

Farm Workers in Namibia: Living and Working Conditions



Cons Karamata
Labour Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI)

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Abbreviations

AEA	Agricultural Employers Association
LAC	Legal Assistance Centre
LaRRI	Labour Resource and Research Institute
NAFWU	Namibia Farmworkers Union
NAU	Namibia Agricultural Union
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NNFU	Namibia National Farmers Union
SSC	Social Security Commission
UNAM	University of Namibia

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Executive Summary

This study aims to provide up-to-date information on the current status of farm workers in Namibia's commercial and communal farming areas. More specifically, the study investigated the impact of the introduction of the minimum wage on the living standards of farm workers, health and safety issues in the farming sector, the impact of HIV/Aids, land use rights and the status of women on farms.

The sample

We surveyed 58 commercial and 102 communal farms country-wide in nine regions. We interviewed 345 farm workers and 154 farm owners across the country. The majority of farm workers (85,2%) were male while only about 15% were female.

Demographic Data

The bulk of farmworkers were between 20 to 29 years of age (40,2 %), followed by those who were 30 to 39 years old (25%). About a third of our respondents (33,7%) spoke Damara>Nama as a home language, followed by those who spoke Oshiwambo (32,3%) as their home language.

The farm workers hailed from a variety of regions such as Hardap (13,1%), Omusati (12,5%), Omaheke (11,9%), Ohangwena (11.6%), and Otjozondjupa (10.8%). The most common destinations for migrant farm workers were Otjozondjupa, Omaheke and Khomas. Most of those who migrated to Otjozondjupa hailed from Ohangwena and Okavango regions.

About 40% of all farmworkers in our sample had no formal education. About 44% of them had some primary education (grade 1 to 7) while a small group of our respondents (13.4%) completed grades 8 to10 and only a tiny minority (2.3%) had a secondary qualification (grade 11 to12).

Working Conditions

Most farm workers (93.5%) are employed on a full-time basis throughout the year. Those workers who were not full-time employees were employed on short-term contracts to carry out specific duties (e.g. fencing, debushing etc) or work as seasonal workers.

The majority of our respondents (70,5%) were employed in their current jobs for more than a year. About 27% stayed in their employment for more than 6 years while a significant portion (15%) remained in their jobs for more than 10 years. The percentage of workers who remain more than 10 years in their employment is higher on white-owned commercial farms.

The majority of the surveyed workers (66.1% %) are general workers being used to carry out a wide range of duties ranging from livestock herding, fencing, weeding, debushing and gardening.

Working days and hours

The majority of farm owners indicated that farm workers have an average working week of 40-45 hours. Almost half of all farm workers (47.3%) indicated that they work longer than the standard working week of 40 to 45 hour in Namibia. More than a third (35%) work longer than 50 hours per week. Most of them (88%) work 6 to7 days per week. They further pointed out that they work 7 hours on Saturday and 6 hours on Sunday on average.

Workers on white-owned commercial areas indicated that they had an average working week of 48 hours while those on black commercial farms worked for 40 hours. Workers on communal farms on the other hand worked for 35 hours per week on average.

Leave days

Almost half of all surveyed workers (45, 7%) receive no annual leave. More than a third (34, 2%) of those who did get leave were not paid during their leave days. According to the Labour Act (1992), all workers in Namibia, including farm workers are entitled to paid annual leave of at least 24 consecutive days. In our survey we found that only 23% of farm workers enjoyed this right.

Wages and rations

Almost half of our respondents (49,4%) earned wages below N\$400 per month. On average farm workers in Namibia earned N\$ 350 per month.

Workers on white-owned commercial farms earned between N\$ 501- N\$ 600 on average. On black-owned commercial farms workers earned an average monthly wage between N\$301 – N\$400 while on communal farms the average wage was between N\$ 201- N\$250.

At a national level, about 66% of all interviewed farm workers indicated that they received food rations in addition to their wages. Significantly more workers on communal farms (85%) received food rations (or eat together with farm owners) than their counterparts on black-owned (73%) and white-owned (56%) commercial farms. The most common food items received by workers were milk, meat and maize meal.

Minimum wage

Only 14.4% of all farm workers knew about the minimum wage. When probed for actual knowledge only half (53%) of those who claimed to know about the agreement knew the correct cash amount and the additional food rations benefits.

Only slightly more than half of all farm owners (54.8 %) countywide have implemented the minimum wage. Almost all white commercial farmers (97.2%) and 85.7% of black commercial farmers indicated that they implemented the minimum wage agreement on their farms. On the other hand, only 14% of all communal farmers implemented the minimum wage.

Most white farm owners (71%) indicated that the minimum wage had no impact on their farms. They pointed out that they have been paying higher wages than the minimum wage before its introduction.

Ownership of livestock and tenure rights

Although 70% of all farmers indicated that they allowed their workers to own livestock, only about a third (30.7%) of all interviewed workers countrywide actually owned livestock on the farms where they work.

Most white farmers did not allow their workers to own cattle as workers were allowed to own small stock only. On average workers owned 11 to 15 heads of small stock. Farm workers with the highest number of small stock (16 to 20 on average) were found in the Khomas region.

The majority of black commercial farmers also did not allow workers to own large livestock. They mentioned the lack of land and the high farming costs as the reasons for not allowing workers to own cattle. However, most communal farmers encouraged their workers to own livestock as a way to lure them to stay longer. Despite this, the overwhelming majority of workers (85%) did not own any livestock as they could not afford to buy any or pay the high prices for water charged by Namibia's water utility company, Namwater.

Expenditure

Workers on white-owned commercial farms spent the largest share (52 %) of their wages on food. The second largest expense was "sending money home" (22%) followed by school fees (15%). Entertainment, which includes spending on liquor and tobacco, was another important expenditure item on which workers spent about 10% of their income.

Workers on black-owned farms and in communal areas spent most of their income (53%) on "sending money home" to their families. The second largest item was food (27%) followed by clothing (15.5%).

Living Conditions

About 90% of all farm workers lived on the farms where they worked. The others lived in villages or towns in close proximity to the farms where they worked.

Nationally about half of all interviewed workers (49.7%) lived in brick houses, while 26% indicated that they live in corrugated iron shacks. A large share (37%) of those in communal areas lived in corrugated iron shacks.

About 29% of workers on black-owned commercial farms and 18,1% of those working on white-owned commercial farms were found to be living in corrugated iron shacks. While the majority of workers on white-owned commercial farms in Khomas and Hochfeld lived in brick houses, most workers in Omaheke and around Grootfontein lived in corrugated iron shacks.

A significant portion of workers on communal farms (35,2%) lived in clay huts, while 4,5% of those on black-owned commercial farms and 2,4% of those on white-owned commercial farms lived in similar conditions.

On average farm workers in Namibia spent N\$ 250 per month on food. Given the national average income of farm workers of N\$ 350 per month, this means that on average farm workers spend 70% of their salaries on food. This confirms the high levels of poverty among farm workers.

Human and Labour Relations

A large number of farm workers on white-owned commercial farms complained about ill-treatment by farmers. Their most common complaint was verbal abuse by farm owners. In some cases, workers complained about physical beatings by the farmers. On 4 out of 6 white-owned farms surveyed around Gobabis in Omaheke, workers complained about ill-treatment by farmers. On 70% of the white-owned commercial farms we surveyed in the Grootfontein area, workers lived under constant fears of either physical or verbal abuse and of arbitrary dismissal.

On black-owned commercial farms and communal farms most workers had a good relationship with the farm owners. Generally workers were treated as part of the larger extended family.

About 40% of all surveyed white farmers have retrenched or dismissed workers within the last three years. Only 15.8% of all black commercial farmers and a handful of communal farmers (7,4%) indicated that they retrenched or dismissed workers since 2003. Reasons provided for retrenchments/dismissals ranged from “absence without leave” (33%), “working under the influence of alcohol” (19%) to “theft of livestock” (14%). The introduction of the national minimum wage in 2003 seemingly had no impact on retrenchments.

Knowledge of Trade Unions

Only 36,5% of all interviewed workers knew about trade unions. More workers on commercial farms knew about trade unions than those on communal farms. Almost half of the workers on black-owned farms (45,8%) and 42,4% of those on white-owned commercial farms knew what trade unions are. On the other hand, only 22.9% of the surveyed workers on communal farms knew what trade unions are.

Among the surveyed workers, 21,4% of those on white-owned commercial farms and 6.5% of those on black-owned farms reported visits by trade unions. On the other hand none of the workers surveyed on communal farms reported any visits by trade unions.

While 57% of all workers indicated that unions were allowed on their farms, 10% revealed that they were discouraged from joining union by their employers. When asked about services provided by the union, 32% indicated that the union helped when they had trouble with their employer or that the union negotiates with the employer on their behalf. Another 10.7% mentioned that the union provides advice on work-related matters.

Social Security

Less than half of our respondents (39.3%) were registered as members of the social security scheme. Only 8% those registered with social security indicated that they have claimed benefits from the scheme. The most common claims were maternity leave payouts (81%) with the rest (19%) receiving payment after work-related injuries.

Occupational Health and Safety

Usage of Chemicals

Ten percent of all surveyed workers were exposed to dangerous chemicals. However, only less than half of them indicated that they received training on the usage of these chemicals

Work Related Injuries

About 16% of all interviewed workers indicated that they have been injured at work. Injuries seem more common on white-owned commercial farms (20%) than on black-owned commercial farms (10.6%) and on communal farms (12,3%).

More workers on black-owned commercial farms (40%), and on communal farms (29,4%) indicated that the farm owners covered their medical cost while only 25,5% of all workers on white-owned commercial farms indicated the same.

Access to Health Facilities

The majority of workers (86.3%) indicated that they went to state hospitals or clinics for medical treatment while about 10% indicated that they received treatment at private medical centers. About 41% of all farm workers interviewed indicated that they were taken by the farm owner to medical centres, while 25,5% had to rely on hitchhiking. Yet a significant portion (21%) indicated that they walked to medical centers while only about 6% traveled with their own cars.

Almost half of all workers revealed that it took them longer than 30 minutes to get to a place of treatment.

Female Workers

About 15% of all farm workers were female. Most of them were employed as domestic workers on white- owned commercial farms. On average they received N\$ 350 –N\$400 per month for an average working week of 35 hours. The male workers on white commercial farms on the other hand received N\$500 – N\$600 per month while working between 46 to 49 hours per week. The hourly wages and men and women were similar and stood at about N\$ 2,60.

HIV/AIDS

The majority of farm workers (94,5%) knew what HIV/AIDS was. Fifteen percent of them indicated that HIV/AIDS was a problem on the farm where they worked. However, only 5% knew somebody who was HIV-positive.

While 11,2% of workers on communal farms knew someone who is HIV-Positive, only 1,8% of those on white-owned commercial farms indicated the same. Similarly, only 0,6% of all workers on white-owned commercial farms knew anybody who died of AIDS-related diseases compared to 14% on communal farms. Among the reported deaths were more men (53%) than women (46%).

Only 5.6% of all our respondents indicated that their households were affected in one way or another by HIV/AIDS. They had to support HIV-positive family members financially or take care of orphans of family members who died of HIV/AIDS.

Introduction and Methodology

The agricultural sector is the largest employer in Namibia, employing about 29% of the labour force. The majority of agricultural jobs are in rural areas and they account for 53% of the rural employment. Almost 70% of the population in Namibia is dependent directly or indirectly on agricultural production for their livelihood.

The working conditions within the agricultural sector have been documented in the 1990s and still receive significant attention in the media today. Studies such as those carried out by the Legal Assistance Centre, the University of Namibia and the report of the “Kameeta Commission” all pointed to poor living and working conditions of farm workers in Namibia. Farmers’ organisations like the Namibia Agricultural Union (NAU) have pointed out that working conditions of farm workers have improved over the years and are no longer among the worst.

Following the study carried out by the LAC and UNAM in the mid 1990s, entitled “The living and working conditions of farm workers in Namibia”, the Namibian government appointed a commission of inquiry into labour-related matters affecting agricultural and domestic workers. This commission became known as the “Kameeta Commission” and found that cash wages in this sector ranged from N\$ 80 to N\$ 350 a month. This meant that agricultural workers were among the poorest and lowest paid workers in the country.

In 2003, the first minimum wage for farm workers was introduced, following an agreement between agricultural employers (both communal and commercial farmers) and the Namibia Farmworkers Union (NAFWU). The parties involved agreed to a minimum cash wage of N\$ 2.20 per hour¹, in addition to food and accommodation to be provided by employers. This agreement was greeted with mixed responses. While some farm workers felt that the cash wage was still too low to cover their living expenses, some farmers indicated that they could not afford to pay the agreed minimum wage. They indicated that they might have to resort to retrenchments.

To date no comprehensive research has been carried out on the impact of the minimum wage. Media reports suggested that the new wage was not implemented everywhere. Communal farmers in particular indicated that they were unable to adhere to the agreed wage. In addition, there were frequent reports of farm workers being dismissed and evicted from farms, which has once again highlighted the plight of agricultural workers.

¹ This amounts to N\$429 per month for a 45-hour working week.

Motivation for this study

The current debate on farm workers, their rights and living conditions cannot be advanced without comprehensive and reliable information on the current status of farm workers in Namibia. The studies carried out in the 1990s might be outdated as they could not take into account the developments in recent years.

Our study aims to fill this gap by providing up-to-date information on the status of farm workers in the commercial and communal areas. The particular issues to be investigated included the impact of the minimum wage agreement, the impact of HIV/AIDS on the farming sector, gender issues on farms and a comparison of wages and benefits with other sectors. Farmers' unions have repeatedly argued that material benefits provided in kind needed to be taken into account when such comparisons were made.

Focus of research

The research project scrutinised the current working and living conditions of Namibian farm workers. Key research questions address the following:

- The impact of the introduction of the minimum wage legislation on living standards and employment levels
- Health and safety issues in the farming sector
- HIV/AIDS in the agricultural sector (spread, prevention, treatment)
- Land use rights
- Gender-based differences in employment conditions

Research methods

The study combined quantitative and qualitative research methods. Besides collecting relevant documents from farmers' and farm workers' unions as well as the available literature on the topic, we conducted in-depth interviews with key informants from the NAU, NAFWU, the Namibia National Farmers Union (NNFU), government officials and relevant NGOs. In addition, we visited about 54 commercial farms and about 102 farms in communal areas to conduct interviews based on structured questionnaires. On each farm, we interviewed the farm owner and 3-4 workers. Our sample included the Omaheke, Oshikoto, Otjozondjupa, Kavango, Karas, Erongo, Khomas, Caprivi, Ohangwena, Oshana and Hardap regions.

The field interviews were particularly important to be able to gather quantitative data on important variables such as wages, benefits, working hours, family sizes, duration of employment, etc.

Altogether 345 farm workers and 154 farm owners were interviewed. Using existing national labour force data, the sample was carefully drawn so as to ensure a fine mix based on gender, age and regional representation.

Furthermore, our sample needed to consider the four basic categories of farmers, namely:

- communal farmers
- affirmative action farmers (black commercial farmers)
- established commercial farmers (white commercial farmers), and
- resettled farmers.

Although we visited resettled farms the sample was too small to draw nationwide trends, hence data from resettled farms were not included in the analysis.

Care was taken to cover the various types of farming systems such as:

1. small-stock farming
2. cattle farming
3. mixed livestock-crop farming
4. mixed mahangu-livestock farming, and
5. mixed maize-livestock farming.

Within each category, different types of farming activities were practiced such as “survival farming” (subsistence only); “livelihood farming” (subsistence and marketing of surplus); “market-oriented farming” and commercial farming. Our sample covered these various categories in order to sketch a national picture. The quantitative data was then analysed on LaRRI’s SPSS system.

We are aware that we could only establish some general trends in the agricultural sector as the relatively small sample did not allow us to arrive at detailed conclusions about the conditions within each particular type of farm.

Literature Review: Previous studies

Only a few studies have been carried out on the working conditions of farm workers on communal and commercial farms in Namibia. However, the question of farm labour in Namibia is as old as settler agriculture and continues to occupy a central place in the political economy in Namibia (Werner 2001: 3). In 1995, Namibia's President appointed a "Commission of Inquiry into Labour-Related Matters affecting Agricultural and Domestic Employees" which examined the working conditions and domestic and farm workers and made wide-ranging recommendations how their situation could be addressed. The Commission's report was finalised in July 1997.

In 1996, the Legal Assistance Centre in collaboration with the University of Namibia released a comprehensive report on "The living and working conditions of farmworkers in Namibia". Thereafter, only a few publications emerged such as a small number of research papers and the wage surveys by the Agricultural Employers' Association (AEA). These publications revealed the following:

Remuneration

Farm workers earned between N\$80 to N\$500 depending on whether the workers are employed in a communal area or on a commercial farm. In the mid 1990's wages ranged between N\$80 and N\$350 per month. In some instances wages were supplemented by rations, in others not (Werner 2004: 25). According to the LAC-UNAM study of 1996, permanent workers were paid a total cash wage of about N\$166 per month plus a monthly ration valued at N\$229. In communal as well as in commercial areas food, rations were common and consisted mainly of maize meal, sugar, coffee or tea and occasionally meat (Devereux, Katjuanjjo an van Rooy 1996: 23).

Wages differed between communal and commercial farms, as wages were much lower in communal areas. Many agricultural employees in the communal areas received no cash payment. Where cash wages were paid, they were very low. However in the north in particular, wages tended to rise during busy seasons (loc. cit.). Wages in communal areas were determined by tasks, and in some regions by the influence of the surrounding farms.

In general, farm workers spent almost all their money on food and basic necessities and in some cases incurred debts with their employers. Workers took goods on credit/account and were charged interest. This resulted in perpetual indebtedness by farm workers which limited their mobility (Ibid: 20). The total

monthly expenditure of a farm worker household was N\$221, of which about 42% was spent on food items (Ibid).

Farm workers on commercial farms tended to get increases each year (AEA 2004: 25). The AEA wage survey of 2004 stated that there were many factors that influences the employer's decision to give a salary increment. 16% of employers indicated that they gave inflation related increases, 13% said they provided their workers with annual increases, 35% indicated that salary increases were determined by the financial situation of farm. Some of the employers used a combination of the above factors to determine increments.

Training

10 years ago, 83 % farm owners claimed to give their workers in-service or on the job training whilst only 24% of workers reported that they received such training. Most of the workers indicated that they picked up the skills themselves on the job and contradicted their employers' claims (Devereuz et al 1996: px).

The AEA Wage Survey 2004 revealed that most farm workers were employed as general workers. The diverse activities, which contribute to the successful running of a farm require that certain workers are given specialized in-service training in areas such as welding, driving, dosing and injecting (Republic of Namibia 1997: 12).

Housing

Due to the nature of farm work and the location of farms, farm workers mostly resided on the farms where they work. Several researchers raised concern regarding to the inadequate housing of farm workers. However, it is believed that housing conditions are much better now than at independence. The LAC-UNAM study of 1996 found that 62% of the permanent workers resided in brick houses while 15% lived in corrugated iron houses and 8% live in improvised houses. A few years later, the AEA Wage Survey (2004) reported that 80% of farm workers had brick houses, 12% corrugated iron houses, 2% mobile homes and 6% had houses built from other material. About 32% of commercial farm workers were reported to have wash and toilet facilities inside their houses (AEA 2004).

Most farm workers did not have adequate toilet facilities. About 53% had to use "the bush" as a toilet, 20% used a shared flush toilet and 10% used a pit latrine. In communal areas it was common to find no toilet facilities for the workers at all. About 33% of workers had poor water supply (Devereux et al 1996: px). In the communal areas as well as in some parts of the north it was also common for farm workers to live in the same house as their employers and to be treated as part of the family. Thus if the employers' house lacked running water or a flush toilet, the worker could not expect such facilities either This was also the case on most black-owned commercial farms. Young workers at cattle posts in the northern part of the country had to endure the worst housing conditions (Ibid: 24).

Health and Safety

On most commercial farms, workers were provided with protective clothing to some extent. Although 91% of farmers claimed to provide their workers with adequate protective clothing (overalls and boots), only 55% of workers confirmed this (Devereux et al 1996).

Some farm workers indicated that they sometimes had to perform dangerous farming activities without the use of protective clothing. When they inquired about protective clothing they were told to either do the job or to go look for another job. In communal areas it was uncommon for workers to be provided with protective clothing.

Working Conditions

On commercial farms it was very rare to find a worker who worked for less than 4 days a week although this was common in communal areas. About two-thirds of farm workers worked for 5.5 days per week. A further 16% worked for 6 days and 6% worked every day of the week (Devereux et al 1996: px).

Most commercial farm workers worked on average for 8 hours per day. More than half worked for more than 8hrs per day and only 10% work between 1 and 5 hours per day. Of those working for more than 8hrs per day, 36% work for 5.5 days per week, 30% worked for 6 days per week and 21% worked for 7 days per week.

Most farm workers worked for 6 hours before lunch, while 48% worked for 5 hours before they could take their lunch break. The LAC-UNAM study revealed that it was not unusual for farm workers on commercial and communal farms to work long hours, which was regarded as normal and part of their daily work routine. Additional hours worked were not regarded as overtime and therefore workers received no additional remuneration (Ibid).

It was common for commercial farm workers to take paid annual leave. 70% of the farm workers indicated that they could take annual leave, while 19% said that their annual leave was unpaid. Almost 60% of farm workers received paid sick leave. In communal areas workers usually took leave during the school holidays when their children returned boarding schools (Ibid: px).

Most of the farm workers indicated that they had to work on public holidays. More than one third indicated that they could not take leave on public holidays while 48% indicated that they could do so (loc. cit.).

Gender

Farm work was characterised by a sexual division of labour as men were employed to carry out work like cattle herding, fencing etc. while women were engaged in domestic work. There were also a number of stereotypes among

commercial farmers regarding the suitability of specific ethnic groups for work on farms. Gebhard (1978) had documented a number of these stereotypes (Ibid: 8).

Trade Union Membership

A relatively high unionisation rate among commercial farm owners (mostly with the NAU) was contrasted by a low unionisation rate among workers as only 12% of them were members of the Namibia Farmworkers Union (NAFWU). The low unionisation rates among workers was due NAFWU's limited organisational and human resources (Ibid: pxi).

Workers' Livelihoods

In the absence of adequate laws, farm owners were not obligated to improve the living conditions of their workers. However, some individual farmers took the initiative to improve their living and working conditions (Werner 2004: 26).

Farm owners generally imposed restrictions on the number of livestock their workers may keep on the farm, with the result that the average number of workers' livestock was very low. Workers preferred to keep livestock at their own homestead/villages as a safety measure. In the Omaheke region, workers were permitted to keep an average of 8 large stock units and an unlimited number of goats on the farms where they worked. In some cases the right to keep a limited number of animals on a commercial farm was a right that farm workers earned after a certain period of service. In others, the right to keep livestock on the farm formed part of the basic remuneration package (Ibid: 18,19 & 27).

In most cases, farm workers could not afford to buy livestock although they expressed the wish to own livestock. According to the AEA's survey of 2004, 13% of commercial farm workers owned large stock (cattle), 18% owned small stock and 27% owned horses, mules and donkeys. In communal areas, workers were encouraged to keep livestock although they had to pay Namwater per head of cattle/livestock. However, the rights to graze livestock or cultivate land on an employer's farm were not universal in the communal farming sector and where they did exist, they varied from employer to employer. (Devereux et al 1996: 18 & 19)

It was very common (especially on commercial farms) to find small shops being run by the employer's wife. Such shops normally sold some basic food stuffs and necessities and were ostensibly run to enable farm workers to buy things which are not provided in their rations (Ibid: 20). Workers alleged to be overcharged for things bought at these shops while it was costly for them to travel to the nearest town.

HIV/AIDS

This was thought to be a very serious problem affecting workers in commercial and communal farming areas. There was, however, no recent data on the impact of HIV/AIDS on farm workers. In most cases farm workers were equipped with

the most basic knowledge but more research on the impact of HIV/AIDS is needed.

Workers especially in communal areas were concerned about the HIV/AIDS epidemic. They claimed that they were losing family members who at times were the main breadwinner in the household. The rights of workers suffering from the epidemic may be threatened unless timely action is taken (Ibid: 9).

Minimum Wage

A new Collective Minimum Wage Agreement was introduced in April 2003 by the Namibian Farmworkers Union (NAFWU), the Namibia National Farmers' Union (NNFU) and the Agricultural Employers Association (AEA). This agreement made it compulsory for all farm workers to be paid at least N\$ 2.20 per hour² plus either food rations or N\$210 per month. The purpose of the Minimum Wage was to improve the living standard, reduce poverty, maintain social peace, and ensure income levels above the breadline and to prevent the exploitation of workers. Furthermore, the agreement requires the employers to provide housing (including water and sanitation) and to allow farm workers to keep livestock or cultivate land on the employer's premises. The new Agreement was received with criticism from the commercial and communal farmers who claimed that in some cases they could not afford it. This law is still in force unless otherwise amended.

² Which amounts to N\$ 429 per month for a 45-hour working week.

Living and Working Conditions of Farmworkers in Namibia Today

The sample: Farming , Personal and Demographic Data

Farming data

We surveyed 58 commercial and 102 communal farms country wide in nine of Namibia’s thirteen administrative regions: Khomas (16 commercial farms); Omaheke (9 commercial and 13 communal farms), Otjozondjupa (14 commercial and 23 communal farms), Ohangwena (10 communal farms), Oshikoto (10 communal farms), Oshana (10 communal farms), Omusati (10 communal farms), Caprivi (35 communal farms) and Hardap (8 commercial and 4 communal farms). Within commercial farms a further distinction was made between established (white) and new (black) commercial farmers. Following this classification, a total of 42 white-owned and 14 black-owned commercial farms were surveyed.

Table 1: Farmer category by region

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
Khomas	0	0	16	16
Omaheke	8	4	10	22
Otjozondjupa	20	6	11	37
Hardap	4	2	7	13
Omusati	10	0	0	10
Ohangwena	9	1	0	10
Oshana	10	0	0	10
Oshikoto	10	0	0	10
Caprivi	31	1	0	32
Total	102	14	44	160

Taking the various types of farming activities into consideration, we surveyed 73 farms where cattle farming was the main farming activity, 52 small-stock farms, and 36 crop farms. On many of these farms, farmers were engaged in multiple farming activities apart from the main farming activity. Most cattle farms (30.1%) were found in Namibia’s “cattle county”, Omaheke, while most small stock farms (36,5%) were found in Otjozondjupa. It is important to note however that the majority of farms in our sample were situated in Otjozondjupa, Namibia’s largest farming region. Most of the farms were

crop farming was the main farming activity were found in the Northern regions, especially Caprivi.

Table 2: Region and Main Farming Activity

	Main Farming Activity						Total
	Small-stock farming	Cattle farming	Crop farming	Guest farm	Mahangu farming	Maize farm	
Khomas	2	14	0	0	0	0	16
	3.8%	19.2%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	9.9%
Omaheke	0	22	0	0	0	0	22
	.0%	30.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	13.6%
Otjozondjupa	19	19	1	0	0	0	39
	36.5%	26.0%	3.8%	.0%	.0%	.0%	24.1%
Hardap	12	1	0	1	0	0	14
	23.1%	1.4%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	8.6%
Omusati	7	1	0	0	2	0	10
	13.5%	1.4%	.0%	.0%	22.2%	.0%	6.2%
Ohangwena	5	2	0	0	3	0	10
	9.6%	2.7%	.0%	.0%	33.3%	.0%	6.2%
Oshana	3	3	0	0	4	0	10
	5.8%	4.1%	.0%	.0%	44.4%	.0%	6.2%
Oshikoto	3	7	0	0	0	0	10
	5.8%	9.6%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	6.2%
Caprivi	1	4	25	0	0	1	31
	1.9%	5.5%	96.2%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	19.1%
Total	52	73	26	1	9	1	162
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Farm workers' personal and demographic data

We interviewed 345 farm workers and 154 farm owners across the country. The overwhelming majority of our farm worker respondents (85,2%) were male while only 51 (14,8%) were female. This finding is in line with earlier studies, which found that farm workers in Namibia are predominantly male.

Table 3: Farm Workers' Sex

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Male	294	85.2
Female	51	14.8
Total	345	100.0

Table 4: Farm Workers' Age

	Frequency	Valid Percent
less than 20 years	20	6.0
20-29	133	40.2
30-39	83	25.1
40-49	50	15.1
50-59	28	8.5
60+	14	4.2
does not know	3	.9
Total	331	100.0

A large part of our farm workers were 20 to 29 years of age (40,2 %), followed by those who were 30 to 39 years old (25%). These findings show that the workforce on Namibia's farms is relatively youthful.

Table 5: Home Language

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Silozi	17	5.0
Oshiwambo	110	32.3
Otjiheherero	51	15.0
Damara>Nama	115	33.7
Rukwangali	25	7.3
Afrikaans	10	2.9
Khoisan	13	3.8
Total	341	100.0

About a third of our respondents spoke Damara>Nama as a home language, closely followed by those who spoke Oshiwambo (32,3%). The other workers in our sample spoke either Otjiherero (15%), Rukwangali (7,3%), Silozi (5%), Khoisan (3,9%) or Afrikaans (2,9%). It has to be noted that the farms in the central regions were dominated by workers who spoke Damara>Nama as their home language.

Table 6: Language by Farmer Category

		Farmer Category			Total
		Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
Language	Silozi	14.8%	2.1%	.0%	5.2%
	Oshiwambo	51.9%	18.8%	22.8%	31.8%
	Otjiheherero	17.6%	33.3%	8.2%	15.0%
	Damara>Nama	5.6%	25.0%	53.8%	33.6%
	Rukwangali	5.6%	6.3%	9.4%	7.6%
	Afrikaans	.0%	4.2%	4.1%	2.8%
	Khoisan	4.6%	10.4%	1.8%	4.0%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A look across farmer categories shows that the majority of workers (51,9%) in communal areas spoke Oshiwambo while most workers (53,8%) on white-owned commercial farms spoke Damara>Nama as their home language. On the other hand, black-owned commercial farms were dominated by workers who spoke Otjiherero (33,3%) followed by Damara>Nama speakers(25%).

Table 7: Marital Status

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Single	181	52.9
	Married	63	18.4
	Cohabitating	85	24.9
	Divorce	5	1.5
	Widowed	8	2.3
	Total	342	100.0

More than half of the surveyed farm workers (52.9%) were single while a quarter of our respondents were cohabitating. Less than 20% were married and a handful of our respondents (2.3%) were widowed or divorced (1.5%). The large number of single workers may be explained by the fact that the bulk of our respondents were relatively young.

Table 8: Region of birth

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Caprivi	2	.6	.6
	Kavango	26	7.6	8.1
	Ohangwena	40	11.6	19.8
	Omusati	43	12.5	32.3
	Oshana	13	3.8	36.0
	Oshikoto	6	1.7	37.8
	Otjozondjupa	37	10.8	48.5
	Omaheke	41	11.9	60.5
	Erongo	4	1.2	61.6
	Khomas	40	11.6	73.3
	Hardap	45	13.1	86.3
	Kunene	27	7.8	94.2
	Angola	7	2.0	96.2
	Zambia	13	3.8	100.0
Total	344	100.0		

The largest group of respondents were born in the Hardap region (13,1%), followed by Omusati (12,5%), Omaheke (11,9%), Ohangwena (11.6%), Otjozondjupa (10.8%) and others. Some respondents indicated that they hailed from Zambia (3.8%) and Angola (2%). Most of them were found in the Northern and North-Eastern regions.

Table 9: Region of birth by region of residence

Region of birth	Region of residence							Total
	Caprivi	Ohangwena	Omusati	Otjozondjupa	Omaheke	Khomas	Hardap	
Caprivi	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
	5.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	1.6%	.0%	.0%	.6%
Kavango	1	0	0	14	6	3	2	26
	5.0%	.0%	.0%	14.6%	9.5%	5.4%	3.2%	7.7%
Ohangwena	1	14	1	18	2	2	1	39
	5.0%	73.7%	5.0%	18.8%	3.2%	3.6%	1.6%	11.6%
Omusati	0	1	13	11	7	2	7	41
	.0%	5.3%	65.0%	11.5%	11.1%	3.6%	11.3%	12.2%
Oshana	0	0	3	2	0	2	5	12
	.0%	.0%	15.0%	2.1%	.0%	3.6%	8.1%	3.6%
Oshikoto	0	0	0	3	0	2	1	6
	.0%	.0%	.0%	3.1%	.0%	3.6%	1.6%	1.8%
Otjozondjupa	0	0	0	29	1	4	0	34
	.0%	.0%	.0%	30.2%	1.6%	7.1%	.0%	10.1%
Omaheke	0	0	0	5	33	3	0	41
	.0%	.0%	.0%	5.2%	52.4%	5.4%	.0%	12.2%
Erongo	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	4
	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	1.6%	5.4%	.0%	1.2%
Khomas	0	1	0	3	2	32	1	39
	.0%	5.3%	.0%	3.1%	3.2%	57.1%	1.6%	11.6%
Hardap	0	0	0	0	2	2	41	45
	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	3.2%	3.6%	66.1%	13.4%
Kunene	1	1	2	11	7	1	4	27
	5.0%	5.3%	10.0%	11.5%	11.1%	1.8%	6.5%	8.0%
Angola	3	2	1	0	1	0	0	7
	15.0%	10.5%	5.0%	.0%	1.6%	.0%	.0%	2.1%
Zambia	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
	65.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	3.9%
Total	20	19	20	96	63	56	62	336
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A comparison between workers' regions of birth and regions of current residence reveals some migration patterns. Within Namibia, most workers migrated to Otjozondjupa,

Omaheke and Khomas. Most of those who migrated to Otjozondjupa hailed from Ohangwena and Kavango while most migrant farm workers in Omaheke migrated from Omusati and Kunene. The majority of workers born in Ohangwena (73.7%), Hardap (66.1%) and Omusati (65%) still work in their regions of birth. This makes Ohangwena the region with the highest retention rate. A look at migration patterns from outside Namibia reveals that most migrant workers migrated from Zambia (65%) and Angola (15%) to work in the Caprivi region.

Table 10: Levels of education

		Valid Percent
Education	None	40.4
	Grade 1-7	43.9
	Grade 8- 10	13.4
	Grade 11 - 12	2.3
	Total	100.0

Slightly more than 40% of all farmworkers in our sample had no formal education. About 44% of our respondents had completed some form primary education (grade 1 to 7). A small group of our respondents (13.4%) completed grade 8 to10 while only a tiny minority (2.3%) had a secondary qualification (grade 11 to12). This picture improved only slightly since 1996 when 48% of all farmworkers were without any formal education (Devereux et al. 1996). Such low levels of education limit the employment opportunities for farm workers making them dependent on their current employers. It needs to be noted however, that, given the high national unemployment in Namibia, agriculture absorbs a high percentage of jobseekers with no formal education.

Working Conditions

Our study found that farm workers in Namibia are not a homogeneous group of workers across the country. Their working and living conditions vary starkly across farmer categories and farming regions. In our analysis we therefore provide findings at national level where national trends are observed while providing a disaggregated analysis of trends across farmer categories and regions where applicable.

Most of our analysis is based on responses from farm workers while in some specific sections we drew on the interviews with farm owners.

Basis of Employment

Most farm workers (93.5%) indicated that they were employed on a full-time basis throughout the year. Those workers who were not full-time employees pointed out that they were employed on short-term contracts to carry out specific duties (e.g. fencing, debushing etc) or worked as seasonal workers.

About 35.7% of all farmers indicated that they had written contracts with their workers stipulating the terms of employment. On all other farms, the terms of employment were only communicated to the workers verbally.

Table 11: Are you employed on a full-time basis?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
	yes	319	93.5
	no	22	6.5
	Total	341	100.0

Table 12: Do you a written employment contract for your workers?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
	Yes	50	35.7
	No	84	60.0
	Don't know	6	4.3
	Total	140	100.0

Duration of Employment

The majority of our respondents (70,5%) indicated that they were employed in their current jobs for more than one year. Moreover, 27.3% stayed in their employment for more than 6 years while a significant portion (15%) remained in their jobs for more than 10 years. This shows a high level of permanence of employment, which is in line with national employment trends (LaRRI, 2004), but also points out the limited scope of employment alternatives available to farm workers.

Table 13: Length of working period

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Less than a year	101	29.5
	1-5 yrs	146	42.7
	6-10 yrs	43	12.6
	11-15 yrs	22	6.4
	16-20 yrs	11	3.2
	21-25 yrs	10	2.9
	26-30 yrs	3	.9
	more than 30 yrs	6	1.8
	Total	342	100.0

An analysis across farmer categories shows that the percentage of workers who remained more than 10 years in their employment was highest on white-owned commercial farms (21,8%). Also, when asked whether a family member had worked on the farm before them, about a third (30.9%) indicated that a parent or even a grand parent had worked there. These findings confirm the incidence of life-time generational farm workers that is common on Namibia’s commercial farms.

Table 14: How long have you been working on the farm?

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
Less than a year	23.6%	41.7%	29.9%	29.6%
1-5 yrs	52.8%	39.6%	36.2%	42.1%
6-10 yrs	13.2%	12.5%	12.1%	12.5%
11-15 yrs	4.7%	4.2%	8.6%	6.7%
16-20 yrs	2.8%	.0%	4.6%	3.4%
21-25 yrs	.0%	.0%	5.7%	3.0%
26-30 yrs	2.8%	.0%	.0%	.9%
More than 30 yrs	.0%	2.1%	2.9%	1.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Duties

About two-thirds of the surveyed workers were general workers who had to carry out a wide range of duties ranging from livestock herding, fencing, weeding, debushing and gardening. These tasks were referred to by farm owners as “normal farm work”.

As a result of this multitude of tasks, farm workers, especially on white-owned commercial farms, were fully occupied with physical work that often resulted in exhaustion. Only a small minority of the surveyed workers (1.6%) carried out specialized work including welding, construction, painting and driving. About 8.2% of all workers, mostly women, were employed as domestic workers.

Table 15: Duties

	Responses (%)
Ploughing	2.6
Harvesting	3.5
Domestic Work	8.2
Livestock herding	31.3
Weeding	8.1
Fencing	20.8
Mechanical	5.1
Electrical	0.8
Plumping	9.3
Gardening	5.9
Abattoir	0.6
Welding	0.1
Building	0.8
Painting	0.3
Driver	0.4
Debushing	0.9
Supervisor	0.5
Pumping water	0.6
Shop Assistant	0.3
Total	100

Working days and hours

There is a great deal of disagreement between farm owners and farm workers regarding the number of working days and hours. The majority of farm owners indicated that farm workers had an average working week of 40-45 hours. Moreover farmers pointed out that working hours on weekends are limited to less than 4 hours on Saturday and between 1-2 hours on Sundays on average.

However, almost half of all farm workers (47.3%) indicated that they worked longer than the standard working week of 40 to 45 hours. More than a third (35%) worked longer than 50 hours per week. Most of them (88%) worked 6 to 7 days per week. They further pointed out that they had to work 7 hours on Saturday and 6 hours on Sunday on average. Also, more than half (53.4%) indicated that they had to work on average for 7 hours on public holidays.

Table 16: How many hours do you work per week?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	5-10 hours	6	1.8
	11-19 hours	14	4.2
	20-25 hours	20	6.1
	26-30 hours	14	4.2
	31- 35 hours	20	6.1
	36-39 hours	13	3.9
	40-45 hours	90	27.3
	46 - 49 hours	40	12.1
	50-55 hours	44	13.3
	56-59 hours	23	7.0
	60-65 hours	24	7.3
	66 - 69 hours	2	.6
	70 -75 hours	10	3.0
	76 - 79 hours	5	1.5
	80 -85 hours	4	1.2
More than 90 hours	1	.3	
Total	330	100.0	

Table 17: How many days do you work per week?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1-2 days	3	.9
	3-5 days	37	11.0
	6-7 days	297	88.1
	Total	337	100.0

Table 18: Do you work on public holidays?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	yes	182	53.4
	no	156	45.7
	don't know	3	.9
	Total	341	100.0

Table 19: How many hours do you work on public holidays?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 hour	6	3.9
	2 hours	9	5.9
	3 hours	9	5.9
	4 hours	12	7.8
	5 hours	15	9.8
	6 hours	12	7.8
	7 hours	11	7.2
	8 hours	36	23.5
	9 hours	15	9.8
	10 hours	17	11.1
	11-15 hours	9	5.9
	don't know	2	1.3
	Total	153	100.0

An analysis across farmer categories shows that workers on commercial farms work longer hours than their counterparts in communal areas. Workers on white-owned commercial areas indicated that they had an average working week of 48 hours while those on black commercial farms worked for 40 hours. Workers on communal farms on the other hand worked for 35 hours per week on average. Adherence to working hours was strict on white commercial farms while work on black owned farms work was more task-oriented.

On the other hand, most workers on communal farms worked at their own pace, generally orientating their working day around the “position of the sun”. We observed a general trend between the number of livestock and the number of working hours. The more livestock was on the farm, the more work had to be done and therefore the longer workers had to work.

Table 20: How many hours do you work per week?

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
5-10 hours	5.7%	.0%	.0%	1.9%
11-19 hours	9.5%	.0%	2.3%	4.4%
20-25 hours	11.4%	4.8%	2.9%	5.9%
26-30 hours	8.6%	2.4%	2.3%	4.4%
31- 35 hours	8.6%	4.8%	3.5%	5.3%
36-39 hours	1.0%	9.5%	4.0%	3.8%
40-45 hours	9.5%	35.7%	35.8%	27.2%
46 - 49 hours	11.4%	11.9%	12.7%	12.2%
50-55 hours	4.8%	7.1%	20.8%	13.8%
56-59 hours	7.6%	4.8%	7.5%	7.2%
60-65 hours	9.5%	14.3%	4.6%	7.5%
66 - 69 hours	.0%	.0%	.6%	.6%
70 -75 hours	0.8%	4.8%	1.7%	3.1%
76 - 79 hours	0.9%	.0%	.6%	1.3%
80 -85 hours	.0%	.0%	.0%	1.3%
More than 90 hours	.0%	.0%	.6%	.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Overtime

More than half of all farm workers indicated that they worked overtime. Overtime was significantly more common on commercial farms where 70,5 % of all workers worked overtime. On the other hand, the majority of workers on black-owned commercial farms (53.3 %) and on communal farms (66.1 %) indicated that they did not work overtime. When asked about overtime, most workers were not familiar with the concept. Workers on black-owned commercial farms indicated that they just completed whatever tasks needed to be done (e.g. repair of water pumps, fencing) without considering the number of working hours. This mostly happened whenever the farm owners were on the farm, most of whom worked in urban centres. The tasks and therefore the working hours were much less when the farm owners were not present on the farm - which was mostly the case on black commercial farms.

Table 21: Do you work overtime?

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
yes	24.8%	44.4%	70.5%	51.7%
no	66.1%	53.3%	28.9%	44.6%
don't know	9.2%	2.2%	.6%	3.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Most respondents who worked overtime (73, 6 %) indicated that they received no monetary compensation for overtime work. To some extent this trend was confirmed by farm owners, most of whom indicated that workers got “time off” (i.e. were granted compensatory leave), mainly over week-ends, for working overtime.

Monetary compensation for those workers who received overtime pay (24%), varied between one to two times the normal hourly rate. A minority of workers, mostly on hunting farms in Khomas, indicated that they received game meat and tips from hunters for slaughtering game after working hours.

Leave Days

Almost half of all surveyed workers (45,7%) received no annual leave. More than a third (34, 2%) of those who did get leave were not paid during their leave days. This is a gross violation of the stipulations of the Namibian Labour Act (No.6 of 1992). According to the new Labour Act (2004), all workers in Namibia, including farm workers will be entitled to paid annual leave of at least 24 consecutive working days. In our study we found that only 23% of farm workers currently enjoy this right.

Wages and Food Rations

About half of our respondents earned wages below N\$ 400 per month. Our calculations show that on average farm workers in Namibia earn a paltry N\$ 350 per month, despite the introduction of a national minimum wage for farm workers of N\$2.20 per hour in 2003. This translates in N\$ 429 per month, based on a 45 hours working week.

Table 22: How much do you get paid per month?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	less than N\$ 100	6	1.9
	101-150	19	6.1
	151-200	18	5.7
	201-250	24	7.6
	251-300	38	12.1
	301-400	50	15.9
	401-500	63	20.1
	501-600	26	8.3
	601-700	28	8.9
	701-800	13	4.1
	801-1000	11	3.5
	1001-1200	6	1.9
	1201-1400	1	.3
	1401-1600	5	1.6
	1601-1800	5	1.6
	1801-2000	1	.3
Total	314	100.0	

Table 22 does not reveal the vast disparities in wage levels across farmer categories. Workers on white-owned commercial farms earned between N\$ 501- N\$ 600 on average. On black-owned commercial farms farm workers earned an average monthly wage of N\$301 – N\$400 while on communal farms the average wage was N\$ 201- N\$ 250. A small minority of workers on white-owned commercial farmers (9,2%), received monthly wages of more than N\$800 per month and a handful of workers (5,2%) were paid between N\$ 1401-N\$ 1800 per month.

We also found disparities in wage levels within white commercial farms across farming areas. The lowest wages were paid by farmers in Omaheke and in the Grootfontein district, ranging from N\$ 400 – N\$ 600. Farmers in Khomas paid their workers relatively higher wages ranging from N\$ 450 – N\$1200. The highest wages were paid by farmers in the Hochfeld farming area where wages varied between N\$ 600 – N\$ 1500. These disparities show how farmers in the same farming area influence each other with regard to working conditions of their workers. Also, the close proximity of Grootfontein and Gobabis to communal areas contributes to a high supply of farm labour to commercial farms as opposed to Khomas where farm workers are scarce.

Most workers on white-owned commercial farms further indicated that while wages were paid on time, most of their income went towards paying debts owed to the farm owners. The share of the income spent on debt repayment ranged from 40%-70%. This debt trap makes it impossible for most workers to use their incomes to improve their living conditions.

Table 23: Monthly wage by Farmer Category

Monthly wage in N\$	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	Established commercial farmer	
less than 100	6.0%	.0%	.6%	1.9%
100-150	19.3%	.0%	1.7%	6.1%
151-200	15.7%	9.1%	.0%	5.5%
201-250	16.9%	13.6%	2.3%	7.8%
251-300	27.7%	13.6%	3.4%	12.0%
301-400	7.2%	27.3%	16.1%	15.9%
401-500	4.8%	22.7%	27.0%	20.4%
501-600	.0%	6.8%	12.6%	8.4%
601-700	1.2%	6.8%	13.8%	9.1%
701-800	1.2%	.0%	6.3%	4.2%
801-1000	.0%	.0%	3.4%	3.6%
1201-1400	.0%	.0%	.6%	.3%
1401-1600	.0%	.0%	2.9%	1.6%
1601-1800	.0%	.0%	2.3%	1.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Gender-based differences

About 15% of all farm workers covered by our study were women. Most of them (80%) were employed as domestic workers, mostly on white-owned commercial farms. Most of them worked half days and were paid similar hourly wages as their male counterparts who worked full days. On average, female domestic workers received N\$ 350 –N\$400 p.m. for an average working week of 35 hours. This equals about N\$ 2.60 per hour. The male workers on white commercial farms on the other hand received N\$500 – N\$600 p.m. on average while working between 46 to 49 hours per week which equals about N\$ 2,80 per hour. Thus the main reason for male farm workers earning more than their female counterparts is the difference in working hours and not the actual amount paid per hour (see tables 25 and 26).

Table 24: Which tasks do you carry out?

		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
Which tasks do you carry out?	Ploughing	5.6%	8.0%	6.0%
	Harvesting	2.1%	6.0%	2.7%
	Domestic work	5.6%	80.0%	16.7%
	Livestock herding	74.5%	2.0%	63.7%
	Weeding the farm	1.0%	.0%	.9%
	Fencing	3.1%	.0%	2.7%
	Mechanical	.7%	.0%	.6%
	Plumbing	.7%	.0%	.6%
	Gardening	3.8%	.0%	3.3%
	Building	.3%	.0%	.3%
	Driver	.7%	.0%	.6%
	Debushing	.3%	.0%	.3%
	Supervisor	1.0%	.0%	.9%
	Pumping water	.3%	.0%	.3%
Shop assistant	.0%	4.0%	.6%	
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 25: How much do you get paid per month?

		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
Wage per month?	less than N\$ 100	0	1	1
		.0%	2.6%	.6%
	101-150	3	0	3
		2.2%	.0%	1.7%
	201-250	1	3	4
		.7%	7.9%	2.3%
	251-300	3	4	7
		2.2%	10.5%	4.0%
	301-400	17	11	28
		12.4%	28.9%	16.0%
	401-500	38	9	47
		27.7%	23.7%	26.9%
	501-600	18	4	22
		13.1%	10.5%	12.6%
	601-700	22	2	24
		16.1%	5.3%	13.7%
	701-800	12	0	12
		8.8%	.0%	6.9%
	801-1000	8	3	11
		5.8%	7.9%	6.3%
	1001-1200	6	0	6
		4.4%	.0%	3.4%
	1201-1400	1	0	1
		.7%	.0%	.6%
1401-1600	4	1	5	
	2.9%	2.6%	2.9%	
1601-1800	4	0	4	
	2.9%	.0%	2.3%	
Total		137	38	175
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 26: How many hours do you work per week?

		Sex		Total	
		Male	Female		
How many hours do you work per week?	11-19 hours	Count	2	3	5
		% within Sex	1.5%	7.9%	2.9%
	20-25 hours	Count	1	4	5
		% within Sex	.7%	10.5%	2.9%
	26-30 hours	Count	4	0	4
		% within Sex	2.9%	.0%	2.3%
	31- 35 hours	Count	2	4	6
		% within Sex	1.5%	10.5%	3.4%
	36-39 hours	Count	3	4	7
		% within Sex	2.2%	10.5%	4.0%
	40-45 hours	Count	50	12	62
		% within Sex	36.5%	31.6%	35.4%
	46 - 49 hours	Count	17	5	22
		% within Sex	12.4%	13.2%	12.6%
	50-55 hours	Count	33	3	36
		% within Sex	24.1%	7.9%	20.6%
	56-59 hours	Count	12	1	13
		% within Sex	8.8%	2.6%	7.4%
	60-65 hours	Count	8	1	9
		% within Sex	5.8%	2.6%	5.1%
	66 - 69 hours	Count	1	0	1
		% within Sex	.7%	.0%	.6%
	70 -75 hours	Count	3	0	3
		% within Sex	2.2%	.0%	1.7%
	76 - 79 hours	Count	1	0	1
		% within Sex	.7%	.0%	.6%
	More than 90 hours	Count	0	1	1
	% within Sex	.0%	2.6%	.6%	
Total		Count	137	38	175
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Food Rations

Two-thirds of all interviewed farm workers indicated that they received food rations in addition to their wages. Significantly more workers on communal farms (85%) received food rations (or eat together with the farm owners) than their counterparts on black-owned (73%) and white-owned (56%) commercial farms.

Table 27: Do you receive any food rations on a regular basis?

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
yes	85%	73%	56%	66%
no	15%	27%	44%	34%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The most common food items received by workers were milk, meat and maize meal. Nationally, 41% of all respondents indicated that they received 1-2 litres of milk per week, 25% receive 6-10 litres of milk per week while 16, 7% received more than 10 litres of milk weekly. Over 40% of those who received rations indicated they got 1-2 kg of meat per week while about 10% received more than 10 kg of meat weekly.

However on white-owned commercial farms most workers only received meat on a regular basis. They had to buy the rest of their food from shops owned by the farmer. This was confirmed by most farm owners who indicated that they substituted food rations with cash wages after the introduction of the minimum wage.

By contrast, most workers on black-owned commercial farms indicated that they received regular food rations including maize meal, sugar and milk from their employers. Occasionally workers or farm owners hunted on the farm, in which case meat was shared between them.

The majority of workers on communal farms revealed that they shared food with their employers. In addition, they indicated that they were allowed to milk the cattle for their own personal consumption.

Minimum Wages

Knowledge of the minimum wage

In 2003, the Namibia Farmworkers Union (NAFWU) and the agricultural employers agreed on the first minimum wage for farmworkers in Namibia. The parties agreed to a minimum cash wage of N\$ 2.20 per hour, in addition to food and accommodation to be provided by employers. Our study found that only 14.4% of all farm workers knew about the minimum wage. When probed for actual knowledge only half of them actually knew the correct cash amount and the additional food ration and accommodation benefits. In other words, only 7% of all farm workers knew the details of the minimum wage agreement.

Also, we found varying interpretations of what the minimum wage provisions are. Whereas most respondents were aware of the cash amounts to be paid to workers the other benefits (food rations and accommodation) were interpreted in different ways. There is thus a need for a detailed breakdown of the additional benefits agreed in the minimum wage agreement and this should be circulated among farm owners and farm workers alike.

Table 28: Do you know about the minimum wage for farm workers?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	yes	49	14.4
	no	291	85.6
	Total	340	100.0

All interviewed owners of commercial farms knew about the minimum wage. On the other hand, about 80% of all farmers in communal areas have heard about the minimum wage agreement.

Implementation

Only slightly more than half of all farm owners (54.8 %) countywide have implemented the minimum wage. But this finding conceals the fact that the ability to implement the minimum wage differed starkly across farmer category. Almost all white commercial farmers (97.2%) and 85.7% of black commercial farmers indicated that they had implemented the minimum wage agreement on their farms. On the other hand, only 14% of all communal farmers had implemented the minimum wage. Most of them indicated that, after discussing the issue with their workers, they resolved to waive it and continued to pay them whatever they could afford.

It is important to note that these 3 types of farmers generally fall in 3 different income groups and hence their ability to pay the minimum wage depends on their level of income. However, the requirements of the minimum wage policy do not differentiate between small scale or subsistence farmers (farm owners in communal areas) and large-scale commercial farmers both on communal and commercial farms. Some farm owners in communal areas only own 30 goats and do not market any of their livestock or crops, but are still expected to comply with the minimum wage policy.

Therefore there might be a need to define who is expected to comply with the minimum wage provisions and to develop some criteria. There are some communal farmers who are wealthy enough to afford the provisions of the minimum wage and therefore the criteria need to be carefully designed.

Table 29: Have you been able to implement the minimum wage?

		Farmer Category			Total
		Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
	Yes	14.0%	85.7%	97.2%	54.3%
	No	65.1%	14.3%	7.5%	34.8%
	Don't know	20.9%	.0%	2.8%	10.9%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The impact of the minimum wage

About 71% of all white farm owners indicated that the minimum wage had no impact on their farms. They pointed out that they had been paying higher wages than the minimum wage before its introduction. One farmer in Khomas who paid his workers between N\$ 800-N\$ 1000 per month was of the opinion that the minimum wage was too low. According to him, most farm owners used the minimum wage as an excuse to keep wages artificially low, whilst they were in a financial position to pay higher wages. The farmer explained:

“The minimum wage is a great shame given the abject poverty in which farm workers are living. Most farmers use the minimum wage to pay their workers outrageously low wages”.

This observation was confirmed by our research on commercial farms in Hardap, Omaheke, and the Grootfontein area. In these farming areas, a significant numbers of farm owners held the opinion that the minimum wage was a maximum compensation prescribed by the law. In some cases farm owners were reluctant to provide more, even if they could afford it. There were also cases were farm owners reduced additional benefits (especially related to food) with the introduction of the minimum wage.

Some farm owners were of the opinion that cash payments were being over-emphasized and other benefits overlooked. They believed, for example, that their housing was much better than what most companies in urban areas provided for workers in the same income category.

On the other hand, most black commercial and communal farmers complained about the practicability of the minimum wage given their own low levels of income. The black commercial farmers mentioned the high farming costs as the reason why they were unable to pay the minimum wage. One black farmer pointed out that he often had to use his savings to pay his workers due to insufficient income from the farming business. Communal farmers pointed out that they lived under poor living conditions themselves and had to share whatever they had with their workers.

Ownership of livestock and tenure rights

One way of addressing the plight of farmworkers is to secure their tenure rights on the farms where they work. Our study found that although 70% of all farm owners indicated that they allowed their workers to own livestock, only about 30% of all farm workers countrywide indicated that they actually owned livestock on the farms where they worked.

We also found huge differences in ownership of livestock across farmer categories in all regions. Most white farmers did not allow their workers to own cattle. Generally workers were allowed to own small stock only. We found that on average workers owned between 11 to 15 heads of small stock. Farm workers with the highest number of small stock (16 to 20 on average) were found in Khomas. In contrast to this general trend, workers in the Hochfeld area were found to own cattle. Many of them owned between 6 to 10 heads of cattle.

When asked about the reasons why workers were not allowed to own cattle, most white farmers (73%) indicated that there was not enough land for workers to own livestock. Another reason provided was “to avoid conflicts with workers”. One farmer shed more light on this reason, which he regarded as the real motive behind farmers’ reluctance to allow workers to own cattle.

“Most farmers fear that once workers own cattle it will become difficult for them to be evicted from the farms. The case of Krumhuk, where a worker used his position as NAFWU president to lay claims on the farm after the owner allowed him to own a large number of cattle, made a lot of farmers anxious. It will become easier for workers to lay claims on the land once they own cattle.”

The majority of black commercial farmers also sided the lack of sufficient land and the high farming costs as the reasons for not allowing workers to own cattle. On communal farms, on the other hand, most farm owners encouraged their workers to own livestock. One farmer explained: *“We want them to own livestock so that they can stay longer. Most of them leave after a short while”*. However, the overwhelming majority of farm workers (85%) did not own any livestock as they could not afford to buy livestock or pay the high prices for water charged by Namibia’s water utility company, Namwater.

Expenditure

We found it quite difficult to get workers to indicate their expenditure on particular items as most of them did not keep track of their household expenditure. Our findings were that workers on white-owned commercial spent the largest share (52 %) of their wages on food. This is in line with our earlier finding that farmers have replaced food rations with cash wages. The second largest expense was “sending money home”(22%) followed by school fees (15%) . Entertainment, which includes spending on liquor and tobacco, was another important item on which workers spent 10% of their income. This confirmed the high incidence of alcohol abuse reported by most farm owners.

Workers on black-owned farms and in communal areas on the other hand spent most of their income (53%) on “sending money home” to their families. The second largest item was food (27%) followed by clothing (15.5%).

Living Conditions

Housing

The overwhelming majority of farm workers nationwide lived on the farms where they worked. A small minority, mainly in communal areas, indicated that they lived in villages or towns in close proximity to their farms.

Among those who lived on farms, 87% indicated that they lived in houses provided for by the farm owners, while about 10% had to build their own houses. Nationally about half of all interviewed workers pointed out that they lived in brick houses, while 26% indicated that they lived in corrugated iron shacks.

A large share (37%) of those in communal areas lived in corrugated iron shacks. About 29% of workers on black-owned commercial farms and 18,1% of those working on white-owned commercial farms also lived in corrugated iron shacks.

Table 30: What kind of housing do you live in?

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
Clay thatched roof	35.2%	4.5%	2.4%	13.8%
Brick house with iron roof	4.6%	61.4%	77.7%	49.7%
Iron shack	37.0%	29.5%	18.1%	26.1%
Caravan	.0%	2.3%	.0%	.3%
Rondavels	.0%	.0%	1.2%	.6%
Old Ford canopy	.9%	.0%	.0%	.3%
Clay iron roof	1.9%	2.3%	.0%	.9%
Traditional with thatched roof	20.4%	.0%	.6%	7.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

An analysis across farming areas reveals that while the majority of workers on white-owned commercial farms in Khomas and Hochfeld lived in brick houses, most workers in Omaheke and around Grootfontein lived in corrugated iron shacks.

We also found that some white farmers in Omaheke had built brick houses for their workers after government officials put political pressure on them. On one farm, workers were full of praise for a particular regional councilor who intervened to take up their grievances with the farm owner: “*After Kilus was here our working and living conditions started to improve*”. This reference was made to a regional councilor who is now the deputy minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources. This case showed that farmers in some farming areas were only willing to improve the living conditions of their workers under pressure.

We also found that a significant portion of workers on communal farms (35,2%) lived in clay huts, while 4,5% of those on black-owned commercial farms and 2,4% of those on white-owned commercial farms live in similar conditions.

More than half of workers nationwide (53,7%) lived in one-room houses, most of which have no running water (67.9%) or toilet facilities(79.8%). Most of the workers on communal farms (92,7%) and on black owned commercial farms (56,8%) lived in one-room houses. On the other hand, most workers on white-owned commercial farms (68.4%) stayed in 2 to 3-room houses.

Human and Labour Relations

Farm owner - farm worker relations

A large number of farm workers on white-owned commercial farms complained about ill-treatment by farmers. Their most common complaint was verbal abuse by farm owners. In some specific cases, mostly in Omaheke, workers complained about physical beatings by the farmers. On 4 out of 6 white-owned farms surveyed around Gobabis in Omaheke, workers complained about ill-treatment by farmers. On one particular farm, workers complained about regular beatings by the farmer. When asked to describe their relationship to the farmer the workers’ common response was: “Hy slaan baie” (He beats us a lot).

Similarly, on 70% of white-owned commercial farms we surveyed in the Grootfontein area, workers live under constant fears of either physical or verbal abuse and or arbitrary dismissal.

Relations were less strained on most farms in Khomas and the Hochfeld area in the Otjozondjupa region. In the Hochfeld area, workers generally were happy with the treatment by farmers. On one particular farm which we regard as a best case practice (see

Box 1), workers were found to work under excellent working conditions and had the best human relations we found on commercial farms.

On black-owned commercial farms and communal farms most workers had a good relationship with the farm owners. Generally workers were treated as part of the larger extended family. This is born out by the fact that they often eat from the same pot. At times, workers were left alone to take care of the farm/homestead while owners were working in urban centres. Generally workers felt a sense of belonging and ownership of the farms.

Retrenchment/Dismissals and Farm Evictions

A widely reported incidence among farm workers is the problem of farm worker evictions. In our study we asked farmers whether they had retrenched or dismissed workers since the year 2003. Our findings show that about 40% of all surveyed white farmers retrenched or dismissed workers within the last three years. On the other hand, only 15.8% of all black commercial farmers and a handful of communal farmers (7,4%) indicated any retrenchments during that period.

Table 31: Have there been any retrenchments/dismissals at the farm since January 2003?

		Farmer Category			Total
		Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
	Yes	7.4%	15.8%	39.5%	17.4%
	No	92.6%	84.2%	57.9%	81.9%
	Don't know	.0%	.0%	2.6%	.7%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Reasons provided for retrenchments/dismissals ranged from “absence without leave” (33%), “working under the influence of alcohol” (19%) to “theft of livestock” (14%). Most farm owners complained of indiscipline of their workers, especially because of alcohol and drug related problems. Even in areas where no drug problems were experienced, “drug lords”, especially in the South are targeting and even exchanging drugs with livestock of farm workers.

As a result of the above mentioned and other disciplinary problems, there was a high degree of mobility within the workforce as more and more workers were expelled or stayed away from work. All the surveyed farmers indicated that all retrenched workers were evicted from the farms. However, only 18% of them indicated that they paid the retrenched workers severance pay. These findings confirmed the dilemma facing farm workers, which stems from the fact that, unlike most other workers, farm workers live at their places of work. Once they lose their jobs, they lose their homes. This is a matter of

great concern as there are allegations that some farm owners use disciplinary issues as an excuse to get rid of some of their long-serving workers to avoid paying for retrenchment packages, pension or providing other retirement benefits like grazing rights or accommodation rights.

Table 32: Reasons for dismissals?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Causing domestic unrest	2	8.3
	Breaking in into my shop and theft	1	4.2
	Theft of livestock and cattle feed	3	12.5
	Absent without leave (AWOL)	7	29.2
	Attempted rape of female worker	1	4.2
	Left to visit his family but never returned	3	12.5
	Cannot afford to keep him	2	8.3
	Working under influence of alcohol	4	16.7
	Un-corporative behaviour	1	4.2
	Total	24	100.0

Table 33: What happened to the retrenched workers?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Had to leave	13	81.3
	Received severance pay and had to leave	3	18.8
	Total	16	100.0

Box 1: A shining example from the Hochfeld area

A Win-Win Scenario

At one farm in the Hochfeld area we found a white farmer who had excellent human and working relations with his workers. The owner provided his workers with two bedroom brick houses in excellent conditions. He paid them above-average wages ranging from N\$ 550 to N\$ 1000 plus food rations. Workers had an average working week of 40-45 hours.

The children of the farm workers were schooling at a private school in Okahandja and the farmer paeds for the school fees.

Furthermore, the farmer bought a vehicle for the foreman while paying half the price for a second vehicle for yet another worker. Also, all workers owned TV sets paid for by the farm owner.

All retired workers of that particular farm were resettled on the farmer's second farm which was only 20 km away. In this way, workers whose parents worked on the farm before could visit their parents in close proximity. The workers expressed high satisfaction with the treatment by the farmer while the farmer reported high levels of productivity among his workers

Knowledge of Trade Unions

Only 36,5% of all interviewed workers indicated that they knew about trade unions. The percentage was higher amongst farm workers on commercial farms. Almost half of the workers on black-owned farms (45,8%) and 42,4% of those on white-owned commercial farms knew what trade unions are compared to only 22.9% on communal farms. This can be partly attributed to the fact that the only union in the sector (NAFWU) organises workers on commercial farms only. This was confirmed when we asked workers whether unions ever visited their farms. Among the surveyed workers, 21,4% of those on white-owned commercial farms and 6.5% of those on black-owned farms responded in the affirmative. On the other hand none of the workers surveyed on communal farms reported visits by trade unions.

Table 34: What is a trade union? (farm workers' knowledge)

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
Knows	22.9%	45.8%	42.4%	36.5%
Does not know	77.1%	54.2%	57.0%	63.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

About 7% of all interviewed workers indicated that they were union members. This however can not be regarded as a reflection of the entire union membership as our sample was randomly selected and might not have included farms where NAFWU has more members. More workers on white-owned commercial farms (11.2%) indicated that they were union members than their counterparts on black-owned commercial farms (8.7%). Only 1% of workers on communal farms were union members.

About 85% of those who belonged to unions said they were members of NAFWU, while 15% did not know the name of their union.

Table 35: Are you a member of any trade union?

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
Yes	1.0%	8.7%	11.2%	7.4%
No	95.2%	89.1%	88.2%	90.7%
Don't know	3.8%	2.2%	.6%	1.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 36: Which union do you belong to?

	Valid Percent
NAFWU	85%
Don't know	15%
Total	100%

Table 37: Has a union ever visited your farm?

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
Yes	.0%	6.5%	21.4%	12.2%
No	83.3%	71.7%	66.5%	72.8%
Don't know	14.8%	21.7%	12.1%	14.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

While 57,2% of all workers indicated that unions were allowed on their farms, 10,2% revealed that they were discouraged by their employers from joining unions. Furthermore, 5,2% of workers on white-owned commercial farms indicated that their employers discriminated against workers who belonged to a union. When asked for further explanation, 60% indicated that union members were paid lower wages and hardly received any wage increments.

Almost half (48%) of those who belonged to unions had been members for 3-5 years while 7,7% had been with their union for more than ten years.

When asked about services provided by the union 32,1% indicated either that the union helped when they had trouble with the employer or that the union negotiated with the employer on their behalf. Another 10,7% mentioned that the union provided advice on work-related matters.

Farm owners' views on trade unions

Most farm owners (86.2%) indicated that trade unions had free access to the workers on their farms. Most farmers across all categories indicated that unions could play a positive role in resolving labour disputes. Many of them referred to the need for unions to inform workers about their rights and obligations as a way of enhancing working relations and avoiding labour disputes.

However, about 21% of mainly white farmers expressed reservations about the role of unions on farms. Some alleged that unions were either unwilling or unable to solve labour disputes. Yet others claimed that unions misinformed and misled workers. One white farmer in Omaheke explained:

“They are more nonsense-stirrers than workers unions. When they come here they misinform the workers about their rights. Every time they visit I have more trouble with the workers than before.”

Table 38: Do trade unions have access to the workers on your farm?

		Farmer Category			Total
		Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
	Yes	82.3%	94.4%	91.9%	86.2%
	No	11.1%	5.6%	5.4%	9.0%
	Don't know	6.7%	.0%	2.7%	4.8%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Farm owners and farmers associations

The level of membership with farmers' associations differed starkly across farmer categories. The majority of white commercial farmers (81.6%) belonged to a farmers' association, mostly the Namibia Agricultural Union (NAU). On the other hand, only 30% of black commercial farmers and 24.5% of all communal farmers we spoke to belonged to farmers associations.

The largest share of all white farmers (44.8%) and 25% of black commercial farmers indicated that they belong to the NAU, which is the largest farmers' union representing commercial farmers. It needs to be noted however that several of the farmers associations listed in the table below are affiliated to the NAU, making the NAU membership much larger than the 45% indicated above.

Similarly, while none of the interviewed farmers indicated that they are members of the Namibia National Farmers Union (NNFU), which is the only national farmers' union representing communal farmers, most of the farmers' associations that communal farmers belong to are associated to the NNFU.

Table 40: Are you a member of a farmers' union/association?

		Farmer Category			Total
		Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
	Yes	24.5%	35.0%	81.6%	39.7%
	No	75.5%	65.0%	18.4%	60.3%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 40: If yes, which union/association do you belong to?

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
Witvlei Farmers Association	.0%	.0%	3.4%	1.8%
NAU	.0%	25.0%	44.8%	24.6%
Epukiro Farmers Association	4.2%	.0%	.0%	1.8%
Grootfontein Farmers Association	.0%	.0%	10.3%	5.3%
Noordelike Khomas Farm Union/Western Khomas Farmers Association	.0%	.0%	17.2%	8.8%
Hochfeld Farmers Union	.0%	25.0%	10.3%	7.0%
Okakarara Farmers Union	29.2%	.0%	.0%	12.3%
Otjozondjupa Farmers Association	8.3%	.0%	.0%	3.5%
Meteor Farmers Association	8.3%	25.0%	.0%	5.3%
Likwama Farmers Union	33.3%	.0%	.0%	14.0%
Nwani Association	8.3%	25.0%	.0%	5.3%
Southern Namibian Farmers Union	4.2%	.0%	.0%	1.8%
Stampriet Boere Vereniging	4.2%	.0%	3.4%	3.5%
Maltahohe Boere Vereniging	.0%	.0%	6.9%	3.5%
Dordabis Farmers Union	.0%	.0%	3.4%	1.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

When asked about the type of services provided by their farmers unions/associations most farmers (46%) mentioned training on farming and business practices as the main service. The second most common service mentioned was marketing of agricultural products (12.4%) while others mentioned the provision of information on relevant government policies and that the union/association negotiated with government on their

behalf. A few farmers mentioned that their union/association assisted them with access to finance.

Most farmers were satisfied with the services they received from their associations while a handful of them felt that their union/association neglected them because they were located far away from the urban centers.

Social Security

Table 41: Are you registered with Social Security?

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
yes	3.7%	21.3%	66.3%	39.0%
no	95.4%	70.2%	29.1%	57.0%
don't know	.9%	8.5%	4.7%	4.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Less than half of our respondents (39.3%) were registered as members of the social security scheme. Some (4%) did not know whether they were registered with social security or not. Significantly more workers on white-owned commercial farms (66.3%) were registered with the Social Security Scheme than those on black-owned commercial farms (21.3%) and communal farms (3.7%). The Social Security Act stipulates that all workers in Namibia have to be registered with the social security scheme. Our findings show however that more than half of all farm workers in Namibia were not registered with this compulsory scheme.

Table 42: Have you ever claimed from Social Security?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	yes	11	8.0
	no	121	91.0
	Total	132	100.0

Only 8% those registered with social security indicated that they had ever claimed benefits from the scheme. When asked what they had claimed, most mentioned maternity leave payouts (81%) with the rest (19%) receiving payouts after work-related injuries. More than half (55%) of those who had never claimed benefits did not know how or when to claim while 37% indicated that they never had any reason to claim.

About 8% percent of our respondents had not received their social security membership cards, despite having been registered with the scheme. This problem was confirmed by farm owners who indicated that many workers are still to receive their membership cards from the Social Security Commission.

Table 43: Reasons for not claiming from the Social Security Commission

		Valid Percent
	Did not get card from employer	8.0
	Don't know when/how to claim	55.0
	Never had any reason to claim	37.0
	Total	100.0

Occupational Health and Safety

Usage of Chemicals

Another area of concern of farm workers was their exposure to occupational hazards. Our study found that 10% of all surveyed workers were exposed to dangerous chemicals. Amongst the reported chemicals were pesticides against animal and plant parasites as well as chemicals used to combat bush encroachment. Workers listed “blindness”, “damage to lungs” and “death” as some of the possible effects of unprotected exposure to these chemicals. However, only about 43% of farm workers indicated that they received any training on the usage of these chemicals. When asked to explain the type of training received, almost all workers (95%) mentioned that the farm owner showed them how to use the chemicals.

Table 44: Do you personally work with chemicals on the farm?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	yes	35	10.2
	no	308	89.8
	Total	343	100.0

Table 45: Type of chemicals used

	Responses
Against bush encroachment	13.5
Against parasites	43.2
Against tree parasites	24.3
Don't know which ones	13.5
Predators poison	5.4
Total	100

Protective Clothing

When asked about protective clothing, 40% of our respondents pointed out that they received some, mainly from the farm owner. Only 5% mentioned that they had to buy their own protective clothing. The most common type of protective clothing mentioned were overalls (43%), followed by boots (33,8%) and gloves (12%). Others indicated that they received dresses (3.8%), masks (5,9%) and helmets (1.5%).

Table 46: Do you have any protective clothing?

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid yes	94	33.9
no	181	65.3
Total	277	100.0

Table 47: Who provided the protective clothing?

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid The farm owner	90	92.8
The worker	5	5.2
Farm manager	1	1.0
Total	97	100.0

Table 48: Type of protective clothing

	Responses (%)
Gloves	12
Boots	33.8
Overalls	43
Dresses	3.8
Masks	5.9
Helmets	1.5
Total	100

Work-Related Injuries

Since farm workers mostly carry out physical work, many workers are at risk of physical injuries. This was confirmed by our study as 16,7% of all interviewed workers indicated that they had been injured at work.

Significantly more workers on white-owned commercial farms (20%) indicated that they had been injured at work compared to 10.6% of those on black-owned commercial farms and 12,3% of those on communal farms.

However, when asked who carried the costs for medical treatment for injuries, more workers on black-owned commercial farms (40%), and on communal farms (29,4%) indicated that the farm owners covered the cost while only 25,5% of all workers on white-owned commercial farms indicated the same. All other workers had to pay for their medical treatment themselves.

Access to Health Facilities

Due to the remoteness of farms from urban centers, farm workers have limited access to medical care. The majority of our respondents (86.3%) indicated that they went to state hospitals or clinics for medical treatment while about 10% indicated that they received treatment at private medical centers. About 41% of all farm workers interviewed indicated that they were taken by the farm owner to medical centres, while 25,5% had to rely on hitchhiking. Yet a significant portion (21,2%) indicated that they walked to medical centers while only about 6% travelled with their own cars.

Table 49: Where do you go to when you are sick?

	Valid percent
State clinic	53
State hospital	33.3
Private clinic	3
Private doctor	4.5
Private hospital	2.5
Traditional healer	0.3
Get medicine from employer	0.8
Never been sick	2.6
Total	100

Table 50: How do you and your family get to the place of treatment?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	On foot	68	21.2
	With the farmer's car	132	41.1
	Own car	20	5.9
	Animal driven cart	6	1.9
	Bicycle	10	3.1
	Foreman's car	1	.3
	Hitch hiking	82	25.5
	Neighbour's car	2	.6
	Total	321	100.0

Table 51: How long does it take you to reach the place of treatment by farmer category

		Farmer Category			Total
		Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
	Less than 5min	10.0%	2.5%	3.3%	5.5%
	6-10min	7.0%	2.5%	6.0%	5.9%
	11-15min	7.0%	2.5%	4.7%	5.2%
	16-20 min	8.0%	15.0%	7.3%	8.6%
	21 -25min	4.0%	7.5%	2.0%	3.4%
	26-30min	28.0%	17.5%	22.0%	23.4%
	31-35min	1.0%	.0%	.0%	.3%
	36-40min	2.0%	2.5%	6.0%	4.1%
	More than 40min	33.0%	50.0%	48.0%	43.1%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The long distances that farm workers had to travel were confirmed when we asked workers how long it took them to get to medical centers. Almost half of them (47,2%) revealed that it took them longer than 30 minutes to get to a place of treatment. Half of the workers on both white-owned and black-owned and a third of those on communal farms indicated that it took them more than 40 min to get to a place of treatment.

What our statistical findings did not capture is the fact that many farm workers were not allowed to seek medical treatment if their complaints were regarded as “minor” by the farm owners. While this might help to reduce worker absenteeism, it could lead to abuse as it is entirely left up to the discretion of farm owners to determine the severity of workers’ illnesses.

HIV/AIDS

Knowledge and Prevalence

We asked our respondents whether they knew about HIV/AIDS and tested those who responded in the affirmative for real knowledge. We found that the overwhelming majority of farm workers (94,5%) know what HIV/AIDS is.

When we asked our respondents whether HIV/AIDS was a problem on their farm, 15% answered in the affirmative. However, when asked whether they knew anybody who was HIV-positive only 5% said yes. This is a strong indication of the secrecy and stigma attached to HIV/AIDS as in reality many more farm workers are likely to know an HIV-positive person.

Table 52: Is HIV/Aids a problem on the farm?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	51	15.0
	No	241	70.7
	don't know	49	14.4
	Total	341	100.0

Table 53: Do you know of anybody who is infected with HIV/Aids on the farm?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	15	4.4
	No	319	94.4
	don't know	4	.9
	Total	338	100.0

While 11,2% of workers on communal farms knew someone who was HIV-positive, only 1,8% of those on white-owned commercial farms indicated the same. A possible explanation for this could be the remoteness of commercial farms allowing little human interaction, as opposed to communal farms, which are close to smaller towns where workers easily interact with other villagers. There is thus a possibility that farm workers on commercial farms (because of the isolated nature of their environments) have been spared from the spread of HIV and this needs to be considered as a possible “window of opportunity” to launch aggressive mitigation programs and activities before the virus is wide-spread. The HIV/AIDS Policy signed between the AEA and NAFWU with the aim of addressing HIV/AIDS within the commercial agricultural sector is a step in the right direction.

Table 54: Do you know of anybody who is infected with HIV/Aids on the farm?

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
yes	11.2%	.0%	1.8%	4.6%
no	88.8%	100.0%	96.5%	94.4%
don't know	.0%	.0%	.6%	.3%
8.00	.0%	.0%	.6%	.3%
9.00	.0%	.0%	.6%	.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Information on HIV/AIDS.

Most farm workers (61,2%) cited the radio as their main source of information on HIV/AIDS. Other sources of information were the television (9,7%), the farm owners (6,8%) newspapers (6,4%), colleagues (4,8%) and medical centers (4,6%). Only very few workers (1,1%) indicated that HIV/AIDS campaigns such as the Total Control Epidemic campaign had reached them.

It was surprising to observe that very few HIV-AIDS awareness or mitigation programmes were undertaken on the farms. Conversations between farm owners and their workers on the subject of HIV/AIDS were rare and mostly informal and spontaneous.

Table 55: Source of information on HIV/Aids

	Responses (%)
Radio	61.2
Television	9.7
Newspaper	6.4
Employer	6.8
Colleagues	4.8
Hospital/ Clinic	4.6
Government officials	0.7
Pamphlets	0.4
Villagers	0.4
Books	0.2
Saw people dying of AIDs	0.2
Posters	0.4
School	1.1
Friends	0.2
Government campaign	1.1
Neighbours	0.2
Red Cross	0.4
Mobile clinic	0.4
New Start Centre	0.4
Total	100

HIV/AIDS Related Deaths

We further asked our respondents whether they knew anybody who died of HIV/AIDS. Similar to the findings above, only 0,6% of all workers on white-owned commercial farms knew anybody who died of AIDS-related diseases compared to 14% on communal farms.

Table 56: Do you know of anybody who died of HIV/Aids on the farm?

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
yes	14.0%	.0%	.6%	5.0%
no	86.0%	100.0%	99.4%	95.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 57: Are workers informed about HIV/Aids on the farm?

	Farmer Category			Total
	Communal farmer	Black commercial farmer	White commercial farmer	
yes	81.3%	85.1%	79.5%	80.9%
no	18.7%	12.8%	19.9%	18.5%
don't know	.0%	.0%	.6%	.3%
11.00	.0%	2.1%	.0%	.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Among the reported deaths were more men (53%) than women (46%). It is however important to note that according to our findings the overwhelming majority of farm workers (85,2%) are male. We may therefore conclude that proportionately, more female workers died of HIV/AIDS.

Impact of HIV/AIDS

Only 5.6% of all our respondents indicated that their households were affected in one way or another by HIV/AIDS. Some had to support HIV-positive family members financially while others had to take care of orphans of family members who died of HIV/AIDS.

Nationally, only 4% of our respondents indicated that they experienced an increase in household expenditure due to HIV/AIDS. Among the expenditure items are attending funerals of relatives who died of HIV/AIDS, medical expenses, and buying of healthy food for HIV patients.

Conclusion and Recommendations

General

Farm workers in Namibia are not a homogeneous group across the country. Their working and living conditions vary starkly across farmer categories and farming regions. There are three broad farmer categories, which fall in different income groups and provide varying working and living conditions for farm workers:

1. White (established) commercial farmers: This group of farmers falls in the highest income group and hence the material conditions they offer to farm workers are better, relative to other groups of farmers. Despite living under better material conditions, however, many workers on white-owned farms are ill-treated by their employers and are dis-satisfied with their working conditions. Workers reported cases of verbal and in some isolated cases, physical abuse by their employers.
2. Black (emerging) commercial farmers: This group falls broadly in the middle income group and offers material conditions which are lower than those offered by white farmers but higher than those of communal farmers. The majority of farm workers are satisfied their working conditions and generally have a sense of ownership of the farms.
3. Communal farmers: This group of farmers falls in the lowest income group and offers the poorest material conditions to farm workers. However, workers on communal farms are usually satisfied with working conditions and feel a strong sense of ownership of the farms.

Recommendation:

- Policy makers, trade unions and employers' organisations might need to take these different farmer categories into consideration when formulating policy interventions aimed at improving the working and living conditions of farm workers. The minimum wage agreement, for example, might need to be renegotiated to take these different income levels of different farmer groups into consideration.

Education

About 40% of all farmworkers had no formal education. About 44% of them had only completed primary education. Long distances to schools and lack of money made it difficult for farm workers' children to attend school.

Recommendation:

- There is an urgent need for government and NGOs to build more schools in settlements close to farms. Government subsidies for such schools need to be considered to make them affordable to farm workers' children. Moreover,

government and NGOs need to strengthen current efforts towards adult education on farms.

Working Conditions

Permanence of employment, duties and skills

Most farm workers were employed on a full-time basis throughout the year. Those workers who were not full-time employees were employed on short-term contracts to carry out specific duties (e.g. fencing, debushing etc) or worked as seasonal workers.

Most farm workers (70%) were employed in their current jobs for more than one year. Slightly less than a third stayed in their employment for more than 6 years while about 15% remained in their jobs for more than 10 years.

The majority of the surveyed workers were general workers, carrying out a wide range of duties ranging from livestock herding, fencing, weeding, debushing and gardening. A small minority of the workers carried out specialized work including welding, construction, painting and driving.

Most farm workers had multiple skills in various areas but lacked formal qualifications. As a result farm workers became vulnerable and depended on their employers.

Recommendation:

- Policy makers need to look at providing specific courses to upgrade the skills of farm workers and grant them formal qualifications. Such formal qualifications would give farm workers the necessary leverage to bargain for better working conditions or seek alternative employment.

Working days, working hours and leave days

Most farm workers in Namibia worked longer than the average 40 to 45 hours per week. About a third worked longer than 50 hours per week. Most workers worked 6 to 7 days per week.

Working hours and days varied across farmer categories:

Workers on white-owned commercial areas indicated that they had an average working week of 48 hours while those on black commercial farms worked for 40 hours. Workers on communal farms on the other hand worked for 35 hours per week on average.

Adherence to working hours was strict on white-owned commercial farms while work on black-owned farms work was more task-oriented. On the other hand, most workers on communal farms worked at their own pace, generally orientating their working day around the “position of the sun”.

Almost half of all surveyed workers received no annual leave. More than a third of those who were granted leave received no payment during their leave. This is a violation of the Labour Act (No 6 of 1992), which grants a minimum of 24 consecutive annual leave days on full pay. Under the incoming Labour Act (2004), this will increase to 24 consecutive working days per year.

Recommendations:

- Innovative solutions must be found to enforce adherence to the legally prescribed maximum working hours on farms. Workers who work longer than 45 hours per week must be compensated in monetary terms for overtime work.
- Solutions must be found to enforce all rights of workers, such as leave days, as provided for by the Labour Act on farms.

Wages and rations

On average farm workers in Namibia earn N\$ 350 per month. But wage levels and the provision of food rations vary starkly across farmer categories.

Workers on **white-owned commercial farms** earn between N\$ 501- N\$ 600 on average. Only about 56% of them receive regular food rations. Many farmers have replaced food rations with cash wages after the introduction of the minimum wage agreement. However, during the hunting season, most workers in Khomas receive game meat regularly.

A large share of the income (ranging from 40%-70%) of workers on white-owned commercial farms is spent on paying off debt accumulated by buying mainly food from employers' shops.

On **black-owned commercial farms** workers earn average monthly wages between N\$301 – N\$400 while on **communal farms** the average wage lies between N\$ 201- N\$250. In both these categories most workers either receive regular food rations or share food with farmers. About 73% of workers on black-owned farms and 85% of all workers on communal farms indicated that they received food rations. The most common food items received by workers were milk, meat and maize meal. Most of them had unlimited access to milk for personal consumption.

Recommendations:

- As mentioned above, the Minimum Wage Agreement should be amended to make a distinction between the various farmer categories.
- Labour inspectors must be empowered to inspect price mark-ups at farm shops.
- It needs to be legislated that no employer may allow any employee to accumulate debt of more than 50% of his her monthly cash wage.
- Employers must be compelled by law to enter into written employment agreements with their employees, stipulating the wage level agreed upon and the date of payment.

Minimum wage

Only a small minority (14%) of all farm workers country-wide knew about the minimum wage. More workers on commercial farms knew about the minimum wage than their counterparts on communal farms. On the other hand, all farmers on commercial farms knew about the minimum wage compared to about 80% of communal farmers.

Only slightly more than half of all farm owners (55%) countywide had implemented the minimum wage. Almost all white commercial farmers (97%) and 85% of black commercial farmers indicated that they had implemented the minimum wage agreement on their farms. On the other hand, only 14% of all communal farmers had implemented the agreed minimum wage.

About 71% of all white farm owners indicated that the minimum wage had no impact on their farms. They pointed out that they had been paying higher wages than the minimum wage before its introduction. Only a few white farmers complained and claimed that they had to retrench workers to afford the increase in wage costs. This, however, does not seem to be the real reason as farmers provided different explanations when we asked them about retrenchments on their farms.

Recommendation:

- There is a need to step up the information campaign on the minimum wage agreement, especially among workers on communal farms.

Ownership of livestock and tenure rights

Although most farmers indicated that they allowed their workers to own livestock, only about a third of all interviewed workers countrywide actually owned livestock on the farms where they worked. Most white farmers did not allow their workers to own cattle as workers were allowed to own small stock only.

The majority of black commercial farmers mentioned the lack of land and the high farming costs as the reasons for not allowing workers to own livestock.

On communal farms, most farm owners encouraged their workers to own livestock as a way to lure them to stay longer. However, the majority of communal farm workers did not own any livestock as they could not afford to buy livestock or pay the high prices for water.

Recommendations:

- The Labour Act should be amended to grant farm workers the right to graze their animals on commercial farms on which they are employed. Such an amendment should provide a formula which determines the number of animals to be kept or

- the size of land to be ploughed in relation to the carrying capacity of the farm in question.
- Generational workers as well as those who have worked on the same farm for more than ten years, should be entitled to legally sanctioned rights of tenure on the farm, and such rights should be included in the title deed of the farm in question. Such rights must entitle workers to own both small stock and large stock.
 - The Government and agricultural banks should consider granting loans to farm workers to buy livestock.
 - Government must consider farm workers as primary beneficiaries of the land reform policy, in order to break the cycle of poverty and dependency which affects generational employees in particular.

Living Conditions

Nationally about half of all workers lived in brick houses, while 26% indicated that they had to stay in corrugated iron shacks. The majority of workers on white-owned commercial farms in Khomas and Hochfeld lived in brick houses, while most workers in Hardap, Omaheke and around Grootfontein lived in corrugated iron shacks with no running water or toilet facilities.

On black-owned commercial farms most workers living at the farm owners' settlement stayed in brick houses while the majority of workers at cattle posts had to live in iron shacks.

A large share of those in communal areas stayed in corrugated iron shacks while a significant portion of workers lived in clay huts.

Some white farmers complained about the uncertainty around government policy on the expropriation of farms. Farmers indicated that this uncertainty made it difficult for them to invest in new houses for workers as they could not be certain how much longer they would be the owners of the farms.

Some farmers in Omaheke only started improving workers' housing conditions after pressure from political leaders in the region.

Recommendations:

- The requirements for housing standards in the minimum wage agreement should be renegotiated to consider the three different farmer categories described above.
- Housing requirements should be clearly outlined, stipulating the number of bedrooms, cooking and eating facilities, running water and sanitary facilities.
- Government needs to implement the recommendation of the "Kameeta Commission" to increase the tax incentives to farmers in respect of providing better housing for workers.
- Trade unions and political leaders should continue to engage farmers with regard to the need of providing workers with better housing.

- Government should clarify its policy on land expropriation through clear guidelines and criteria that will be applied. This might help in allaying farmers' uncertainties and make it easier to enforce the stipulations on housing conditions for farm workers.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

On white-owned commercial farms relations between workers and owners are generally poor, emanating both from the huge gap in living standards and the treatment of workers by owners. A large number of workers complained about mal-treatment by owners, which ranged from emotional to physical abuse. Workers were treated without respect and the worker-employer relationship was generally characterised by a “master and servant” mentality.

Few exceptions were found where, despite the gap in living standards, workers expressed satisfaction with the treatment by their employer and generally had a sense of ownership of the farm.

Owners complained mostly about workers being absent without leave and workers being under the influence of alcohol.

On black-owned commercial farms and communal farms workers were generally treated as part of the larger extended family. This is evidenced by the fact that they often eat from the same pot and at times were left alone to take care of the farm/homestead while owners worked in urban areas. Generally workers felt a sense of belonging and ownership of the farm. However, many of them complained about late payment or non-payment of wages.

Nationally more than a third of all workers knew about trade unions. But knowledge of trade unions varied across farming categories and regions. More workers on commercial farms knew about trade unions than those on communal farms. The majority of workers in Khomas knew about trade unions while those in more remote regions knew less about trade unions. In Omaheke, for instance, regional councilors and the Ministry of Labour dealt with labour relations on the farms, rather than a trade union.

More workers on white-owned commercial farms (21%) reported visits by trade unions than those on black-owned farms (6.5%). On the other hand, none of the workers on communal farms reported any visits by trade unions.

While more than half of all workers indicated that unions were allowed on their farms, 10% revealed that they were discouraged by their employers from joining unions.

About a third of all workers indicated either that the union helped when they had trouble with the employer or that the union negotiated with the employer on their behalf. Another 10.7% mentioned that the union provided advice on work-related matters.

Recommendations:

- NAFWU needs to step up its recruitment activities, especially on communal farms.
- Trade unions should be granted the right of access to an employee's workplace to recruit new or consult with existing members.
- Government, through the Ministry of Labour should consider making available an annual grant to registered trade unions operating in the farming sector to strengthen their organisational capacity to protect employee's rights.

Social Security

Less than half of our respondents (40%) were registered as members of the social security scheme. Only 8% those registered with social security had ever claimed benefits from the scheme.

There were widespread complaints from farm owners about long delays regarding their registration applications and social security cards for their workers.

Recommendations:

- Representatives of the Social Security Commission should travel to remote areas to register workers and to conduct inspections to detect non-registration.
- Workers should be allowed to register with the SSC via local authorities, municipalities or any other public office to speed up the registration process.
- A faster and more effective way needs to be found to distribute Social Security registration cards.
- The SSC needs to implement strict measures to implement the provisions of the Social Security Act, and impose stiff penalties in the event of its contravention

Access to Health Facilities

The majority of our workers (86%) indicated that they had to go to state hospitals or clinics for medical treatment while about 10% indicated that they received treatment at private medical centers. About 41% of all farm workers indicated that they were taken by the farm owner to medical centres, while 25,5% had to rely on hitchhiking. Yet a significant portion (21%) indicated that they had to walk to medical centers.

Almost half of all farm workers revealed that it takes them longer than 30 minutes to get to a place of treatment. Many farm workers were not allowed to seek medical treatment if their complaints were regarded as "minor" by the farm owners. This led to abuse as it was entirely left up to the discretion of farm owners to determine which medical condition constitutes a "minor" condition.

Recommendations:

- Government and NGOs should build more clinics in settlements close to farms. Farmers expressed an urgent need for a clinic in the Hochfeld area.
- Farmers should be required to provide transport for workers to medical centers, with consideration given to a possible sharing of transport costs.

HIV/AIDS

Almost all farm workers (95%) knew what HIV/AIDS is. Fifteen percent of them indicated that HIV/AIDS was a problem on the farm where they worked. However, only 5% knew somebody who was HIV-positive. The ratio was higher on communal farms.

Most workers (60%) cited the radio as their main source of information on HIV/Aids. Other sources of information were television (10%), the farm owners (7%) newspapers (6,4%), colleagues (5%) and medical centers (4,6%). Only a handful of workers (1,1%) indicated that HIV/AIDS campaigns such as the Total Control Epidemic campaign has reached them.

Very few HIV-AIDS awareness or mitigation programmes were undertaken on farms. Farm owners rarely had conversations with their workers on the subject of HIV-AIDS. Accessibility of condoms (being one of the few prevention tools) is a major cause of concern on farms.

Recommendations:

- It could be that farm workers on commercial farms (because of the isolated nature of their environments) have been spared from the large scale spread of HIV. This needs to be considered as a possible “window of opportunity” to launch aggressive mitigation programs and activities on these farms. Such programs should include an effective way of distributing condoms on farms.

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