

Stygende tabak-sluikhandel kos SA miljarde

Agri SA is bekommerd oor die toename in onwettige tabakhandel, soos getoon deur die onlangse opvolg-*Ipsos*-kleinhandeloudit. Die oudit het gewys dat belastingontduiking tot so 'n mate toegeneem het dat byna **1 uit elke vier** sigarette se aksynsbelasting nie verklaar word nie.

In die drie maande sedert die eerste oudit het tabakprodukte, wat onder die minimum belasting betaalbaar verkoop is, van 33,1% in Junie tot 41,8% in die informele kleinhandel sektor gestyg. Dit beteken dat die Suid-Afrikaanse Inkomstediens nou minstens **R8 miljard** per jaar verloor; 'n toename van die R7 miljard wat in die vorige oudit van die *Ipsos*-studie aangemeld is.

"Dié sluikhandel is 'n direkte bedreiging vir meer as 350 plaaslike tabakplase," sê Pietman Roos, Agri SA Hoof van Korporatiewe Sake en Kommunikasie. "Hoewel die onwettige handel van ingevoerde tabakblare gebruik maak, veroorsaak dit indirek 'n afname in die vraag na tabakblare van plaaslike produsente vir die wettige mark."

Tabakplase in Suid-Afrika - waarvan 155 in besit van swart kleinboere is - stel 1 000 mense in diens en ondersteun 30 000 afhanklikes in die landelike gebiede van Limpopo, Noordwes, Mpumalanga en die Oos-Kaap. Dié produsente is ten volle afhanklik van die wettige tabakbedryf in Suid-Afrika om hul produkte te koop.

"Dié nuwe bewyse van die toename in sluikhandel is hoogs kommerwekkend en regverdig 'n onmiddellike aksie van die regering," sê Roos. "Die oplossing vir die sluikhandel is eenvoudig; onwettige sigaretfabrieke moet gestuit word en daar moet onmiddellik voltydse wetstoepassingsamptenare na die fabrieke gestuur word."

Agri SA sal voortgaan om die wettige tabak industrie, as 'n belangrike werkskepper in verskeie streke van Suid-Afrika, teen hierdie bedreiging te ondersteun. Agri SA vra dat die regering dringend met hierdie aangeleentheid handel, aangesien die lewensbestaan van duisende Suid-Afrikaanse produsente in gevaar is.

Navrae:

Pietman Roos

Agri SA Hoof van Korporatiewe Sake en Kommunikasie

(S) 066 201 8326



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Soaring illicit tobacco trade costs SA billions

Agri SA is concerned by the intensification of illicit tobacco trade as shown by the follow-up *Ipsos* retail audit. The tax evasion has escalated to such an extent that excise duty on nearly **1 in four** cigarettes are not declared.

In the three months since the first audit, tobacco products below the minimum tax due have soared from 33.1% in June to 41.8% in the informal retail sector. This means that South African Revenue Service is now losing at least **R8 billion** annually; up from R7 billion reported in the previous wave of the *Ipsos* study.

“The illicit cigarette trade is a direct threat to the more than 350 local tobacco farms,” said Pietman Roos, Agri SA Head of Corporate Affairs and Communication. **“Even though the illicit trade makes use of imported tobacco leaf, it indirectly causes a decrease in demand for tobacco leaf from local producers for the legal market.”**

Tobacco farms in South Africa – of which 155 are black-owned small-holder farms - employ 1 000 people and support 30 000 dependents in deep rural areas, in Limpopo, North West, Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape. These producers are fully dependent on the legal tobacco industry in South Africa to purchase their produce.

“This new evidence of the intensification is incredibly worrying and warrants an immediate government response,” said Roos. **“The solution to illicit cigarette trade is simple; there has to be a clamp-down on illegal cigarette factories by immediately despatching full time enforcement agents to these sites.”**

Agri SA will continue to support the legal tobacco industry, as a major job creator in several regions of South Africa, against this threat. Agri SA asks that government deals urgently with this matter as thousands of South African livelihoods are at risk.

Enquiries:

Pietman Roos

Agri SA Head of Corporate Affairs and Communication

(C) 066 201 8326