

# Take a bow, McDonald's

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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And the Onion goes to... Chicken Licken, for its bullying tactics towards a vegan eatery.



Screen grab from the ad.

Because the issue of land is such a hot-button topic in the country at the moment, I tend to be drawn to anything – printed or visual – which looks at land and how it can be used productively.

I saw, as a young reporter, the promise of the early land redistribution programme in Zimbabwe – how it gave people not only their land, but also their dignity.

With government support on inputs like seed, fertiliser, finance and advice, some small-scale and collective farmers there started to make their way out of poverty and to make a real contribution to the commercial farming output of the country.

Sadly, we all know that didn't last long. There are a number of reasons for that, which is a topic for another time or forum... but many are the voices in this country who warn that we will follow the example of our northern neighbour.

The biggest problem to successful land reform is ensuring that those people to whom land is given can make a living from it. And that's where support comes in: from the government, from other farmers, from business.

“ I must admit I did a double take at the end of an ad, which intrigued me because it was clearly all about land and about black farmers making a success in the agribusiness sector. ”

I wondered whether this could be a government ad for some programme (they haven't done at all well in that regard, so I was curious); or perhaps from AgriSA to emphasise the importance of discipline in any land reform efforts – or maybe it could even be from the Democratic Alliance, which does these sort of optimistic “South Africa is a great place,” ads so well. The potato farmer talked about heritage, about commitment to the land and all the things a good farmer would.

He didn't mention a product, a government programme or political party... so you could have floored me with the proverbial feather when the tag line emerged.

This was for McDonald's South Africa and their “Know Our Food” campaign.

Centred on TV ads and a website – [www.knowourfood.co.za](http://www.knowourfood.co.za) – McDonald's shows its customers not only how their food is produced, but also where it comes from.

The two ads show how potatoes are grown (and turned into French fries), and how McDonald's chickens are farmed.

It's great advertising, because it is authentic and it showcases the efforts of the people who make sure – as one cheeky farmer put it overseas – that we don't go hungry, naked or sober...

At the same time, though, it shows how a business can help drive a transformation agenda by supporting these “new” farmers.

The other video – about a McDonald's chicken producer – is even more thought-provoking, because it shows what can be done when we close down that gulf that exists between white and black in this country. Go to the site and have a look.

So, McDonald's, Know Your Orchid – from me.

While we're on the subject of the fast-food business, almost the opposite of the correct way (in my view) of doing business is Chicken Licken.

It is continuing its thug-like attitude to what it sees as competition by taking a vegan restaurant to court because that

restaurant had the effrontery to include the word “soul” in its marketing.

For those of you not aware of it, Chicken Licken’s founder, the late George Sombonos, managed somehow to get the words “soul food” registered as his property – at least in connection with any food operation.

He and his company have ruthlessly pursued anyone using this term, even if they are in no way connected with fast-food chicken.

“ I still think it is outrageous that a person, or a company, can effectively copyright, for their own benefit, a common phrase. ”

Ironically, “soul food” is an expression that came from black Americans and was not the invention of George Sombonos. To sue a small – and vegan, *nogal* – place is nothing more than intimidation. They are not competition for Chicken Licken and never would be.



#OrchidsandOnions: Chicken Licken goes a long way to make a marketing point; but FNB should see its *ares*

Brendan Seery 10 Oct 2017



But if you make an example of them, no one else will step out of line.

If you thought you might have heard of this way of conducting business before, you’d be right: it’s called the Mafia.

So, Chicken Licken, collect your Onion from me... I’ve given you one previously, so this is not your sole award. (See what I did there?)

By the way, I will never buy Chicken Licken...

## ABOUT BRENDAN SEERY

Brendan Seery has been in the news business for most of his life, covering coups, wars, famines - and some funny stories - across Africa. Brendan Seery's *Orchids and Onions* column ran each week in the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg and the *Weekend Argus* in Cape Town.

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