading to farms merging is probably another reason for the decline in the numbers of farms,' Roodt said.

ends