

## **WiARM - SA MIDVAAL GAUTENG**

By: Women in Agricultural Rural Movement

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WiARM, a movement of black farming women formed in early 2023, with assistance from OFHR. For a year, they have been using direct actions, political education, mobilising of women farm owners, which the 1994 Democracy used instant gratification to sell land for the first time to black farmers who had a lot of hope, yet without the agricultural support, education and funding that went into agri-business, historically, and till today, the domain of the “boers”, the white farmers, whose reach extend today in all parts of South Africa, as well as international pesticide companies and those who produce genetically modified, and terminator technology seeds, sold to black farmers to produce quickly, but never again, and the resultant destruction of the land, loans from the banks and the government that are forced upon the farmers, which keeps them in a cycle of debt- not to mention the inability of black farmers to claim security for their farms, with big crimes like stock theft, where cases go reported but not much is done about it.

WiARM, together with Rural Women’s Assembly and OFHR and many other grassroots movements in solidarity, are unpacking and dissecting the corruption of the “one women, one hectare” policy, that was written into the constitution by the ANC, but with many loopholes that only disadvantaged black farmers- especially the women, in a double strike of patriarchy, from cultures that don’t allow inheritance of land onto women when their husbands die for e.g., to the broader economic, spatial, and structural apartheid that prevents their success as women farmers. In South Africa, the 1 woman, 1 hectare policy was a farce, as only if 1,2 hectares is owned, would a borehole be provided by the government to support farming. So, the campaign is to adjust that policy to include land with water, as what farm can operate without water. Borehole costs run into their R20000 min bracket- and with extreme poverty faced by these women, not many can afford to build their own boreholes, let alone get security for their produce, their stock, and their own lives, where GBV is also a factor with women farmers, and a society where the respect that should be given to our women farmers, responsible for the basics of food security in our communities is lacking .

Their voices fall on the deaf ears of the police and government. This is not only a local, but international issue with women farmers, as well young black youth who go into agriculture but don’t get the support- financial, educational or other support that they are offered often plays into a bigger Agri-corporate capitalist means of agricultural production. If you don’t like it, then you are left to fend for yourself, where you choose organic and permaculture methods of agriculture for example, and aim to bring back farming production, and sale of produce to the community level- much like the “Mundi’s” in India, where the largest ever protest in the world happened by farmworkers protecting this system from the neo-liberal prime minister Modi and his allies in the US and west who wanted to monopolise and capitalise on this age-old

system of farming. The same is happening in South Africa, where “small-scale” farmers, back-yard gardeners etc, are kept “small scale” and prevented from producing on a large scale to feed their communities, as well create jobs and agricultural sustenance.

WiARM were approached by farmers with case numbers that they opened with SAPS, many cases of which were not addressed properly or given enough attention. We take it upon ourselves as WiARM and confronted the senior police commander of Midvaal and demanded that he come and account to the women farmers about their cases. This “stock theft” campaign and today's protest are one of the numerous issues faced by black women farmers in Midvaal, and beyond, and part of a bigger patriarchy that we face with women in our country and the world. Even the fact that most of the women farmers are older, retired women, getting no pay from what they do, needs to be interrogated, and is a big issue. Most farming women continue working past retirement but get no support from the government and society at large.

WiARM asks for support, and to hear their voices as to what is really happening on the ground, compared to the pretty pictures painted by the department of agriculture and the government and SAPS. Empower one woman, you empower the country. Let's give our women farmers and farm owners the , protection and solidarity that they deserve.

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