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**ROLE PLAYERS MUST JOIN FORCES TO ERADICATE “TOT” SYSTEM, URGES SOUTH AFRICAN WINE AND BRANDY COMPANY**

In addition to the various actions the South African wine industry has taken in the past to curb alcohol abuse, a combined effort by the industry, organised agriculture and non-governmental organizations is needed to rid the country of the so-called “tot” system, where farm workers receive part of their wages in the form of liquor. Dr Johan van Rooyen, chief executive of the South African Wine and Brandy Company (SAWB), says his organisation endorses and will sustain all efforts to stamp out illegal practices and transgressions in this regard. “We support all actions to rid our industry of this amoral custom. Apart from causing socio-economic problems in rural communities, it taints the image of the South African wine and agricultural industries,” says Dr Van Rooyen.

“It is also unacceptable that the wine industry should, by implication, be made to stand in the dock, while these violators operate in isolation and definitely do not represent the general situation on wine farms. I also want to reiterate that the practice of remunerating someone in liquor, insofar it still occurs, is not limited to wine farms. Therefore it remains unfair to taint the entire South African wine industry with the “tot” system.

Dr Van Rooyen’s comments on possible remnants of the system followed numerous media reports last week that producers were still supplying wine to their workers in lieu of monetary payment.

He points out that the SAWB, which represents all sectors of the wine industry – including labour, producers, cellars and trade – is geared to prevail upon all these role players to tackle the

problem in unison. “It is important to note that the problem is of a socio-economic nature and that it requires a united approach. A simple, singular solution does not exist.”

Because of the severity of the problem and his mandate to address issues pertaining to the wine industry on the economic, labour and social fronts, the SAWB commits itself to support the following:

- The mobilisation of a group representing unions and labour, to act as a high-level deliberator on all issues regarding the wine industry, via the Labour Chamber of the SAWB;
- Bringing into being a network that will act as a link for all groups involved with social issues in the wine industry, to determine the scope of the problem;
- Setting up an umbrella strategy for social upliftment and responsible wine consumption by rural communities.

“The fact that the ‘tot’ system has been laid in front of the door of the local wine- and agricultural industry for so many decades, proves that there is no instant or unilateral solution. The issue must be tackled in an integrated and co-ordinated manner,” says Dr Van Rooyen.

“The wine industry will therefore join hands with other groups such as the Black Association of the Wine and Spirits Industry (BAWSI), the coalition of rural non-governmental organisations (RUDNET) and Dopstop to attend to the problem in an integrated fashion, as part of the Wine Industry Development Plan to which the SAWB has committed itself and which is endorsed by Government.

“Together with this, the SAWB will draw up a code of honour that will be monitored by the SAWB and other stakeholders. This code of honour will, amongst other things, commit the wine industry to quality control, environment-friendly and also other ethical practices, for which the ‘tot’ system definitely does not qualify.”

