

BRANDING SOUTH AFRICAN AGRICULTURE

The National Agricultural Marketing Council has a project that will be launched this year where they want to get agricultural role players to financially support their endeavors to create a uniform image nationally and internationally for South African Agriculture. I presume that Brand SA; Proudly SA and South African Tourism would integrate this project into their current *modus operandi* as well.

The initiative is sound in its merits, but to get government funded departments to work together is challenging as we have experienced. Mainly because the environment in which they operate is about 'protecting their turf'. Privately owned agricultural stakeholders are often easier to deal with because they are empowered to make decisions as they are financially independent.

I see the exercise, initially, as an educational one within South Africa. Agriculture has a legacy in South Africa that to some extent is negative because of Apartheid. The Agritourism South Africa

Information Portal was started in 2016 to enable South Africans and International visitors to meet South African farmers. This initiative has been successful because farmers realize the potential of earning additional income and diversifying. As international travelling has become unaffordable for most South Africans, holidaying at home, while enjoying new experiences has become an increasingly popular option.

We also need to see a change in the education syllabus with a greater focus on Agriculture in schools that are in Rural areas. We need to see the youth playing a far more active role not only in Agriculture, but in Agricultural policy making as well and we need to keep the youth employed meaningfully on farms.

Supporting the Agricultural industry to become Brand aware is difficult, because are many different types of Agriculture and many different types of farming. Farming in future, will not only be land based, but will be water (sea/dam) as well. Of course, there will be farming in cities which can be

highly successful as the Dutch have proved. We need to broaden our viewpoint as to what is considered farming. The traditional farms that had many different crops and animals are rare to find these days because of input efficiencies. Determining a 'common' agricultural brand is complex.

So what threads can we find to brand successfully in such a multi-layered industry? For those in the industry, it is easier to contribute to this discussion. The professionalism and dedication of Farmers and Agricultural workers is often noted by foreign journalists and farmers. "This is not what we expected..." is a frequent comment from visitors. However, an element of confusion exists because of diverse communication that South Africans portray of their own country, whether it be politically based or economically driven.

Our Farmers approach farming differently. From lifestyle small holdings to export-driven large companies; from abalone farming to tilapia to game breeding farms. We should be careful not to

narrow the focus too rigidly. Africa is known for its diversity and its vibrancy. Just as there is no one type of farmer, there is no one market. Visitors are multi-dimensional and want to experience different aspects of what a farm offers.

Agritourism South Africa is a farmers and agricultural workers information portal. We interact regularly whether assisting with Tourist campaigns or taking video footage. We are not just another booking site. We are currently working on a Project to increase the awareness of Agritourism nationwide in September, to coincide with Tourism month. Visitors will be encouraged to interact with farmers.

In the iPES (International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems) report “From uniformity to Diversity” it refers to the paradigm shift from industrial agriculture to diversified agroecological systems (www.ipes-food.org). Most farmers realise that a fundamentally different model of agriculture based on diversification within farms is essential as

the oversubscribed Landbou Weekblad Konferensie oor Herlewingslandbou in Reitz, proved.

If farming as an industry is changing from Uniformity to Diversity, this is a clear indication that forming one standard brand to promote Agriculture is not the way to go. In Agritourism, we have over 20 different types of farming activities that visitors can participate in when visiting farms. One of the documents that lead to the formation of Agritourism South Africa was the FAO document on the Future of food and agriculture: Trends and Challenges -

<http://www.fao.org/publications/fofa/en/>. It is obvious that there has to be change – all the Trends & Challenges apply to South African Agriculture and Agritourism is a conduit to that change.

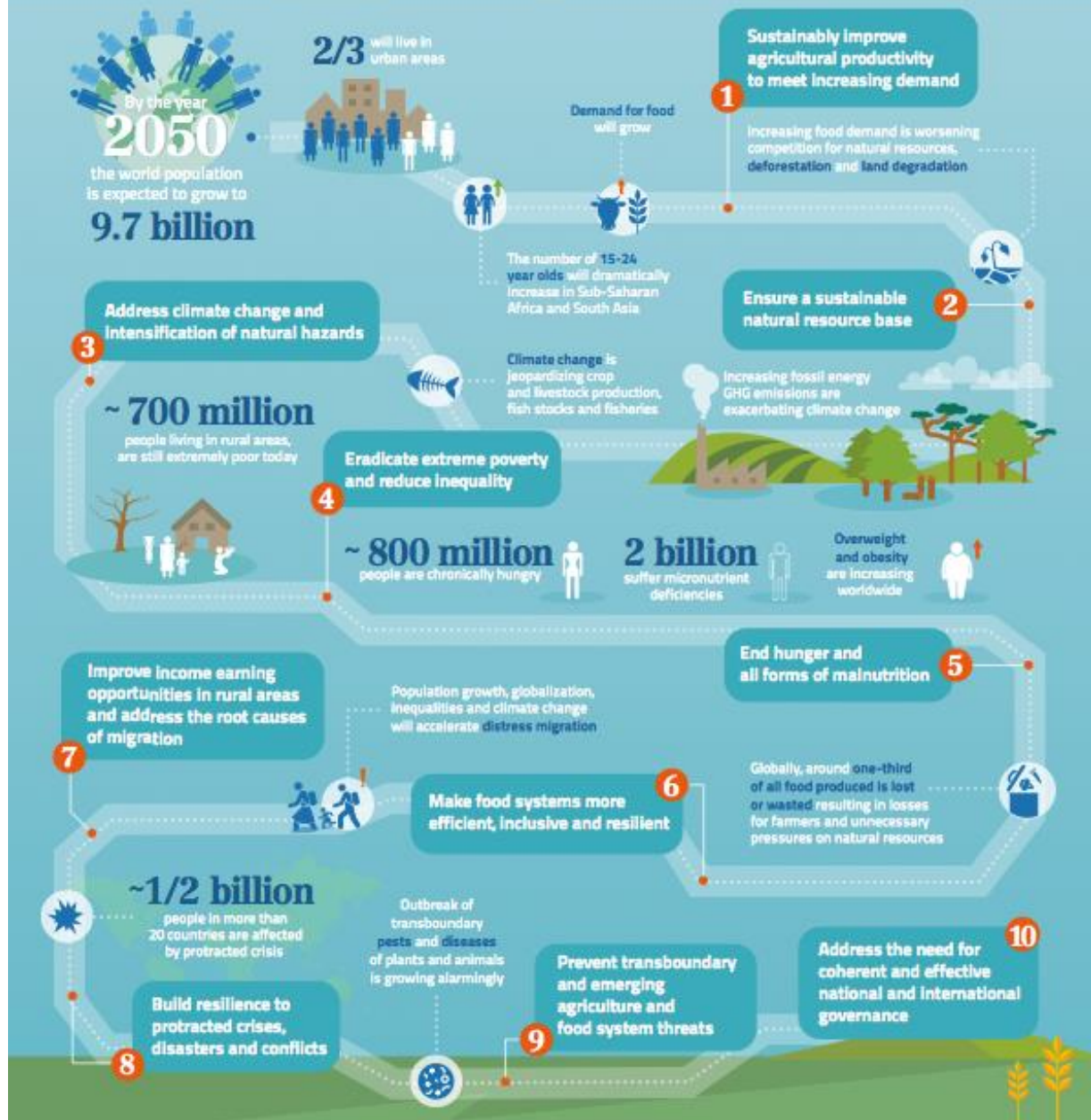
Agritourism is an essential element in the Branding of South African Agriculture. To see is to believe. That is why we place such a strong emphasis on visual footage and have a You Tube channel that is continually updated. The figures of the economic success of Agritourism in countries such as Italy,

Vietnam, New Zealand, Canada etc. are available. Let us ensure that when we Brand South African Agriculture that we do it after consulting with farmers and the agricultural workers who provide us with food every day. We should be grateful and embrace the Agricultural community.

Agritourism South Africa supports all efforts that are made to place South African Agriculture on the World map. www.agritourismsouthafrica.com for further details.

The future of food and agriculture

The global trends and **challenges** that are shaping our future



Food and Agriculture Organization
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