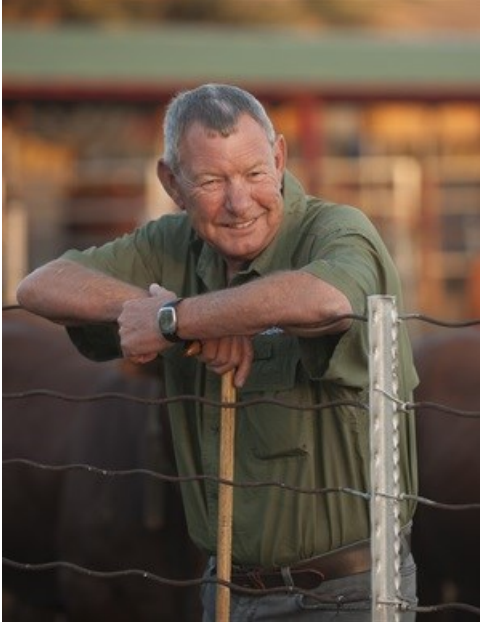


# Farmers encouraged to have a vision for their business

More than 150 farmers and members of the general public attended the Farmers' Day recently held by the Sernick Group on its Liebenbergstroom Farm just outside of Edenville in the Free State. According to one of the speakers, Nick Serfontein, founder and chairman of the Sernick Group, the event was motivated by the political and economic uncertainty in South Africa caused by recent cabinet shuffles and rating downgrades.



Nick Serfontein

The event also included commentary by Dr Theo Venter, a political and policy analyst at the North-West University's School of Business and Governance, Prof Johan Willemse from the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of the Free State, and Hennie Snyman from Paradigm Landboukundige Adviseurs.

## What farmers can expect during these uncertain times

Theo Venter, a frequent commentator in the political arena, delivered a presentation on what the country can possibly expect during these uncertain times. Despite both rating agencies, Fitch and Standard & Poor's, downgrading South Africa's credit rating to junk status, Venter is convinced that our robust, but stable political system will keep the situation intact in the long term in spite of what many fear mongers might say in the news or on social media.

"We have both an independent judiciary system and media outlets which is probably two of our strongest assets at the moment and which we should not take for granted. We should keep in mind that we're in the midst of a typical political cycle of a developing country and negative aspects such corruption, crime, a slow economy, unemployment and then, of course, an inefficient government are inevitable."

Venter finished his presentation saying that we can expect even more political noise in the coming months especially within the ruling party in addition to more economical unrest. Regardless of what happens Venter's underlying message to farmers was to not be deterred by whatever may happen and always keep in mind that these things are cyclical. Farmers should stay unwavering in their efforts to maintain a stable agricultural position.

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In turn, Willemse, a well-known analyst and speaker within the agricultural community furthered the positive message during the day. "If farmers want to see this uncertain time through they have to keep their eyes on their plan, whether it be a three or a five-year plan. Those who choose to focus on the ever-changing politics and economy will lose sight of what is important and they will be the ones who will be forced to sell their land," warned Willemse.

His overall message spoke of optimism while he encourages farmers to have a vision for their business: "If we are being honest our farmers are doing well, but if they want to keep it up they need to understand that like politics and the economy, agriculture growth also runs in cycles. Farmers should find out where in that cycle they find themselves and make smart decisions based on the three or five-year plan they have set up. Stay patient and calm and you will see it through."

## Establish more precise farming methods

Finally, Serfontein ended the day's proceedings encouraging farmers to establish more precise farming methods: "If you want to be a success in today's modern times you will need to be more precise with regards to how you go about farming."

If you're not measuring then you can't control, it's as simple as that. But at the end of the day, you must enjoy it, if you don't then there's no point in doing it. We farm because we love it."

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