

# Press Release

# Surplus People Project

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for immediate release

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## Rural women gear up for parliament picket tomorrow

**"Second day of conference to focus on movement building and social cost of economic crisis on rural woman"**

The "From poverty to food sovereignty" conference organised by the Surplus People Project is entering its second day at the Ocean View Hotel in Strand where eighty rural women are preparing themselves for a picket at parliament tomorrow.

These farm workers and small scale farmers will be protesting against legislative ignorance to their plight, amendments to the current water laws, the lack of environmental impact assessments on land earmarked for farming and an overhaul of the black economic empowerment model on farms.

These issues came out during workshops yesterday. Delegates blamed the government's neo-liberal economic policies for the massive GM crop failure and once again committed themselves to agro-ecological farming as an alternative. The reduction of their carbon footprint also took centre stage as they called for alternative farming implements which are both kind to the environment and user-friendly to women farmers.

In preparation for the protest at parliament tomorrow, Wendy Pekeur, general secretary of Sikhule Sonke, will be delivering an input on movement building and the role of women in the process. Koni Benson, a Canadian feminist involved with the International Labour Information Group (ILRIG) will facilitate a session on "Women and Resistance: Feminism in History" whilst the Right to Agrarian Reform for Food Sovereignty Campaign convenor, Davine Witbooi, will be sharing the challenges facing that movement.

According to SPP Director, Herschelle Milford, the conference is but the beginning of a concerted process to put the issues of rural women on the national agenda. "Delegates, who are representing farming communities in the Northern, Western, Southern and Eastern Cape, will also be drawing up an action plan for engaging the various role-players in the land and agricultural sector.

In SPP, we have identified rural women participation as critical for the well-being of the South African democracy. We have to take back the means of production and ensure that rural women in their various organisations have equal access to land and other resources. " she says.

The picket at parliament is to start at 11h00 on Thursday, 26 March 2009 with various land rights organisations set to support the protest action.

***Please contact Herschelle Milford on 083 748 1009 for more information.***