SASEV / SATI SOUTH AFRICAN TABLE GRAPE CONFERENCE 2026

Connecting Ideas | Cultivating Success

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South African Grape Industries into the Future

Training, Innovation and Entrepreneurship as a Partnership between Industry and Academia

Prof Albert Strever

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5–6 August 2026 | Allée Bleue, Franschhoek

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South African Grape Industries into the Future – picture everybody naked. . .

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WHERE WE ARE GOING

Five ideas in twenty-five minutes

01

Two worlds, colliding

A Gen Z generation of students meets an industry being reshaped in real time.

02

Skills vs competencies

Why mindset — not just technique — is what carries a career.

03

The value chain as classroom

Beyond "the viticulturist" or "the winemaker" — a whole system of opportunity.

04

Entrepreneurship, AI and professional skills

What we already build into the curriculum, and how.

05

Recurriculating for the future

Mapping the degree onto a circular value chain, and specialising later.

I Ain’t Worried - OneRepublic · 2022

I should be scared, honey, maybe so
But I ain't worried 'bout it right now (right now)
Keeping dreams alive, 1999, heroes
I ain't worried 'bout it right now (right now)
Swimmin' in the floods, dancing on the clouds below

I ain't worried 'bout it
I ain't worried 'bout it



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How our students see the world

Many students arrive certain they are training for one job — "the viticulturist," "the winemaker," "the consultant/manager." They picture a single soundtrack for their future before they have seen the whole stage.

A generation that grew up connected, questioning and AI-native — and that expects the same of the institutions training them.

Digital and AI-native

AI Chatbots, search, and generative tools are assumed infrastructure, not novelties.

Purpose over prestige

They ask "why does this matter" before "what must I know."

Skeptical of top-down authority

They trust evidence, peers and lived experience over a title.

Non-linear career expectations

Comfortable moving between roles — less attached to one fixed job.

There's Nothing Holdin' Me Back - Shawn Mendes · 2017

....There's nothing holdin' me back
There's nothing holdin' me back

She says that she's never afraid
Just picture everybody naked
She really doesn't like to wait
Not really into hesitation. . .



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Picture your industry of choice. . . naked and exposed

If students should picture their futures honestly, we should picture our industries honestly too — stripped of glamour and outdated assumptions.

Emerging technologies

Fast-moving, radically novel and increasingly disruptive across the whole sector (Rotolo et al., 2015).

5IR pressure on 4IR foundations

Just as agriculture absorbs Industry 4.0, a 5th industrial revolution — human-centred, AI-augmented — is already on the horizon.

Real hype, real substance

Gartner-style hype cycles remind us: not every trend converts to value. We must teach principles, context and pitfalls — not just buzzwords.

Graduates and systems thinking

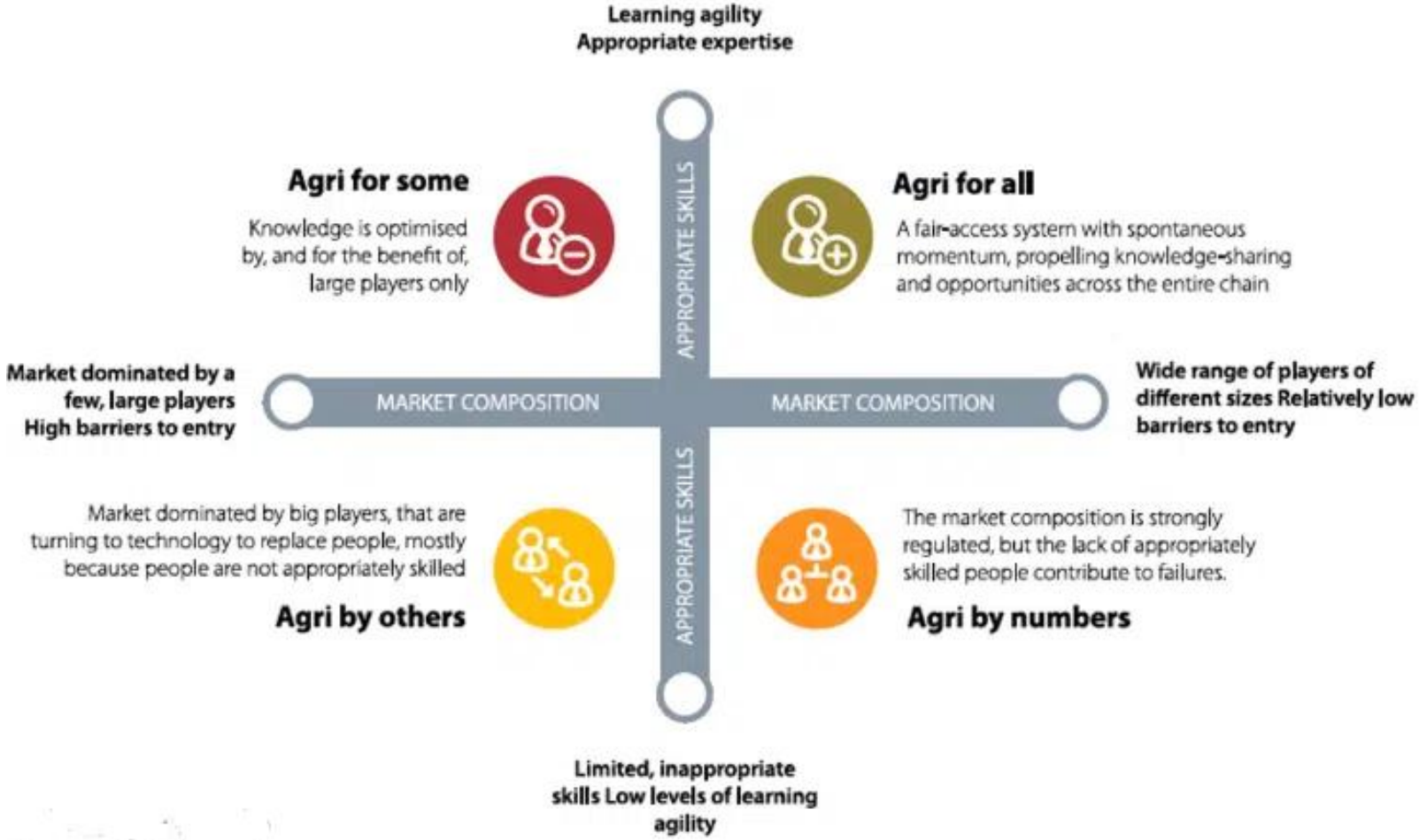
Across agriculture and engineering alike, graduates often lack a systems view of disruptive technology (Cai et al., 2021).



https://www.agriorbit.com/report-launched-on-agri-skills-needed-for-the-future/

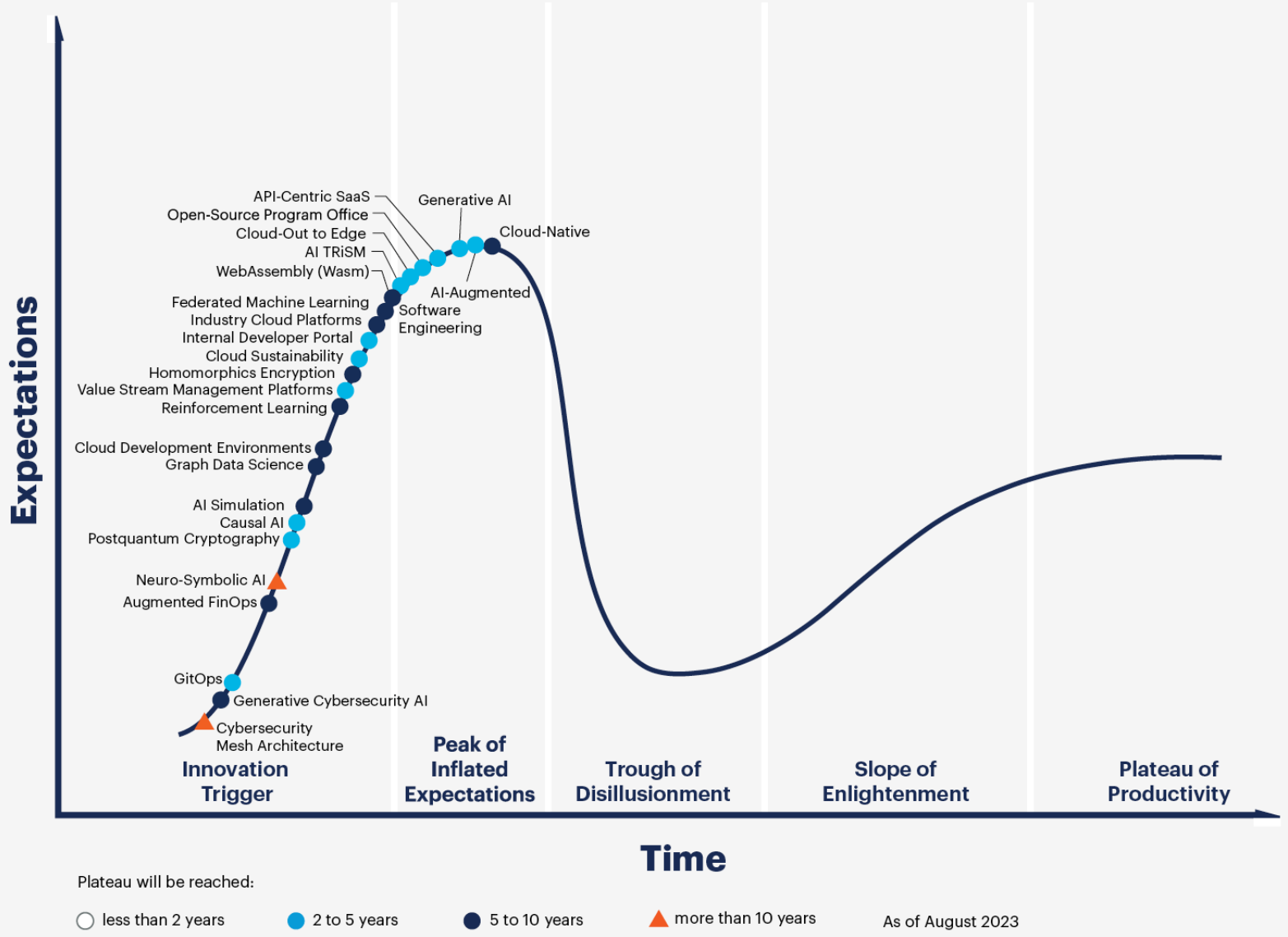
Thinking again. . . .or thinking forward? (IFR, 2022)

- Doris Viljoen (IFR)
  - Scenarios about future of work in the agri industry by 2035.
- "skills need for the future of work in the agri industry is a mixed bag"
- "In short, the skills needed for a healthy agri industry consists of
  - "soft skills"
  - natural science
  - systems thinking
  - technology integration
  - data management



From: https://www.agriorbit.com/report-launched-on-agri-skills-needed-for-the-future/

Hype Cycle for Emerging Technologies, 2023



https://www.gartner.com/en/articles/what-s-new-in-the-2023-gartner-hype-cycle-for-emerging-technologies

The Naked And Famous - "Young Blood"

. . . We're only young and naive still
We require certain skills
The mood it changes like the wind. . .



Skills get you started. Competencies keep you there. Competency = (skill + mindset)!

Skills

Learned, applied abilities that put knowledge to work in execution or performance (Tonderai, 2022).

e.g. mastering theory, pruning technique, viticultural decision making, vineyard planning and site selection

Necessary — but on their own, not sufficient.

Competencies

Knowledge, behaviours and abilities built from skills plus positive values and attitude (Chan et al., 2017; Wong et al., 2022).

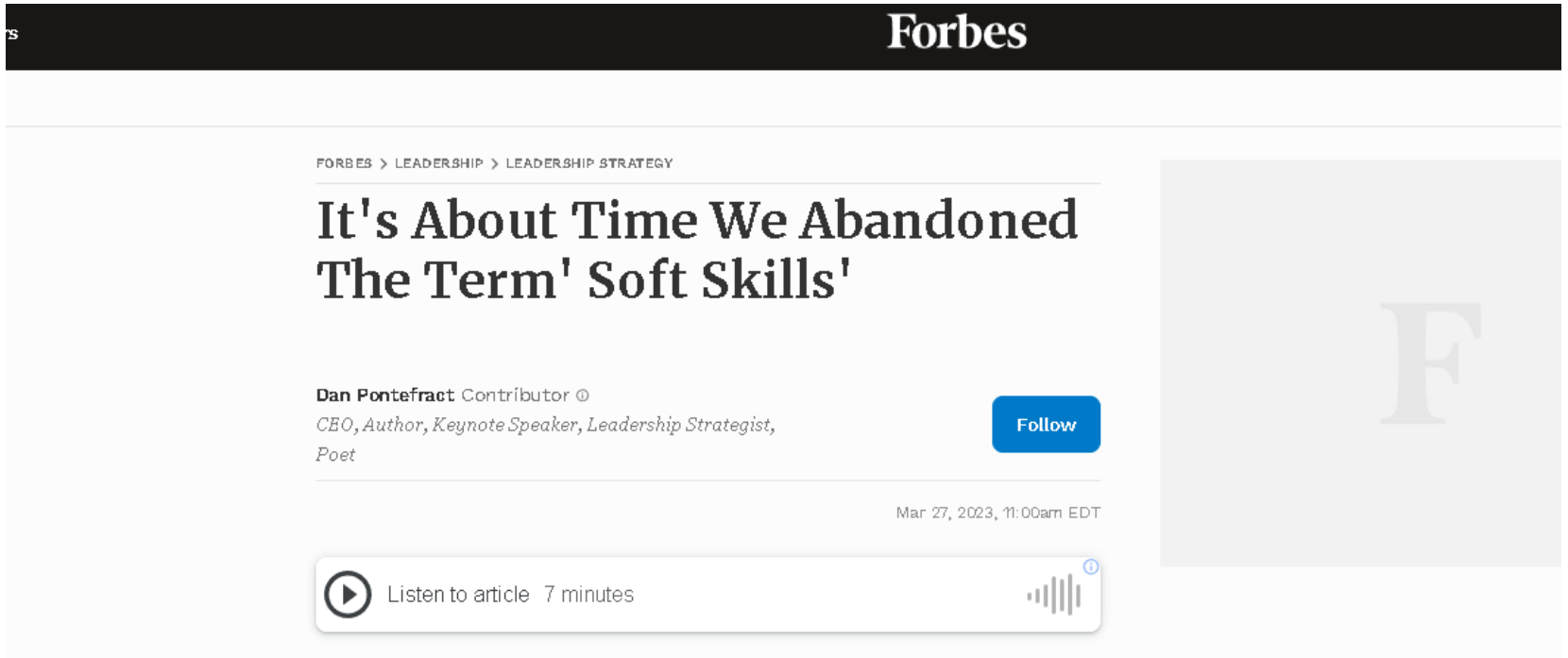
e.g. the judgement to decide/discern, not just execute — the ability to make the business decision itself

What we should be training graduates to hold.

“Soft” or professional skills?

- Pontefract, 2023 referring to “soft skills”:

“They form the bedrock of effective leadership, i.e. through communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and teamwork, and deserve the label ‘professional skills’”



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Retiring the phrase "soft skills"

*Communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, emotional intelligence and teamwork are not "soft" — they are the **professional competencies** that carry a career (paraphrasing Pontefract, 2023).*

What the future-of-work research is already telling us



Professional / "soft" skills



Natural science foundation



Systems thinking

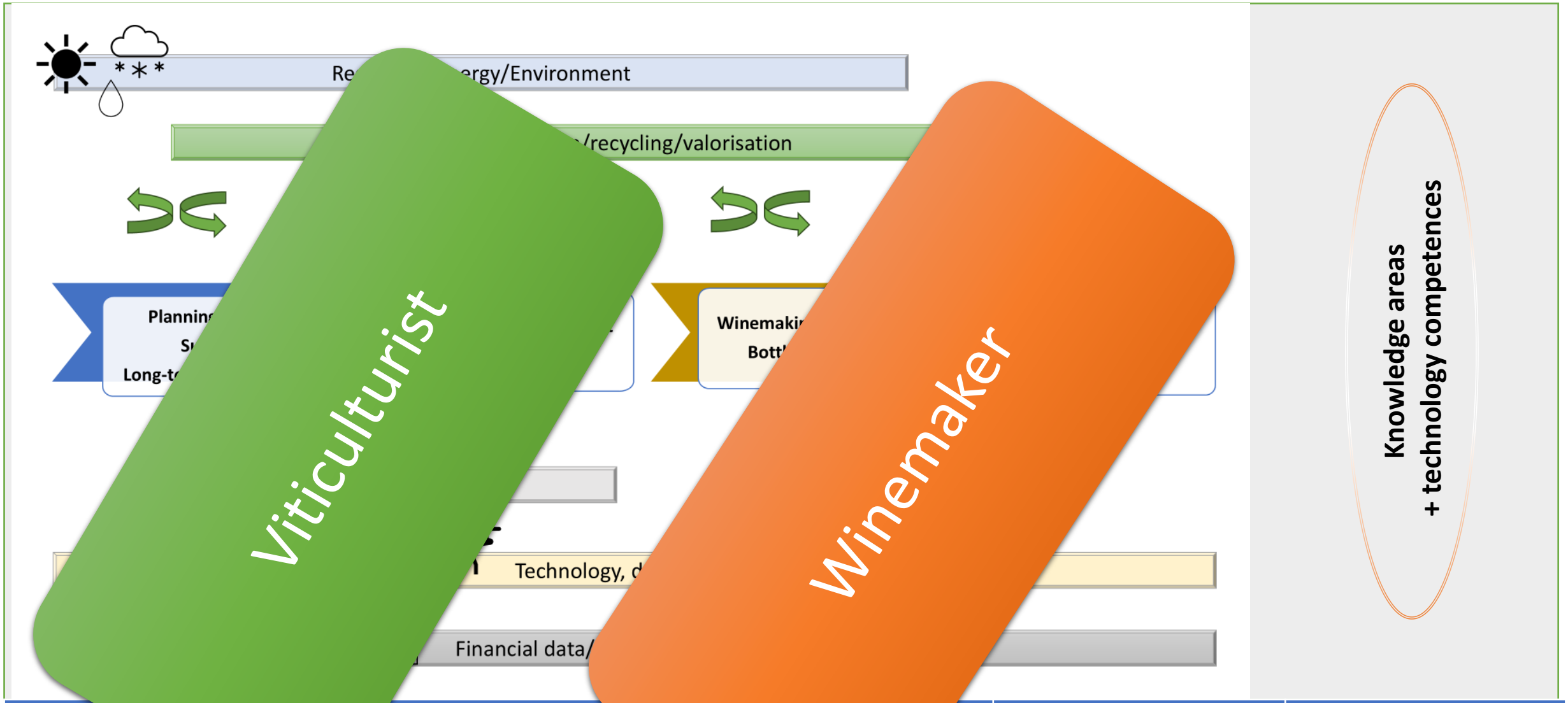


Technology integration



Data management

The skills a healthy agricultural sector will need for 2035 — a "mixed bag," not a single specialism (Institute for Futures Research, 2022).

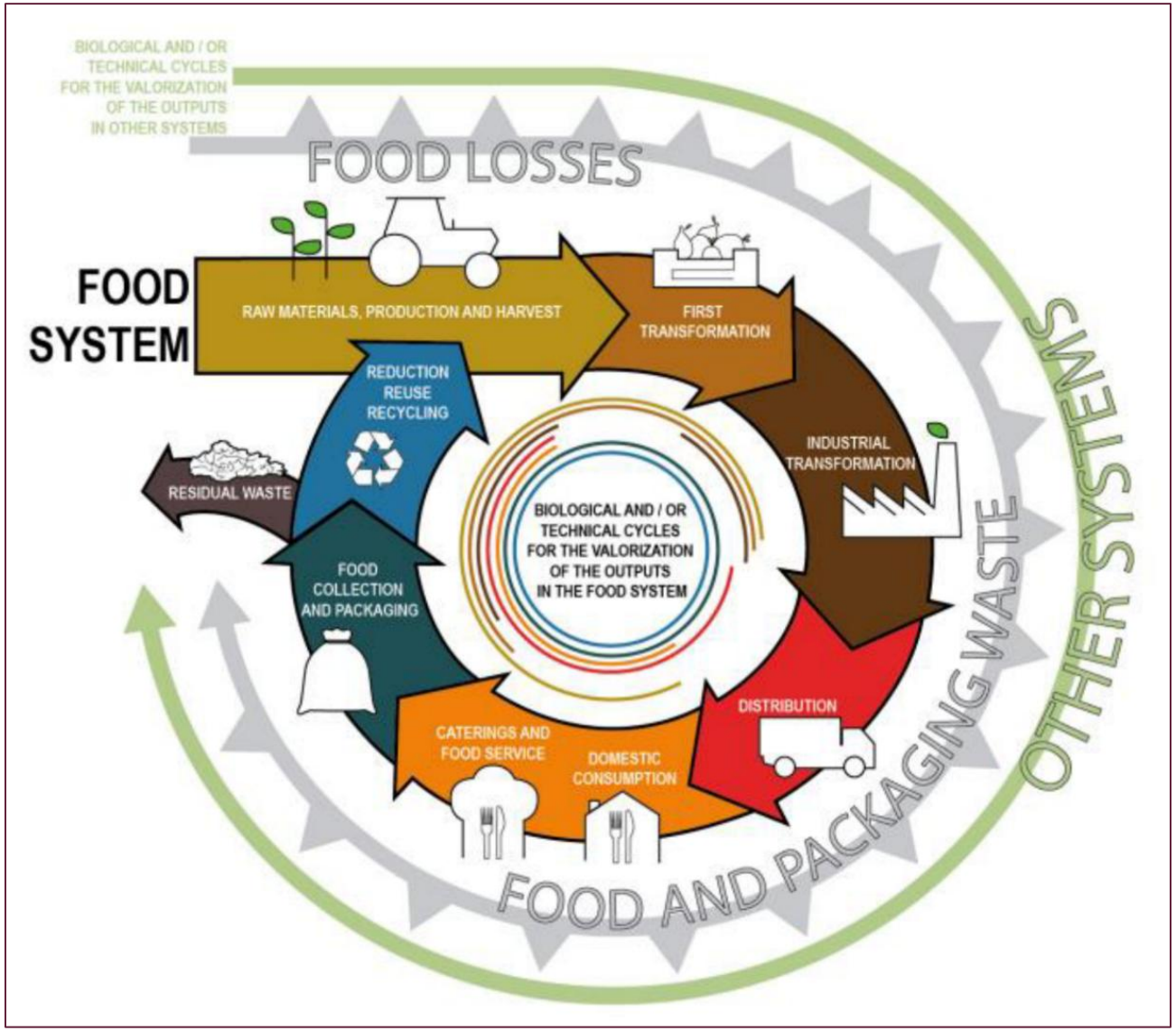


I.e. viticu ce, plant pathology	ing)	Wine marketing

Technical competences	
Leadership, problem solving, digital literacy etc. (“soft skills”)	Transversal competencies

Value/supply chain view

- Value chain/supply chain – difference (Feller et al, 2006)
- Agri supply chains will be largely value chains
- But cannot just be linear
- Circular bioeconomy view crucial (Duque-Acevedo et al., 2020; Jones et al. 2021; Toop et al. 2017; Fassio and Tecco 2019).



Entrepreneurial competencies — for every career path

Whether a graduate starts a business or joins one, these traits underpin how they navigate a career (after Man, 2001; Nieuwoudt, 2016; Shulist).

- **Opportunity recognition**
- **Relationship building**
- **Conceptual & analytical thinking**
- **Organising & operational ability**
- **Strategic thinking**
- **Commitment & resilience**
- **Learning agility**
- **Calculated risk-taking**

Underpinning entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial traits

Prof Patrick Shulist, Aalto University

Internal locus of control	**Self-efficacy**	**Motivation**	**Persistence & commitment**
Persuasion	**Taking initiative**	**Calculated risk-taking**	**Accepting failure**

In many ways, these competencies are needed regardless of the career path a student follows.

2023 entrepreneurship implementation (capstone project) (Grapevine and Wine Sciences)

GWS 278

- Ideation (individual)
- Basic principles of entrepreneurship and related skills and formulating an industry-related individual idea/innovation
- Using AI tools in business idea evaluation

GWS 378

-Groupwork – “company” formation

-Entrepreneurial principles: industry-related idea filtering

-Lean canvas and product/service prototype/specification development

Industry internship

- Idea customer discovery
- Questions/survey
- Further work on choosing a single idea at the end of the internship (winter school)

GWS 454

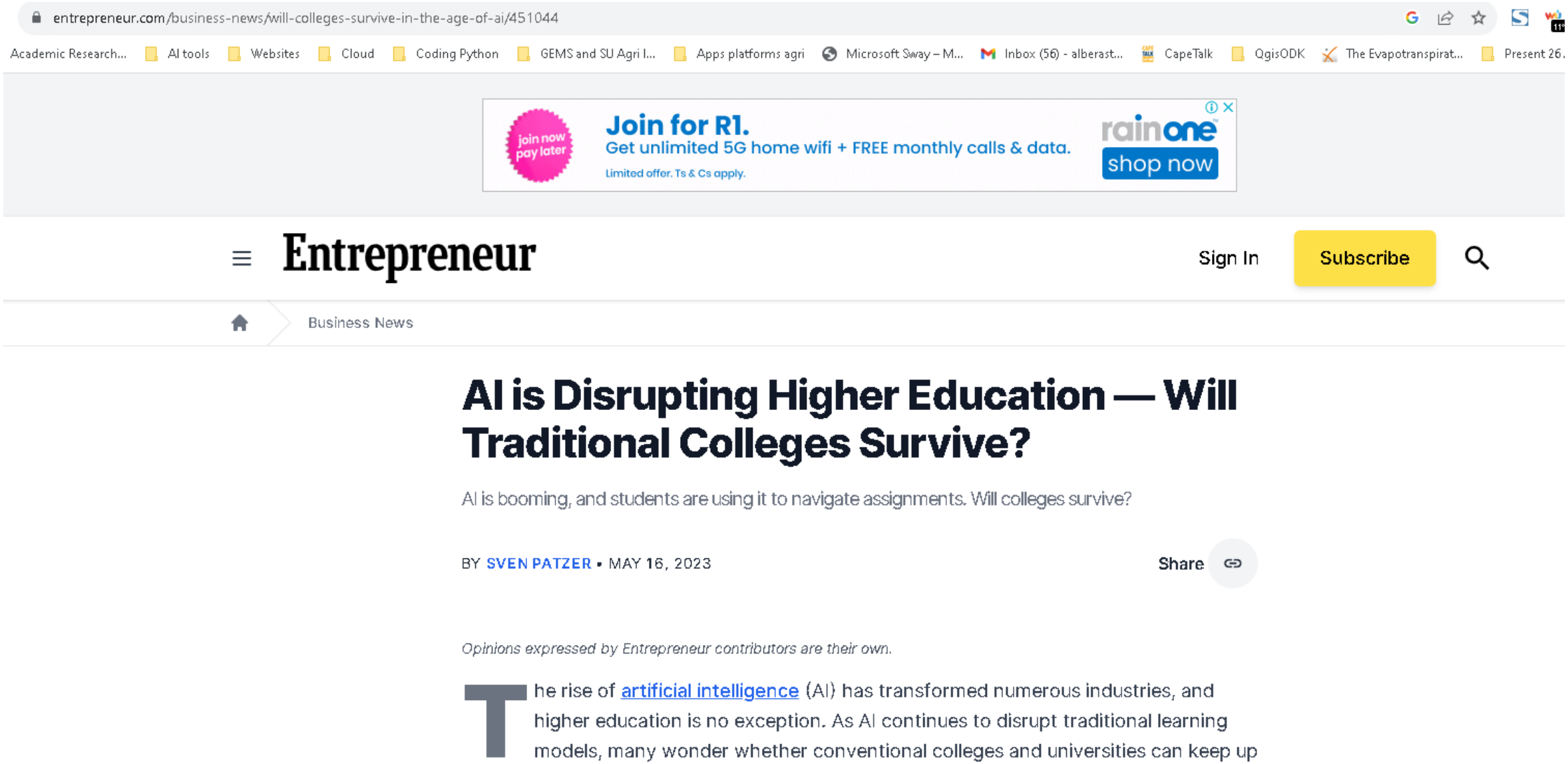
- Innovation, emerging tech & entrepreneurship in the context of a changing industry and world
- Finalising pitch deck and portfolio

Individual portfolio/pitch/video

Group pitch/portfolio (2 ideas)

Feedback and choice of 1 idea

Final pitch/showcase



https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/will-colleges-survive-in-the-age-of-ai/451044

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Embracing AI in teaching and learning

The real question isn't whether AI belongs in higher education — it's whether we teach the principles, context and limits before the hype does.

Research & writing assistants

Literature discovery, summarisation and paraphrasing tools already used in coursework.

Business-idea evaluation

AI used directly inside GWS 278 to stress-test student venture ideas.

Curriculum technology-scoping

Text-mining and topic modelling to systematically scan which emerging technologies matter (engineering-management research, 2022–23).

Principles before hype

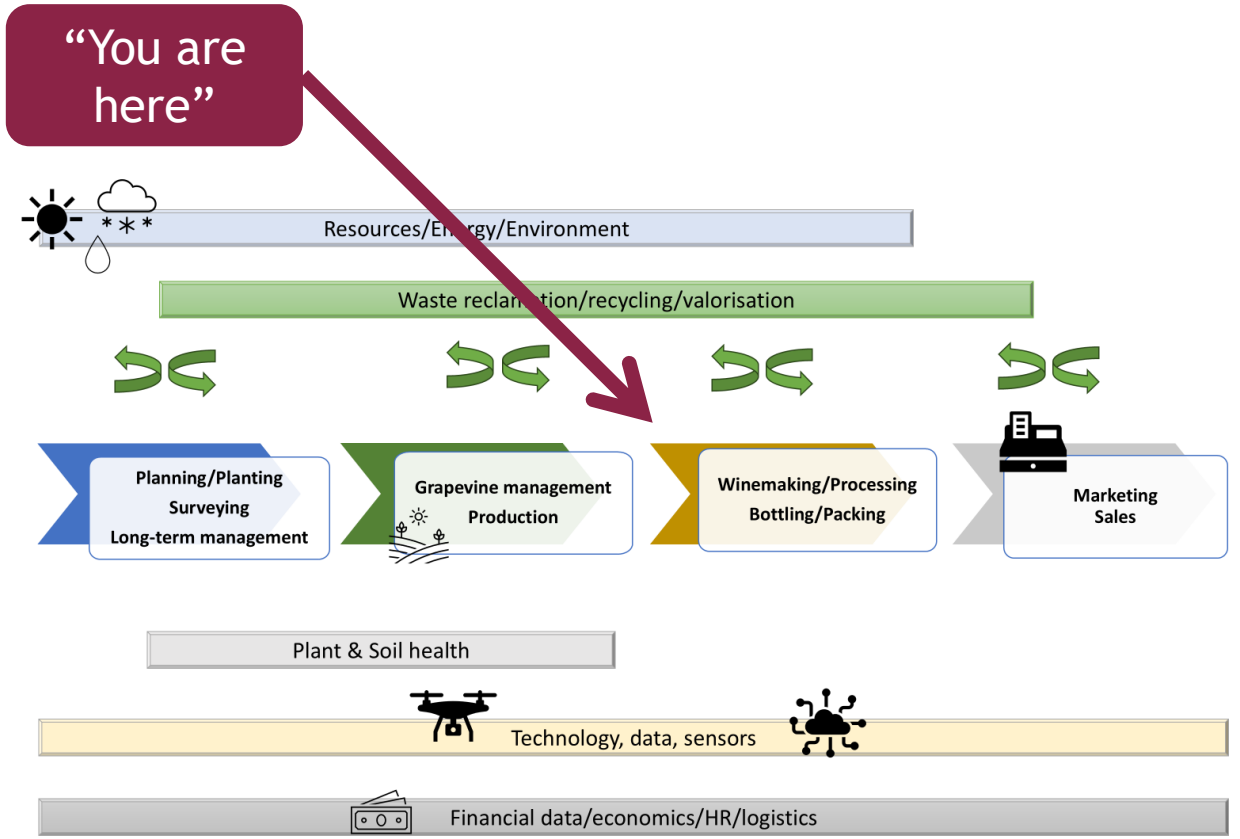
Gartner-style hype cycles are real — we teach students to separate substance from noise (Pleasants, 2022).

Getting out of the labyrinth

Today, students move through the curriculum module by module without a map of the whole system they are entering.

The proposal

- Map the whole circular value chain on Day 1, so every student sees the full system before they specialise in any part of it.
- Locate each year’s modules explicitly within that map — a visible "you are here" for the curriculum.
- Zoom progressively: molecule and plant physiology first, then vineyard and winery, then the full industry and business system.



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The good news: most of it is already there

BScAgric (Viticulture & Oenology) / Grapevine and Wine Sciences — current build-up



Year 1

Foundation sciences + industry introduction



Year 2

Vine & wine physiology, soil science, microbiology



Year 3

Applied viticulture & winemaking, entrepreneurship, electives



Year 4

Precision viticulture, terroir, innovation, capstone internship

What is missing is not content — it is a visible, circular map that connects the years and the value chain into one coherent journey.

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Starting with the end-third-year internship, students choose a track — building depth exactly where the industry needs it most.



Table grapes



Raisin production



Winemaking



Business, marketing and/or entrepreneurship



Research & postgraduate study

Internship placements with industry partners become the two-way bridge — feeding real placement needs back into how tracks are designed.

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A partnership, not a pipeline

This conference theme is the mechanism, not just the strapline: training the graduate of the future takes every part of the system working together.



Universities

Scientific depth, research capacity, and systems thinking — Stellenbosch and beyond.



Training institutes

Practical, hands-on career preparation — Elsenburg and similar institutions.



Industry

Internship placements, mentorship, and honest feedback on graduate readiness.



Graduates

Entering, questioning, and eventually reshaping the sector themselves.

AGNITION

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AGNITION

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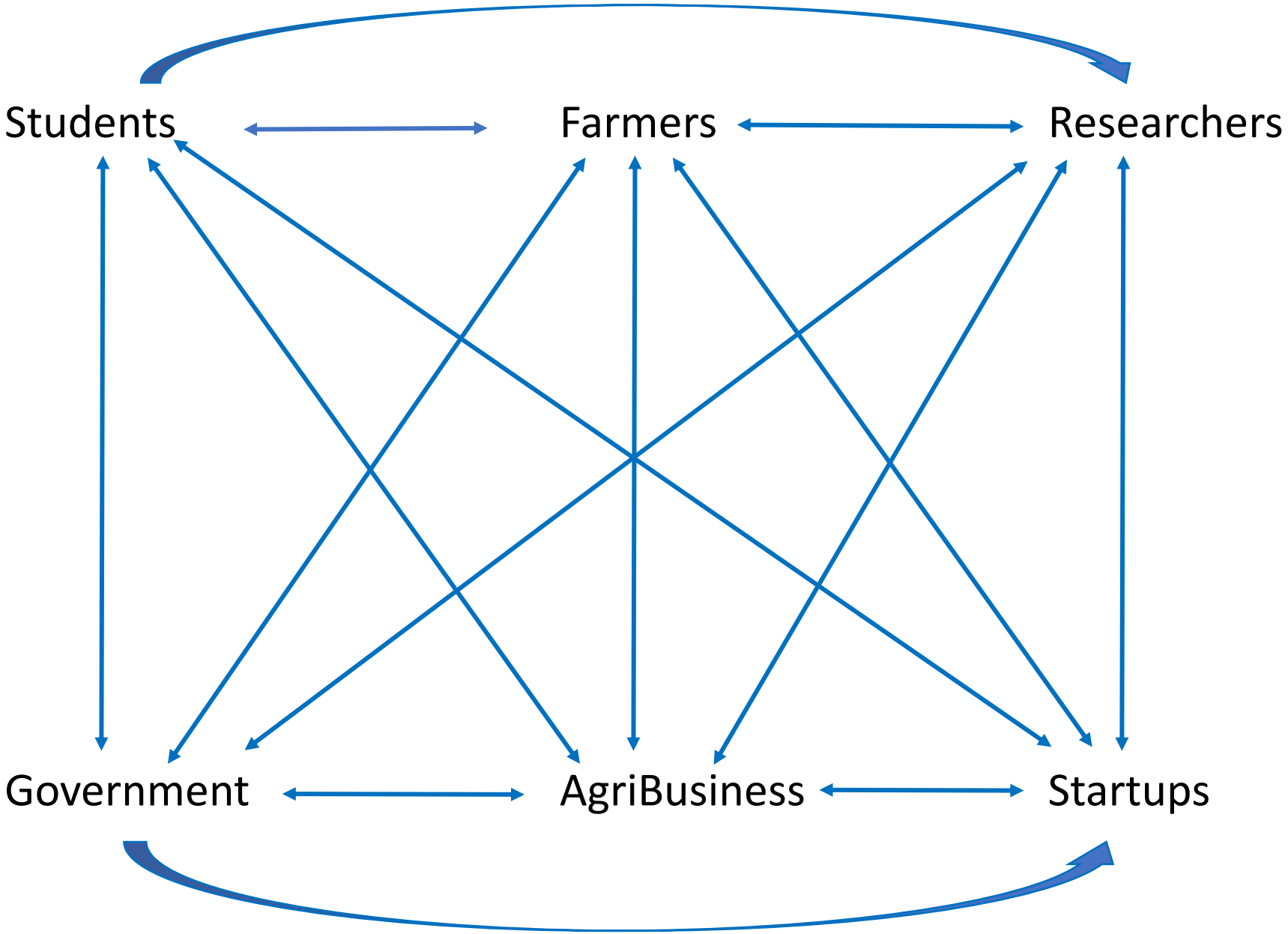
Incubate

Coordinate

Educate



AGNITION
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Our Coordination Challenge

AGNITION
Agricultural Innovation Hub • Stellenbosch



Stronger connections. Shared knowledge. Greater impact.

Working together to grow a thriving and inclusive agricultural innovation ecosystem in the Western Cape.

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What we are aiming to produce

Scientifically grounded

Strong foundations in the biology, chemistry and physiology of the plant and process.

Competency-rich

Professional skills built in, not bolted on — communication, judgement, teamwork.

Entrepreneurial by instinct

Comfortable spotting opportunity and taking calculated risks, in a business or their own.

AI- and data-literate

Able to use emerging tools critically — separating hype from genuine value.

A systems / value-chain thinker

Sees where their role sits in the bigger circular picture, not just their own module.

Adaptable

Ready for a sector that will keep changing faster than any curriculum can fully predict.

Connecting ideas. Cultivating success.

Training the graduate of the future is a partnership — between industry and academia, science and business, one generation and the next.



thank you | enkosi | dankie

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