



Media Release

For Immediate Release

To: All Media

Date: 24 June 2024

Attention: News Editors / Community Radio Stations/ Agricultural writers

ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH LAND AND ILLEGAL DEFORESTATION OF NATURAL FORESTS

The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) is deeply concerned about the illegal occupation of its land and the illegal deforestation of natural forests in some parts of the country including in Umthiza Research Farm, East London and in Irene, Pretoria. These unlawful activities pose a serious threat to the ARC's mandate of conducting research and innovation for the benefit of the agricultural sector and the nation at large.

The ARC owns and manages several farms and research stations across the country, where it conducts various experiments and trials on crops, livestock, agro-processing and other aspects of agriculture. These sites are valuable assets that contribute to the generation of scientific knowledge and solutions for the challenges facing the agriculture sector, such as climate change, food security and biosecurity etc.

Dishonest and corrupt persons are illegally selling off stands to members of the public in Umthiza Research Farm, East London and in Irene, Pretoria. Members of the public are warned to resist the temptations to illegally occupy or invade land and any ARC property as this will only result in them losing their hard-earned money and investments during evictions.

The illegal occupation of the ARC's land not only diverts limited resources aimed at achieving the ARC's important mandate but also disrupts its research activities, jeopardises the safety and security of its staff, equipment and infrastructure. The illegal settlers often damage or destroy the ARC's property, vandalise its facilities, steal its resources and interfere with its operations. The ARC has been engaging with the relevant authorities and stakeholders to address this situation and to ensure that its land is protected and used for its intended purpose.

The illegal deforestation of protected natural forests specifically in Umthiza Research Farm, East London is another alarming issue that affects the ARC's research and the environment. Natural forests are important ecosystems that provide various ecological services, such as carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, soil erosion prevention, water purification and climate regulation. They also host a variety of flora and fauna, some of which are endangered.

The illegal deforestation of the said protected natural forests by unscrupulous individuals for illegal settlement and other uses is a serious crime that has dire consequences for the environment and the society. The ARC urges the public to respect and protect the natural forests and to report any illegal activities to the relevant authorities.

These unlawful acts delay much needed research and development that ensures support to the agricultural sector and food security in South Africa. The ARC will continue to work with the courts and law enforcement to execute eviction orders against these illegal acts.

Members of the public may also report land invasion, the illegal sale of land and corruption to 0800 000 604 or email: arc@tip-off.com.

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Notes to the Editors

About the Agricultural Research Council

The Agricultural Research Council is a premier science institution that conducts research with partners, develops human capital and fosters innovation in support of the agricultural sector. The ARC provides diagnostic, laboratory, analytical, agricultural engineering services, post-harvest technology development, agrochemical evaluation, consultation and advisory services, food processing technology services as well as various surveys and training interventions. For more information visit the ARC website at: www.arc.agric.za

