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Ongombo resettlement falters

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THE Namibia Farmworkers' Union has told former farmworkers resettled at Ongombo West, a farm 30 km northeast of Windhoek, to start looking for jobs or to initiate projects to help themselves instead of waiting for Government handouts.

Nafwu Secretary General Alfred Angula also told the relatives of the seven former farmworkers to get off the land because it cannot accommodate all of them.

Ongombo West was expropriated by Government a year ago and seven former farmworkers, who started a dispute with the owners that led to the expropriation, were resettled on it together with three other families.

However, when a Nafwu delegation visited the farm on Saturday, close to 50 adults had moved into a 1 200-hectare camp with their livestock.

The other three families occupy the remainder of the 4 006-hectare farm.

"Firstly, the camp is too small to accommodate all of you.

Keep your animals at a reasonable level and start identifying a project such as a poultry project that can sustain you.

Government cannot build houses or feed you all the time," Angula told the community who met with him under a tree.

He was responding to an appeal by one of the former workers, Immanuel //Hoebeb, who requested that the union facilitate Government assistance for them.

//Hoebeb said the camp was too small, the water pump was broken, they wanted a Government loan to buy livestock and, perhaps, also relief food.

//Hoebeb, along with Elias //Hoebeb, a father of nine who has worked on the farm for the last 21 years, Cornelia Rooinasie, Erik !Ganeb, Wilfred Sethie //Hoebeb, Ben !Ganeb were dismissed by former owner Hilde Wiese after a labour dispute.

The dispute started with a dead goose, developed into a labour

dispute and ended with the expropriation of a family farm.

Rooinasie killed the goose "by accident".

The owners demanded that she pay compensation.

Then, Heinz Wiese, the husband of owner Hilde, shot and killed a goat belonging to an employee, thinking it was in a restricted area.

The dispute snowballed and became political.

Government moved in and expropriated Wiese's farm in September last year and paid her N\$3,7 million - more than N\$5 million short of what she had requested.

When The Namibian visited the farm, the flower production had totally ground to a halt.

Just before the farm was expropriated, the Wieses had intended to expand their flower production into a N\$10-million business, employ around 40 more people, build a kindergarten and more houses.