

SA needs correct mindset to ensure economic growth

The debate about changing the Constitution to facilitate land expropriation without compensation was not the first controversial issue farmers have had to contend with. Politicians regularly came up with new ideas, such as the 50:50 land-shareholding idea that was suggested a few years ago. This was the opinion of Ernest Pringle, chairperson of Agri SA's policy committee on agricultural development, who was speaking at the association's recent roadshow meeting in Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape.

"Fortunately, changing the Constitution is not that easy; if [this] is done, [it] would have almost unfathomable ramifications for society," he said.

The real problem was the failure to realise that the developed world's successful economies were based on growth. Despite its huge potential, agricultural growth in Africa had remained flat, Pringle explained.

"One reason for this is that 80% of property is not privately owned; another is that African leaders are bogged down by an ideological mindset," he said.



ABOVE: These farmers from the Steytlerville district attended the recent Agri SA roadshow in Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape. From left: Ernie Deyzil (Schuinspad), Micky Hayward (Suikerdoorns), and Louis Hayward (Doornrivier). The meeting was attended by about 450 farmers, and further meetings will be held in Graaff-Reinet and Queenstown.
ROELOF BEZUIDENHOUT

Africa had the fastest growing population on Earth. By 2025, 23% of the world's youth would be living on the continent. Africa would soon have 50 cities with more than one million inhabitants each. By 2030, as many as 340 million African citizens could be displaced by poverty, Pringle said. "This is why European countries are pouring aid into the continent; they are trying to stem a potential tsunami of migrants.

"While South Africa struggles to attain 1% [GDP] growth, East Asian countries such as Vietnam, previously also under colonial rule, regularly attain 8% growth. We need at least a 5% growth

rate to counteract poverty. Other countries, such as Columbia and Georgia, have grown dramatically. They used foreign aid for technology and to build infrastructure, while South Africa exports its skilled people. No country can afford that.

"The US, a democratic, capitalist country with a relatively small population in which government plays a minor role, consistently grows at around 3% and produces 25% of the world's output. They have the right approach to growth."

Personal security and property rights were fundamental rights. If the state could not protect these, the alternative was to be ruled by local warlords, Pringle added. – Roelof Bezuidenhout

LAND REFORM

Land expropriation: rather focus on the outcome – expert

South Africa's land issue was in the spotlight during a recent seminar entitled, 'Land expropriation without compensation: why, how and what else?', held at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The seminar was led by Prof Ruth Hall, senior researcher at UWC's Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies.

According to Hall, the net of the land debate needed to be cast much wider than just debating about how land should be expropriated. "We should rather refocus our attention on who should get the land and for what purpose it will be used. As soon

as we know the answers to these questions, we would be able to know what land should be targeted."

During a question and answer session, Hall said research indicated that although there was an enormous demand for land, it was for small, well-located parcels of land. She added that the research had also shown that most people did not want to share a 1 000ha farm 100km outside Beaufort West, for example.

"They want small plots within a few kilometres of a rural town so that their kids can go to school and they can work to earn a livelihood."

She also commented on the recent motion passed in Parliament to investigate whether to amend the Constitution to make provision for the expropriation of land without compensation.

According to Hall, expropriation of land without compensation was already provided for in the Constitution. The Constitution had never been the obstacle to land reform; rather, government's lack of vision was the problem, she said. The current land debate was an opportunity to push for more meaningful change, she added. – Jeandré van der Walt