



CITRUSDAL

ADVICE OFFICE

Citrusdal is situated at the base of the Cederberg mountains in the Olifants River Valley about 177 km north of Cape Town. Named after the abundance of citrus fruit farms in the valley, Citrusdal was established in 1916 by the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk.¹

The total population recorded in the 2011 census was 7,177 people, 15.6% of whom identified as Black, 69% as Coloured and 14.5% as White. Afrikaans is the predominant language spoken in the area at 87.5% followed by isiXhosa at 5.9%.²

The main focus of the Citrusdal Advice Office is to provide paralegal services. The LDA has been very successful in assisting their clients with illegal and fraudulent deductions by unscrupulous companies and has successfully represented clients at the CCMA.³ It has helped clients to receive outstanding COIDA and UIF pay-outs.



Petrus Brink, former coordinator Citrusdal Advice Office and Colleen Alexander-Julies from SCAT.



Maria Fortuin, previous Board member Citrusdal Advice Office.



Colleen Alexander-Julies, Petrus Brink and Freddie Koopman.

1. Raper, P. (1987). Dictionary of Southern African Place Names (Vol. 46). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10228195.2015.1113434>
2. Frith, A. (2019) Census 2011: Main Place: Citrusdal. Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://census2011.adrianfrith.com/place/161007>
3. The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) is a dispute resolution body established in terms of the Labour Relations Act, 66 of 1995

FAST FACTS

NAME: Citrusdal Advice Office

LED BY: Frederick Koopman

MAIN CHALLENGES FACED BY THE COMMUNITY: farm evictions, unfair labour practices

MAIN ACTIVITIES: Paralegal support; labour dispute resolution

ADDRESS: 89 Voortrekker Rd, Citrusdal

CONTACT: Phone: 022 3000 141, Cell: 071 413 3444

Email: adviceoffice.citrusdal@gmail.com

LAND RIGHTS SHOULD INCLUDE AN END TO EVICTIONS

FREDDIE KOOPMAN WAS EXPOSED TO FARMWORKERS BEING EVICTED FROM THEIR HOMES ON FARMS FROM AN EARLY AGE. HE WRITES THAT THE CURRENT LAWS GOVERNING EVICTIONS NEED TO CHANGE TO ENSURE FARM INHABITANTS HAVE MORE SECURITY OF TENURE.

I was born in a beautiful village called Citrusdal which is in a valley surrounded by the Swartberg and Cederberg mountains.

During winter you will find the sweetest oranges here and nowhere else in the world. In spring, our town is covered by a blanket of flowers.

I grew up on a farm and was exposed to the injustices experienced by farm workers at an early age. Commercial farmers dismissed farm workers left and right. Farm workers earn a wage of less than R50.00. They live in poverty and often go to bed without food and go to work on an empty stomach. Farm workers are regularly removed from farms. People are dropped off on the side of the road, their furniture is thrown off the vehicles and everything is lost in the process. To this day, farmworkers remain the most marginalised group in our society. There are about 20 000 farm workers who are vulnerable to farm evictions. This phenomenon is evident on every media stream. As a result of evictions, we see people who sit on the side of the road without food and the pain is clearly written on their faces. Children hiccup as they cry. Rain worsens the circumstances because everything is wet and the people have no shelter.

My own experience as a child motivates me to empower farm workers and improve their circumstances. I received a postgraduate qualification, B.Comm (Law), and later joined the Advice Office. Recently we assisted a family who was dropped on the side of the road in the middle of the night by a farmer. In the morning, some passersby contacted us about their plight. We fetched the family with all their furniture and arranged for them to stay at the community hall. We also saw that they had food. We engaged with the farmer and explained the laws of the Extension of Security of Tenure Act 62 of 1997 ("ESTA"), and he eventually agreed to fetch the family and return them to the farm.

We have been working with Tshintsha Amakhaya to work out strategies to stop farmworker evictions. I have also held several workshops explaining ESTA in my community. We also explain ESTA to individuals who walk into our office. Even though it regulates eviction, it does not protect our people as it does not prevent evictions from happening. For this reason, I believe it must be expunged.

When he was Deputy President, President Cyril Ramaphosa called a moratorium on farm evictions in 2014. Since his inauguration as President we have engaged in conversation with him. The President committed himself to dealing with the issue himself. To date, nothing has happened to improve the situation. The purpose of the moratorium is to ensure that farm inhabitants are not evicted. ESTA must first be rewritten to make sure that farm inhabitants have a better outcome. Their living situation should have more certainty. Farm inhabitants need the opportunity to provide their input into changing the law. They need to have a say as they are the people most affected by eviction laws. This is the reality that I want to change.



ACCESS TO JUSTICE



FREDDIE KOOPMAN