

## Fracking ruling a ‘massive victory’ for farmers

A JUDGMENT handed down in the Western Cape High Court on Wednesday has ruled against the South African Agency for Promotion of Petroleum and Exploitation (Pasa), the Minister of Mineral Resources and Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South Africa (Pty) Ltd on an application for exploration rights on more than 800 000ha in KwaZulu-Natal.

Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South Africa has also applied to explore for shale gas near Matatiele.

Hailing the ruling as a “massive victory” for the local farmers who took legal action against the application for exploration, KwaZulu-Natal Agricultural Union (Kwanalu) CEO Sandy La Marque said: “The court decision is a huge relief for farmers not only in the northern parts of KZN, but the entire province.

“We commend those farmers involved for their hard work and determination in achieving this result,” said La Marque.

Rhino Oil and Gas submitted their Notice of Application for exploration in two areas, one in the KZN Midlands, the other in northern KZN, in late 2015 and early 2016 respectively. Both applications covered a total area of more than 1 600 000ha and in excess of

15 000 farms.

Kwanalu was quick to take a proactive stance against exploration and potential fracking, raising the alert to its members and the KZN public in 2010 and again in 2015 stressing the need to take action by participating in the processes as determined.

“When Rhino Oil and Gas first submitted their Notice of Application for exploration in KZN, Kwanalu expressed its concerns about the business and environmental impact and the potential health implications associated with the extraction process known as fracking,” explained La Marque.

Commenting on the court ruling, Rob Hoatson, the farmer behind the legal action, said: “We are satisfied with the judgment and will abide by the court ruling.”

Urging everyone to look at the bigger picture, La Marque said gas and mineral exploration could come at a huge cost to the environment, with the potential to contaminate the already scarce water resources, as well as being associated with serious health problems and threatening to destroy livelihoods and businesses which could lead to job losses and economic instability.

- Supplied.



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