

Press Release

Kobus Steenekamp - agriculture in 2035 and beyond

Looking forward to 2035, Nation in Conversation asked the question on Thursday 17 May: *"How will new technology change the face of agriculture as we know it today?"*

Kobus Steenekamp, MD, Monsanto South Africa was one of the panel members during this discussion and shared with the audience his excitement on the fascinating happenings, now and in the future regarding technology. He said that Monsanto has helped farmers in South Africa for the past 50 years by bringing them the best technology available, enabling farmers to produce more in order to feed the ever growing population of the world.

Looking to the future, Kobus stated that most of the technologies that will take us to 2035 and beyond will be disruptive technologies. It will phase out certain processes and phase out certain skills. It will be imperative for both input suppliers as well as producers, to upskill.

Up to now technology trends focussed on higher productivity, pesticides and herbicides. Newer technologies include exciting developments in the gene editing field. Genome editing techniques can be used to make small changes, similar to mutations but more precisely, to disrupt, correct or modify gene activity.

The potential of genome editing is wide-ranging - it can be used to treat or eradicate diseases, develop pest resistant, high- yielding, environmentally adapted crops and livestock, nutritionally enhanced foods and much, much more.

Kobus reminded the audience that with Bayer's acquisition of Monsanto two leaders in the technology and agricultural space will become one. Together they promise to keep all farmers, commercial and small-scale on top of relevant technology developments. He believes that future technology is absolutely crucial to move both commercial and small-scale farmers into the future. He added that technology has the potential to incrementally increase the output of small-scale farmers and compared hand-weeding with mechanised methods to illustrate.

According to Kobus Steenekamp, South African farmers rank under the best farmers in the world, if not the best! He said that it is for the company a privilege to play a role in ensuring that farmers in our country produce more, with less and in a sustainable manner.

For more information and the high-resolution photograph contact Magda du Toit on magda.du.toit@monsanto.com.