

# The future of agri jobs in the spotlight

Issues such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the entry of millennials into the workforce, and the shift from unskilled to skilled jobs were among the talking points at the Peritum Agri-HR Summit in Bloemfontein recently.

The summit brought together speakers from across South Africa, as well as abroad, to share insights into how role players in the agriculture sector had to evolve to cater to the needs of the sector's workforce in the future.

Addressing the issue of millennials in the workplace, Graeme Codrington, director of Tomorrow Today Global, said the concept of human resources would have to be entirely reimagined, but it would have to be people-centred.

"In a digital technology world of artificial intelligence, robotics and cyber-physical interactions, it's all about the people."

Codrington emphasised that young people in today's world were disruptive and engaged in an entirely different manner than older generations did.

"Today's young people are not just younger versions of us, and that means we can't just do what we've always been doing."

He said they interacted differently with authority figures and had a different set of expectations with regard to how things should work. He emphasised too that they were "digital natives" rather than "digital immigrants", like their elders.

## **A KEY TALKING POINT WAS THE SHIFT FROM UNSKILLED TO SKILLED JOBS**

Codrington said another trait of millennials was that they were constantly learning and developing, which was potentially valuable for businesses.

"We can teach them a lot, but there are things that they know that we haven't even thought of, and we need to build systems in [human resources

management] for both mentoring and reverse mentoring," he said.

Another speaker at the event, Jahni de Villiers, head of labour and development at Agri SA, spoke about remuneration in the sector.

She shared information about the National Minimum Wage and sectoral dispensations, as well as the threat that technology could pose to menial and low-skilled jobs.

"We know that if the right technology exists and it makes business sense, it's going to lead to job losses. This is a policy issue that needs to be addressed between business, labour and government," she said.

De Villiers emphasised aspects such as upskilling existing staff, productivity management, greater flexibility in the work environment, transparency around remuneration, and the impact of business decisions.

"Your business decisions need to be weighed up against the labour impact as a key driver of inclusive growth," she said. – *Sabrina Dean*