

## **Possible solutions to the Agri-Tri-Dilemma: Land Ownership; Economic Inclusion; Knowledge Transfer**

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In a country divided by racism, economic exclusion, and social intolerance, we need to construct more trusted social bridges. An essential ingredient to healthy families, unified communities, national cohesion, and sustainable businesses are reciprocal respectful relationships. Relationships, unfortunately, are also one of the first casualties when everyone is fighting for personal survival. Although crime, corruption, and unethical practise are immensely painful, it is also an equaliser. Broken trust does not only occur in cross-cultural relationships, but it also happens between neighbours, life-long partners, and even within one's family.

The high instances of crime and farm attacks are forcing us to re-evaluate our responsibility to reach out to our neighbours, and people who are living nearby. The crime and struggling economy is forcing us out of the comfortable mono-cultures of friends-on-Facebook type connections into getting to know and engage with the people living next door. The only way to survive economic and social degradation is when people begin to take hands, earn one another's trust, and build collective good-will – i.e. the social cohesion sought as an aim in the NDP.

The Bridgebuilding summit facilitated by Berné Leuvenink from Beulah Africa<sup>1</sup> creates a safe platform for bridge-builders & nation-builders to meet and engage, finding new solutions together, and strengthen their resolve. Dr Ruben Richards<sup>2</sup> opened the gathering by reminding us of the cost of mercy, by modernising the good Samaritan story. We all know what this passage means, and its personal challenge to help the broken, hurt, and disenfranchised: Now go and do it!

Hennie Viljoen, the founder of Amos Agrimin<sup>3</sup>, reiterated the importance of Biblical Economic principals like dual ownership where God owns the land; stewardship of the land and towards workers; sharing where everyone gives; a good work ethic; and fencing one's needs and wants.

Since the inception of the 1st bridge-building Summit, we purposed ourselves to find a man of peace in every location, a father or Elder-type leader who is already uniting and reconciling people together. It was hence my privilege to present seven different Land Reform Practises and models already successfully implemented, and seven initiatives focussed on social-development.<sup>4</sup> These stories are inspiring! During the day as we listened to some of the stories of hope, it brought tears to many eyes. Although the financial costs are high, and solutions complicated to implement; the reward of lives impacted is unmeasurable. Land-reform can only work if it is in a person's heart to make it work.

It is said: Give a man a fish, and you fed him for a day, teach a man how to fish, and you fed him for a lifetime. Teaching a man to fish is not easy. One needs all kinds of tools, time, and resources. Maybe teaching why a man should fish is more natural — helping people find their 'why' is fundamental to any empowering process. But take note! If there are no more fish in the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://beulahafrika.co.za>

<sup>2</sup> [www.rubenrichardsfoundation.org.za](http://www.rubenrichardsfoundation.org.za).

<sup>3</sup> <http://amosafrica.net>

<sup>4</sup> <https://landsummit.co.za/14-models-2019/>

pond, the whole exercise is useless. We thus ventured into the 1<sup>st</sup> (First) aspect of the tri - dilemma - **economic inclusion and market access**.

Many small farmers lost their farms because they could no longer compete due to rising input costs and unstable and low prices from off-takers and stricter food-security measures. Other factors are persisting droughts and unpredictable weather conditions. The solutions that came from experts in the Retail Chain, like Lance van der Spuy (Shoprite), Pieter Wasserfall (Six33), Aj Munian (AgriSolutions), Michael Brinkhuis (Hortfin): We were reminded that for example, Shoprite Checkers engage with 1 114 agricultural producers nationwide for Fresh Products. Surely retailers would want to shorten this list. Differentiation, quality, consistency, scalability, food safety, traceability, and the social narrative make for desired sellable products. Farmers are advised to focus on value-addition, innovation to shorten the value chain<sup>5</sup>, and brand cooperatives or collectives. The retail sector does not know colour or race preferences, and cannot afford to buy inferior products, that would not sell.

The **land ownership** question is the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Second) hugely problematic and complicated challenge of the tri-dilemma. Initiatives like (Witzenburg?) PALS, however, are making promising progress. Through agribusiness VKB, Free State Agriculture and Mpumalanga Agri are requesting them to present their successfully implemented framework. With the solution's focussed Landbou Weekblad GrondBeraad<sup>6</sup> coming up in November, we hope that more and more farmers will begin to explore these avenues towards facilitated land ownership transfer and economic inclusion. Dr Wallace Mgoqi former chief lands claim commissioner, made an appeal on all the stakeholders to understand the depth of the pain people have regarding land distribution, but also to be positive to engage with Government to offer solutions.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> (third) aspect of the Tri-dilemma we all face in Agriculture is **knowledge transfer**: We believe the Future farmers foundation<sup>7</sup> are leading in this field, allowing Agricultural students to do their internship overseas for one year, and then get back to either continue a local internship or enter work in the sector easier with real farm experience, locally and international. We see this program as the fastest way to peacefully and productively change the ageing white face of agriculture in SA. Most farmworkers are poorly educated, and lack capacity to enter into positions requiring technological, mathematical, planning, managerial skills. In many cases, both the farmer and worker's children do not want to remain and work the farm, thus, opening up opportunities for highly motivated and hard-working students. Addressing farm workers developmental and social needs is however also an issue where farmers can play a big role and where corporate social and AgriBEE social development funding should be increasingly channeled.

It is also vitally important that Agri colleges forge stronger alliances with the private and corporate sector in this regard. The underlying problem is that most of these students have no

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.trt.co.za> The Rooibos TradePost (TRT) is an online platform that allows farmers or service providers to list their goods and services, and buyers to bid on these offerings. <http://abalobi.info> Co-designed and fisher-driven ICTs to empower small-scale fisheries 'from hook to cook'

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.netwerk24.com/Landbou/tags/Topics/pals-grondsposium>

<sup>7</sup> <http://futurefarmersfoundation.com>

proper practical experience. Agriculture requires hands-on experience, hence the need for agricultural technical schools opportunities for internships providing skills and knowledge.

## The way forward:

We want to see agricultural-, innovation-, logistical-, cooperative-, collectives-, Ilima- hubs from private, public, people partnerships at the most local level in communities, towns and even cities. The church could be leading these initiatives as the most appropriate bridge-builder and trusted leaders to bring all stakeholders together who share the same values.

We are now focussing on starting three new Think-tanks that can begin to work towards engaging with appropriate parties, seeking practical solutions:

**Skills development and Knowledge Transfer:** There is a growing need amongst farmers to understand and apply the skills development process better, whether that is in a strictly mentorship role or training and upliftment through any other means. We strongly appeal to farmers to make use of the Future Farmers Initiative to ensure that the right student is introduced to the right farmer. If we can place 100 more students per year, think of the impact over five years. The Agriculture sector is a relational sector, and thus needs face to face, contact engagements to stimulate integration. This Thinktank will be tasked, to facilitate and initiate such bridgebuilding initiatives throughout the sector.

**Economic Inclusion:** The ReStory<sup>8</sup> (Heal the land – heal the people) initiative is working to fight social and soil degradation under the leadership of Prof. James Blignaut. They are busy creating a capital fund, as well as a buyer/seller e-platform to shorten the value chain. Individual /family/commodity driven enterprises of scale do exist like: Gideon Milling<sup>9</sup>, Mouton Citrus<sup>10</sup> and Six33<sup>11</sup> providing a profitable, sustainable business model, that unlocks social investment.

**Land Ownership:** Programs like Witzenberg PALS (Partners in Agri Land Solutions)<sup>12</sup> can significantly resolve the ownership question, yet owning land and not having access to a profitable market is self-defeating. We propose that bridge-builders evaluate the possibility of penetrating the local informal market. With the help of the church, we should be able to build secure distribution networks. Training initiatives like work4aliving, GF4GF<sup>13</sup>, FFF<sup>14</sup>, and Farming God's way<sup>15</sup>, and even individual farmer training offered by JB vd Berg of berg Foods at their Baruch Training Centre<sup>16</sup> near Bothaville, is needed to make that production is on an

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<sup>8</sup> <http://restory.co.za>

<sup>9</sup> <http://gideonmilling.co.za>

<sup>10</sup> <http://moutoncitrus.co.za>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.six33.co.za>

<sup>12</sup> <https://wpals.co.za>

<sup>13</sup> <http://gf4gfcentres.co.za>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.foundationsforfarming.co.za>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.farming-gods-way.org>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Bergfoods/>

acceptable standard. AMCUP<sup>17</sup> has distributed 14000 small 9x3m greenhouse net structures, to help small farmers, produce enough food for 50 families all year round.

Bridges are built from a point of contact. So, go and make contact. Let's get out of the compartmental silos of operation and existence and begin to form Citizen Assemblies where all the members of a community can take hands, and work towards practical, implementable solutions on the ground level.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.amcup.co.za/about.html>