

**PRESS STATEMENT BY ANDREW RUSSELL  
CHAIRMAN OF THE SA CANEGROWERS ASSOCIATION**

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***KZN unrest: SA Canegrowers calls on government to declare a state of emergency***

The South African Canegrowers Association strongly condemns the criminality that has swept areas in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. With the violence and destruction escalating in cane growing areas, we call on government to declare a state of emergency and to immediately deploy more South African Defence Force troops to bring law and order in hotspot areas.

KwaZulu-Natal is not only ground zero for the unrest, but also the heart of South Africa's sugar industry. Gauteng has also been hit hard, with the destruction now extending to Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape. The lawlessness evident throughout the country has caused enormous harm to the national economy. That this is taking place in the middle of the harvesting season has caused irrecoverable losses to cane growers, workers, and the one million livelihoods that depend on the sugar industry.

The running total of the damage to South African cane growers to date stands at 353,000 tons of sugarcane that have been lost to arson. At R600 per ton, this represents a revenue loss of more than R211 million.

Millers have been equally devastated, which has had a knock-on impact on the entire industry. All sugar mills in KwaZulu-Natal have been forced to cease operations as they cannot receive cane or distribute sugar and molasses owing to disruptions to transport routes and blockades at these mills. Workers have also been threatened, further prompting mills to shut down in order to protect their staff.

The damage already sustained will cripple the industry long after the unrest has been quelled, resulting in job losses in rural areas where unemployment is rife. Without immediate and drastic measures to restore the rule of law, the ongoing damage to critical infrastructure may soon become irreparable.

SA Canegrowers is communicating and cooperating with government as well as community and industry organisations to prevent and mitigate as much of the damage as possible. Our priority at this time remains the protection of lives.

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