

## Future Farmers, Sernick partner to bolster agricultural opportunities

The Sernick Group has welcomed the opening of the Future Farmers office on its premises in Kroonstad, Free State. The Future Farmers Foundation has offices in Kwazulu-Natal, the Western Cape and now the Free State.



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This new partnership between Sernick's Emerging Farmers Programme and the Future Farmers Foundation marks the beginning of new opportunities for the youth that are interested in agriculture and the agricultural sector in the Free State.

The Sernick Emerging Farmers Programme is supported by the Jobs Fund at National Treasury and is currently assisting 660 emerging farmers to become established commercial farmers. Up until now the model to assist emerging farmers has not been focused on youth development. With this partnership, the company hopes to include more young people from the Free State in its programme and give more people the opportunity to successfully enter the agricultural job market with the necessary knowledge and experience.

"The Sernick Emerging Farmers Programme creates jobs, but more importantly it creates hope," said Nick Serfontein, chairperson of the Sernick Group. As a vocal supporter of helping emerging farmers he went on to say, "All commercial farmers want to make a difference, but they don't know-how. This is possibly our last chance to get it right. We must believe we can, and we must push on because we can make a difference in agriculture."

### Expanding commercial farming experience

The Future Farmers Foundation was founded in 2006 by Judy Stuart a farmer from Howick in Kwazulu-Natal. The organisation is aimed at providing meaningful employment for Future Farmers and develop them to their full potential. The

company uses an apprenticeship-model to qualify farm managers who are capable of running commercial operations. If a candidate shows passion, commitment and potential after the two-year apprenticeship he/she is sent overseas for practical experience.

Future Farmers currently has 40 programme participants gaining invaluable experience at commercial farms in the United States and Australia. Stuart believes this is a vital part of the programme as it gives participants the opportunity to expand their world vision and understand how South Africa fits into the agricultural puzzle. "Ultimately our goal is to give young people from impoverished backgrounds, that have the passion and drive, the opportunity to be commercial farmers," she says.

With the opening of the Free State Future Farmers office, it now also gives farmers in the province the opportunity to be actively involved with mentoring. This is a fundamental aspect of the success of the organisation explains Stuart: "How many people we are able to help is directly linked to how many farmers and sponsors that are willing to support our programme."

### **The requirements to apply and qualify for a Future Farmers apprenticeship:**

- They should be between 18-26 years of age.
- They should be passionate about farming.
- They should have a responsible attitude towards work.
- They should not be married nor have children.
- They should not smoke, drink alcohol or use recreational drugs.
- They should not have a criminal record.

Applicants and possible mentors or sponsors can contact Isabel Boshoff for further information by calling 056 216 2620 or visit the Sernick Empowerhouse office, 50 Reitz Street, Kroonstad.

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