

## Agricultural union hails fracking ‘ruling victory’

**Bernadette Wolhuter**

THE KwaZulu-Natal agricultural union (Kwanalu) has welcomed a second High Court ruling against Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration as “another fracking ruling victory”.

The Pretoria High Court last week granted Wigol Trading interim relief, interdicting the minister of mineral resources from allowing Rhino to forge ahead with its application to search for oil and gas in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands.

The minister was interdicted from considering an environmental impact report and an environmental management programme submitted by Rhino, issuing the company with an environmental authorisation and/or granting Rhino an exploration right.

This comes in the wake of a Western Cape High Court ruling earlier this month setting aside a decision taken to accept Rhino’s application to search for oil and gas in northern KZN.

In that ruling, Judge Daniel Dlodlo said proper procedures had been flouted in how the South African Agency for

Promotion of Petroleum and Exploitation had accepted an application for an exploration right made by Rhino.

Exploration can lead to hydraulic fracturing (fracking), which has faced severe resistance from SA communities, particularly in the Karoo region.

“While this is an interim interdict which will only be made final once the merits of the application are argued, it remains another victory for our farmers,” Kwanalu chief executive Sandy La Marque said yesterday.

“We know there is still a long road ahead in dealing with the matter but we are elated with both rulings.

“The impact and outcomes of gas and mineral exploration will have much larger and longer-lasting consequences – not only for the agricultural sector but all those living in our province”.

She said the “threat” of mineral and gas exploration first became a reality for KZN farmers in late 2015, when Rhino submitted a Notice of Application for exploration in the Midlands.