



Conservation at Work

MOTIVATION FOR HOSTING THE SYMPOSIUM

Conservation can have many interpretations and is a concept which is frequently used loosely to simply mean, “Caring for the environment”. This positive connotation means that it is seldom questioned or analysed as to what it really means. What is being conserved? By whom and why? How do conservation minded people react to issues around land ownership, invasive plant and animal control, food security and other concepts frequently connected to conservation matters? How does the state control and regulate conservation? Who is responsible for enforcing this legislation? Emotional reactions to conservation issues vary from extreme, to luke-warm, which makes any rational debate interesting and exciting, however difficult and challenging it may be. Experts can disagree and there is frequently tension between role players with a range of alternative reactions generated. Answers to these difficult questions are never easy to find.

More often than not the term conservation defines the user. How we see conservation is part of who we are – it forms our identity and the identity of a country. We are in part a reflection of our understanding of the term. In society a study of our environment reflects the growth of consciousness of a country or society and can be as important as social or economic history in shaping us as humans. As responsible landowners, concerned about conservation, we need to focus on how we understand conservation as a process in as precise a manner as possible. In order to assist us, we need the help of experts, able to contribute meaningfully to our efforts, based on thoughtful assessment of the problems which face us. Conservation at Work needs feedback from these experts as well as feedback from members of our organisation made up of landowners and registered conservancies to forge new boundaries for the healthy future of our planet earth.

The goals of conservation are academic – what drives it can only be what is affordable. Conservation for its own sake is rare and may be found in waste recycling projects and plastic conversion programmes; conservation agriculture is becoming a reality but not always easy to sustain; conservation funding also comes from successful business enterprises, which in themselves may not have done the environment any favours, so is a sort of atonement for damage done; finally there is state funded conservation, which may or may not have conservation as its main objective but job creation or something else. In all of these enablers and goals of conservation the social and economic factors have to be considered, as social perceptions of the environment govern how we treat it. Conservation has to be based on thoughtful research, be affordable and sustainable.

This is what we want to achieve at this symposium. To share ideas, knowledge and experiences with those academics that have researched conservation to share these with us who are active in conservation at the workplace. We hope that these shared experiences will lead to constructive dialogue. That thoughtful like-minded experts, able and willing to contribute their knowledge, will inspire and stimulate new ideas and give answers to questions we desperately need, in order to continue working for conservation.