

When the going gets tough, farmers are on familiar territory

By [Dr Kobus Laubscher](#)

9 Apr 2020

South African farmers are old hands at adapting to uncertain and daunting circumstances, and our local agricultural industry has proved to be most enterprising in acclimatising to challenges as they arise. The Covid-19 outbreak should be regarded as an urgent call for employers to take proactive care of agricultural workers, who are integral to our nation's food production.



Image source: Gallo/Getty

In this country we are most fortunate to have such resourceful and hardy individuals, farming communities and companies working to ensure the security of South Africa's food supply during the current national disaster and beyond. Providing your essential services during the Covid-19 lockdown is a great service to our country.

Our farms, as microcosms of society, will be stirred by the winds of change brought about by Covid-19 and it is very likely that it will leave an indelible mark on the way we see and do things going forward. The industry's history is littered with disasters and 'almost disasters' that we have adapted to and that have now become part of our daily lives.



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Courage and agility needed

Rising to the challenge presented to agriculture in these uncertain times will require courage and agility. In tough times, often social cohesion can be borne out of a strong sense of shared common purpose. Times like these, either bind teams and organisations closer together – or things irreparably fall apart.

It is our duty to work together to continue to feed the nation, come what may. We need to embrace the challenges that will inevitably come our way as opportunities to not only test resilience, but to make our processes, systems, policies and people stronger and better equipped for the future.

At farm level, we should be asking ourselves, what more can be done to not only make the world more liveable in the present situation, but also to safeguard the people we rely on from various risks, which are by no means restricted to Covid-19,” Dr Laubscher points out.



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Importance of employee wellness

Covid-19 is highlighting the importance of the employer being aware of the wellbeing of everyone involved in their operations, and making provision to ensure their wellness, as this is essential for the team's collective ongoing productivity.

For too long, responsibility for healthcare has been conveniently relegated to the state and if there was no achievement, it was easy to point fingers. It's time for us to reflect on how we, as farmers or agricultural business owners, contribute to the health status of the people who work for us.

If it takes a crisis like the Coronavirus to serve as a reminder of the inherent value of the agricultural workforce, we should not miss this important lesson.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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