

Agri EC conference to address farming concerns in the province

The provincial body, Agri Eastern Cape will be hosting its 17th annual conference this week on 2 and 3 August 2018 in Jeffreys Bay, which will see Eastern Cape farmers participate in discussions centred around major issues affecting farming in the province - these topics include land expropriation, the management of water resources to ensure food security and the impact that climate change will have on coastal communities. The conference will feature speakers which include academics and industry experts.



Image via [Wikimedia Commons](#).

Keynote speaker Angelo Fick – who is the director of research at the Auwal Socio-Economic Research Institute (ASRI), is also known for his role as a senior researcher and news analyst – will launch proceedings with an in-depth look at the complexities of land issues.

In response to the land question, Fick will discuss how changes in ownership structures demand creative thinking to solve this multi-faceted problem. "There are two conflicting aspects to land expropriation. We are trapped by politicians who are working towards their own agendas which, I believe, are influenced strongly by the upcoming elections, and also by landowners who are afraid of change.

"But all the talk about who owns the land misses the point. You also have tenant farm workers whose ancestors were buried on the farm, and who will be buried there themselves. They and their children attended school on the land. There is a sense of history and they need to be afforded some kind of rights. However, while there is still a long way to go, there are already structures in place, models which are already working, under which landowners co-operate with tenants, and vice-versa, to achieve harmony."

Ensuring food security

With the prolonged drought currently in parts of the Eastern Cape, the importance of water in ensuring food security is another critical issue under the spotlight. This will be addressed by Felix Reinders, the president of the International

Reinders believes that with effective water management and good subsurface drainage, improved soil health conditions can be created for successful irrigation farming which, in turn, would assure the country of a continued supply of food.

Looking ahead, the Eastern Cape regional manager for the South African Weather Service, Hugh van Niekerk will tackle the challenges that climate change will throw at the province, not only in the immediate term but also over the next 100 years. He is expected to highlight the effect that global warming is having on rising sea levels and the impact this will have on coastal communities, as well as on people living inland.

Agri SA president Dan Kriek will also address delegates and provide an overview of the parent body's activities and interactions with government and key stakeholders at national level.

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