

Abundant Harvest

Success in Market Access



Western Cape
Government

Agriculture

BETTER TOGETHER.



by **sappi**

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Abundant Harvest

Success in Market Access

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Introduction

Joyene Isaacs, Head of Department

In the first edition of Abundant Harvest, the highlight was on 'People maketh Agriculture' – farmers, farmworkers, agriculturalists, government officials and business people. The Abundant Harvest series reflects (and will reflect) on food security solutions, business opportunities, innovative methodologies and skills development in the Agricultural sector.

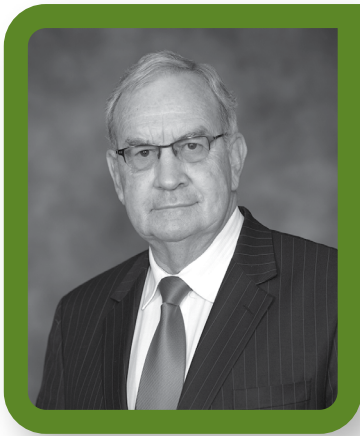
The series also focus on partnerships, the value chain and the principles of working together for a better future. Abundant Harvest is about better together. In this edition, it showcases market access success stories about the farmers and business people in the sector, working with each other, over time, to sell an agricultural product in the local, national and

international markets. It shows the sheer commitment, absolute dedication, hard work and sweet successes of reaching the right market at the right time.

By no means is this an endeavour tackled alone, and most (if not all) the stories show the different roles and responsibilities different organisations and individuals took on to realise success. Again it proves that doing things (problems, challenges, technical barriers, etc.) together, can deliver better results.

Abundant Harvest captures the spirit of better together, not by saying, but by doing – and gives recognition to all involved in the Market Access Programme.





Foreword

Minister Gerrit van Rensburg

This book is a collection of success stories from the Western Cape agricultural sector. It is the stories of new farmers who, with incredible odds stacked against them, are standing tall in our very competitive agricultural sector. Each story is unique, but there are several themes running through all of them.

Producing crops is only half the challenge for the modern farmer, because without a suitable market, it would end up a wasted and useless effort. The Western Cape Department of Agriculture has a dedicated Market Access Programme, which focuses on supporting our producers in finding new markets. These markets could be local or even international. The Department's involvement in these stories is testimony to the fact that the correct support can stimulate a person or business to prosper.

It is evident from each individual story that farming is not easy. Agriculture is extremely competitive; the return on investment is small; and the time frames towards profitability are longer than in any other economic sector.

This begs the question: So why farm?

The answer to this question underlines another theme binding the individuals together: They farm because they are passionate about it. Without passion, none of the proud farmers featured in this publication would have been able to overcome the challenges, and sometimes, disappointments they have had to endure.

And in each story there is a challenge. Each one of these farmers had many opportunities to throw in the towel and give up. But they did not, and therefore their effort deserves to be acknowledged in this beautiful book.

These farmers are very important to the Western Cape Government, because they are representing the future we believe each and every one of our citizens is entitled to: To be able to grab opportunities, and with hard work and the help of government, create your own destiny. These farmers are a living testimony to our underlying philosophy of doing things 'Better Together'.



‘This book is a harvest of feel-good stories planted in the fertile agricultural sector of the Western Cape. Success was not measured by bank balances or production or export volumes – rather it was participants’ dedication and effort and a love of agriculture that secured their inclusion in this book.

The golden thread that ties the 15 stories together is the intimate involvement of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture. Although the theme focuses on the issue of market access (which involves the Programme of Agricultural Economics) farmers are continuously served and supported by a multi-disciplined team from the Department.

Our wish is that the contents of this book will inspire agricultural producers, other government departments and all South Africans. Agriculture brings, after all, food to the table.’

- Charlene Nieuwoudt
Commissioned author



Seven Sisters

One dream

In Mythology the seven sisters were daughters of Atlas and Pleione. They were nymphs trained by Artemis; and were nursemaids and teachers to none other than the infant Bacchus, who we all know as the Roman god of wine. Why do I tell you all this? Because seven very real biological sisters from the Western Cape are successfully exporting their own wine label, 'Seven Sisters', to the world.

Vivian Kleynhans, the middle sister, and evidently the one with the entrepreneurial spirit and vision, is grafting a business in the South African wine industry which will ultimately benefit her six other sisters.

'It all started with a SAWIT (South African Wine Industry Trust) programme initiated in 2005 aimed to develop a generation of black wine makers,

viticulturists and business people, "and I thought, what a glorious and romantic environment to work in," says Vivian, who owned a human resources business. "But today I can say this isn't true: it's extremely hard work and asks lots of money." The programme helped me to develop my own trade mark and taught me about wine marketing. And then I thought that this could be the ideal opportunity to start a business where the whole family can be involved. I knew that I would have to be the one to establish such a venture and once it is successful, they would have enough courage to join me.'

Vivian's initial experience of being a new entrant in the wine industry was unfortunately not a good one. 'I connected with a wine farmer who agreed to supply me with bottled wine which I would then label and

‘To others it might be a lifestyle thing; to us it is putting food on the table.’

- Vivian Kleynhans



market. During my first large wine show in London an experienced international Master of Wine told me that there was something seriously wrong with the wine I had bought from the farmer. I had no idea. Admittedly I knew almost nothing about wine itself – my newly gained knowledge was mostly limited to the marketing side of things.’ An independent local blind tasting confirmed the verdict. The wine was undoubtedly off, a situation which impacted negatively on the particular label.

However, this setback made Vivian only more determined to make it in this challenging industry. ‘Initially I really experienced major animosity from the industry as a whole,’ she says boldly. ‘I now know that they didn’t fully understand me or the situation. They simply didn’t expect me to make it.’ I enrolled in an esteemed business school to learn more about viticulture and wine management. ‘I entered every available course about wine and wine tasting, front of house wine course, and more. No one was ever going to hoodwink me again due to my lack of knowledge of wine.’ When she felt empowered and ready, she registered a new trade mark, African Roots Wine and the brand ‘Seven Sisters’.

‘Since 2006 I’ve built a relationship with esteemed Cellars – those people are worth their weight in gold – they supply me with the product made to our specifications which we market under the Seven Sisters label,’ she beams. ‘I was ready to pull in my sisters. We had great meetings where I had them tasting wine and discussing our future and possibilities. We had to present the wine drinking populace with something new – an intriguing story. We decided to bottle our personalities! We considered our characteristics and they immediately gave me the Sauvignon Blanc,’ she smiles. ‘A full richness of tropical flavours, supported with both fruit and vegetable flavours – it fit my personality perfectly: serious, bold and firm, and not as spontaneous and cheerful as I thought.’

The Seven Sisters wines are named after each sibling: a Bukettraube (Odelia), Pinotage (Rose-Twena), Chenin

Blanc (Yolanda), Sauvignon Blanc (Vivian), Pinotage/ Shiraz (Dawn), Merlot (June) and Cabernet (Carol). Their approach and story found its mark especially amongst Americans and the 2009 Seven Sisters Sauvignon Blanc (Vivian) was selected by American Airlines to be served on their flights, the first South African wine ever. In 2007 their first containers were shipped to America and currently 110 000 bottles are being sold in 42 states.

‘But I soon realised it was a serious handicap not to own land and make our own wine. When wine buyers from especially Europe, the biggest wine buyers in the world, enquire about where our wines come from and I tell them we do not own land or make wine, they are somewhat reluctant to buy our wines.’ Consequently, Vivian approached Government in 2008 for assistance to obtain land. ‘It had to be in the Stellenbosch region – we wanted to be in the heart of the Winelands for our focus would also include a wine tourism side with a restaurant, guest house and tasting room.’

Government transferred ownership of 8,7 ha to African Roots Wine Trust in 2008. Four hectares of vines have already been planted and the next portion is due this year still. The Western Cape Department of Agriculture has assisted them with the construction of a store/wine cellar. The tasting room and restaurant building are halfway up and the sisters each have their responsibility set out for them according to their personality and skills. ‘I’ve also benefited immensely from the Department’s Marketing Access programme which is helping me to develop the European market and with their financial contributions, enter the Nigerian market. Local government plays an important role in our future as new entrants to build a lasting and sustainable business.’

‘It all takes time and money and dedication and the absolute will to stick it out. My dream is to share what we are doing here with others like us,’ she says. ‘Even if one other family can duplicate what we are doing here, they can give 50 people a better future – just

like we are doing with our family.’ Vivian also serves on the board of WOSA (Wines of South Africa) and plays a key role in the development of black-owned wine businesses. She is a founder member of the African Vintners Alliance. ‘My contribution to the group is to find markets and funds to access those markets.’

Bacchus and wine lovers will surely be pleased with the work these seven sisters are doing.



Vivian Kleynhans



Partnership Wines

The heart of a valley

Anyone will tell you that a partnership is only as strong as the various partners and the quality of their input. Based on this, Riebeek Valley Wine Partners, a black empowerment wine project where 40% is owned by 151 previously disadvantaged workers who are permanently employed on wine farms in the region, gets a thumbs up. Apart from Riebeek Cellar's 20% share, the remaining 40% is owned by 28 full-time grape producers in the Riebeek Valley.

In 2004 Riebeek Valley Wine Partners planted their very first 13,6 hectares of Sauvignon Blanc vineyards on the farm Highlands, now called Partnership Vineyards, comprising a total 83 hectares. 'Each of the workers received a subsidy of R25 000 from the Department of Land Affairs, and the amount was matched by the 25 grape producers as well

as Riebeek Cellars,' explains Zakkie Bester, cellar master and general manager of Riebeek Cellars. 'This generated the capital for purchasing and developing the farm, which required intensive preparation prior to cultivation.'

Initially Riebeek Valley Wine Partners planted 13,6 hectares with Sauvignon Blanc, with the ultimate goal of establishing an additional 63 ha of Grenache, Shiraz, Viognier, Chenin Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc. Slowly but surely the goal is being reached. By 2010 the first crop was picked on all the vineyards and by 2011 they had the first full harvest on all the cultivars. The final plantings were done in 2008. The beneficiaries invests 'sweat capital' by sharing their knowledge, experience and labour in their free time. 'We realise that true black empowerment



is not about doling out charity, but rather about creating opportunities,' says Zakkie. 'This farm, with its wonderful soil and winemaking potential, together with the cellar expertise of Riebeek Cellar, offers the group the opportunity to be involved in the entire winemaking process, from the soil to the bottle.' The Partnership Vineyards Sauvignon Blanc and Shiraz were bottled, labelled and released to the international market during early 2010.

'The main thrust of this initiative is sustainability,' says Charl Rudman, responsible for the marketing of the Partnership wines. 'It might take longer to become a huge commercial success, but we are determined.' Charl participated in the Western Cape Department of Agriculture's marketing training courses and consequent Market Access trip to Europe in 2010. 'One cannot solely rely on the concept of BEE for marketing purposes – you have to have the quality, the volumes and a unique selling point. The exceptional quality of our wine, our captivating story, together with the Fairtrade registration and our intense market research, have given us footing in Europe and we sold 7 000 bottles to a buyer from the Netherlands right before the Soccer World Cup in 2010.

Christo Somers, who was awarded the prestigious Farm Worker of the Year trophy in 2010, is currently a laboratory technician and wine administration officer at Riebeek Cellar. 'I'm so privileged to be part of such a successful endeavour. It feels as though I'm now a real role-player in the broad South African wine industry,' he says. 'I'm leaving something behind for my children and their children – something to be proud of. Without the assistance of the producers from the Riebeek Valley we would not have been where we are today.' Chris is responsible for all juice and wine quality analyses. He's also part of the Board of Directors of the project. 'We are really part of the decision-making process – there's no window dressing in this venture.' Zakkie Bester, cellar master and general manager of Riebeek Cellars is just as excited about the project. 'This is a beautiful project – all the role-players are dedicated to make this work.



The biggest advantage is that it gives ownership to people that grew up in this area and community – where it used to be unthinkable that they would someday own land here,’ he says. ‘The sustainability will naturally depend on the self-discipline of all those involved, including financial discipline.’

Currently the greatest challenge is the need to expand the farm. ‘We need more land and more vineyards for a profitable business,’ Zakkie explains. ‘Due to the fact that to date all the profits have been ploughed back into the development of the farm, no dividends have been available for the shareholders. Although they are aware of the long-term nature of the project, they might lose faith if they don’t soon see some sort of compensation from the project. This will only be possible if the area planted under vineyard is increased.’

Slightly more than seven years have passed since the inception of the project. The results of this vibrant

partnership: numerous changed lives, a commercially viable wine farm and more superb wines from the Riebeeek Valley gracing the glasses of international wine lovers. The Riebeeek Valley Wine Partners are undoubtedly part of a win-win partnership in all aspects.

‘The main thrust of this initiative is sustainability. It might take longer to become a huge commercial success, but we are determined.’

- Charl Rudman



Ericaville

Hope through Honeybush

Griqua people's journey with honeybush tea started ages ago and they introduced this fragrant tea to the Colonials who used to travel to the Southern Cape. The taste of honeybush tea is similar to that of rooibos but a little sweeter. In the year 2000, 84 Griqua families started a honeybush project on the outskirts of Plettenberg Bay and called themselves the Ericaville Farming Trust.

'Most of the families were grain, vegetable and stock farmers from the Vredendal area,' explains Sidney le Fleur, the farm and marketing manager of the Trust. 'They were relocated in 1970/71 and re-established in this area.'

'We started the process of applying for land in 1996 and eventually in 2000 each family received a grant

of R16 000 from Government with which we bought 40 ha of land outside Plettenberg Bay. At first we wanted to farm with vegetables – something we knew, but we soon found out that the acidity of the soil was too high and only proteas, tea or Buchu would be suitable.' After extensive research they realised that honeybush tea seemed to show the greatest market growth potential and as the plants grows naturally only in this Southern Cape region, it was the obvious choice.

'In the beginning we only sold the green tea, but by 2005 this had become unprofitable as a kilo of green tea only fetched R2,50/kg and as our goal was to supplement our income and create jobs, this would not do. Being introduced to Fairtrade changed our course: through them we met overseas buyers and

This humble plant, indigenous to the Southern Cape, has happily transformed the lives of 84 Griqua families.



started supplying small amounts of processed tea at R25/kg to these buyers through Fairpackers. Of course, it is always ideal to manage the complete process and we knew that we had to follow that route.' The Ericaville Farming Trust is still the only Fairtrade honeybush tea supplier in South Africa.

They did not have it easy throughout: even though they were able to pay dividends to the shareholders from 2005 to 2009, a severe drought struck them in 2010 and the flailing world economy caused major losses. They had to replant 5 ha and received assistance from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture to do so. 'Also our borehole caved in and had to be redone, we had floods and droughts for four years in a row. When we started we had 14,5 ha in production and after the disasters we were left with a mere 3,5 ha.' The group have recovered somewhat and currently harvests from 8,5 ha.

'We are fortunate to have six stable overseas buyers who buy from us two to three times annually and we have a great relationship. They've paid for us to be organically registered,' Sidney says. 'Through being Fairtrade and organic certified, we receive R45/kg compared to the R38/kg for non-organic tea.' Organic certification is a difficult and time-consuming process which requires perfect record keeping and costs R30 000/p.a. 'Fortunately we've never had trouble with the quality of our product. It is regularly tested by the PPECB as no residue is allowed on tea. Even the factory where it is processed has to be organically certified.'

Ericaville exports some 27 tons of tea to Italy, Austria, Oxfam in Belgium, Top QualiTea in Germany (their largest buyer) and America. 'The local markets are not as strong as the overseas markets,' he explains.

'Abroad they prefer single-region products and are far more health conscious.' They harvest on demand to ensure that the tea lover receives the freshest possible tea. 'From the time of harvest to being shipped our tea is never older than two weeks.

Harvesting the Honeybush is backbreaking work and according to Sidney le Fleur, it's a job women perform best due to their precise handling of the plants and extreme patience.



'The marketing training and exposure I received from and through the Western Cape Department of Agriculture really sharpened my knowledge,' Sidney says. 'I learnt that your approach must differ each time you approach a different nationality – you even have to know which jokes to tell and which not to tell. We've also received first-class assistance from the Department from which we've benefitted immensely, including expert advice, assistance with soil testing and information about value adding.'

'Our biggest challenge is undoubtedly climate change. The tea's growth time is usually in September, but last year it felt like winter until early December. And as October/November are our busiest months with everyone buying tea for the European winter, this is a huge problem.' Ericaville is one of two NGO's taking part in a climate monitoring programme where readings are taken every 3 months concerning the wind and rain, and compared to forecasts made.

All 84 families still form part of the trust. Three people are permanently employed, while the others, who are elsewhere employed, assist according to their skills.

'We aim to establish 30 ha – then it might be profitable to establish our own processing plant.'

'The satisfaction of seeing our progress and the learning curve of dealing with international clients is simply thrilling.'

- Sidney le Fleur



Gladys Mawoneke

A career in progress

Gladys Mawoneke, the CEO of Bumi Hills Group, has flair alright! But her story speaks of an iron will to succeed, hard work and overcoming many stumbling blocks along the way. According to Gladys she has not 'arrived' – her journey connected to agriculture may take a few turns yet.

Gladys came to South Africa from Zimbabwe in 1996 on a journalism study bursary to Rhodes but law was her first love and she took several law majors in addition to the prescribed subjects.

After obtaining her degree she was offered a job by a tobacco company who enabled her to continue with her law degree. During the time that she completed her articles she realised that her true love was business. 'I had no idea what kind of business,' she says. 'I drew up business plans for anything from dry cleaning to special bread, but it was not to be.'

She began making an unpasteurised fermented milk product which was extremely popular in her homeland which she then sold to her friends. 'It was hectic: I fetched raw milk early in the morning from a farmer in Paarl, then left it in my car to ferment while I went to work and then delivered the product on Sundays – all with my private car.' But expanding meant focusing on Cape Town as a market and unfortunately the bylaws of Cape Town stipulated that no unpasteurised milk product can be sold in its jurisdiction. Her business came to a grinding halt.

'The farmer then told me, "I like your work ethics" and offered me an opportunity to market his fruit in Africa. This is tricky because of the poor transport networks but I really needed to prove that I could do this.' After a meeting with the Fruit Producers' Association she connected with buyers in the Netherlands and decided to change direction and

‘As the business grew I realised I was limiting my vision.’

- Gladys Mowoneke



focus on Europe. In January 2009 her first container of fruit was successfully shipped overseas. Being a black woman operating in a predominantly white male environment has not been threatening at all. ‘I’ve experienced it as an advantage,’ she says. ‘Especially male Afrikaner men have assisted me in numerous ways.’

‘As the business grew I realised I was limiting my vision,’ she shares. ‘The next season was a poor one for the fruit industry and I could not get hold of fruit to export. There was also usually only action in the first quarter of the year and I needed to have something for the whole year.’ Gladys started selling fruit and vegetables to local retailers such as Pick n Pay family stores, Spar and various hotels. She was even contracted by Freshmark for specialised fruit for the Zimbabwean market.

‘But I soon realised that being the middle man is not as glorious as it may seem. My prices tended to be higher. Worst of all was that farmers growing for me started selling at lower prices behind my back and I could not remain competitive.’ One of her main challenges is that unqualified entrants to this sector often undercut prices to obtain markets. ‘However, they cannot keep this up and soon they’re out again.’ But the damage is done. Often they also supply products of a lower quality and I hope that industry laws will soon keep this from happening.’

Her connection to the Western Cape Department has been a highly beneficial one. ‘They continuously connect me to possible markets and keep referring customers to me. They’ve also helped me realise that I need to rather become part of the supply chain through value adding.’

‘My dream is consequently to open a processing plant in the Western Cape for niche products such as herbs. But this is extremely costly and I need a lift up. I have the expertise and experience and the passion to make it work,’ she says with a modest yet hopeful smile.





Vaaltyn Pieterse

De Doorns

Siyazama Klipland Boerdery

You'll find De Doorns in the fertile Hex River Valley, huddling between the mountains some 140 km from Cape Town – a lush table grape growing pocket reminding one of Switzerland when seen from the top of the passes on both sides.

'We all grew up in the valley – this is what we know,' says Vaaltyn Pieterse, previously a farm worker and currently the farm manager. 'And when South Africa started to change, we realised our time had come to not only work the land but to own it.' Vaaltyn and Alec Abrahams and their wives, as well as three others grouped together and approached Frans Hugo, a local farmer who became their mentor, for guidance. The only realistically available farm that they could lease was derelict with only brackish water available for irrigation. 'No one really wanted to farm

there,' says Vaaltyn, 'but we believed we had enough experience to turn it around.' In short, the 33 ha farm, of which 27 ha was planted, packed 70 000 cartons when Siyazama took over and in 2007, their first harvest, they packed 95 000 cartons of Dauphine grapes. This figure upped to 101 000 in 2008!

For two years, the group leased the farm on their own from the owner. Thereafter Land Affairs bought the farm and Siyazama has been leasing it from them ever since. With a grant of development capital, a gift of infrastructure from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, and assistance from their mentor and an accountant from a local bank, Siyazama was in business. 'We packed for Dole after Frans convinced them to give us a chance and after the first delivery they acknowledged that the chance they took on us

**‘We all grew up in the valley
– this is what we know.’**

- Vaaltyn Pieterse



has paid off,’ explains Vaaltyn. Currently they pack for Southern Fruit exporters. ‘But we’d very much like to export under our own label’.

Due to the fact that the price for Dauphine grapes is very low, they had to start replacing it with more popular varieties and consequently their production decreased to 70 000 in 2009 but the 2011 harvest brought them back up to 80 000 with the new varieties starting to produce significantly. All their grapes are being exported and when one holds one of the Canaan-sized bunches of grapes, there is no doubt that consumers on the other side of the waters are in for a treat when buying Siyazama’s grapes.

High praise goes to the assistance from the provincial Department of Agriculture: ‘The training opportunities facilitated by them have meant a lot for me,’ says Alec. ‘In addition to the assistance with obtaining production capital and implements, the exposure concerning marketing and exports have really empowered me – so much so that we’re for the first time exporting a container with 20 palettes all by ourselves!’

‘The 2010 Market Access trip to the Netherlands, Oslo, Switzerland and Belgium which I was part of showed me the bigger picture of exports. I clearly understood: you give quality or you leave it – there are many others who would gladly take your space on the shelf. It was good to see how containers are unloaded and inspected in the ports – something this simple definitely impacts the way you work.’

Like in any business there are challenges galore. ‘Obtaining production and development capital is difficult for a business such as ours,’ explains Alec, ‘getting and paying back a loan remains a challenge. We also still need to replace the old vineyards.’ In addition, they would like to buy the packing shed which they’re currently leasing and for which the owner wants R2 million. ‘Siyazama means “we are trying” (ons probeer) and we do just that,’ says Vaaltyn. ‘Together we’ve contributed to the economy



of South Africa; and we're creating jobs for the local community. Also, the people of the valley now look differently at us – we're contributing to the welfare of the town. I don't care about the hard work – I'm just very thankful for the opportunity to be part of this success story.' Siyazama permanently employs 28 people and an additional 32 during the harvest season from September to April.

Alec's fervour is catching: 'This is no project – that sounds like charity – this is a business run on sound business principles with profit as the main aim. My dream for Siyazama is that we'll grow towards significant profits, while empowering our workers, planting new cultivars and satisfying the overseas markets.'

When asked to what they ascribe their success, you hear: 'You have to have sound knowledge and experience of farming and don't try to handle your

own finances – get an expert that you trust for that side of the business. Also, do not initially use what profit you make to buy fancy stuff – plough back. And BE THERE – you cannot afford to go to bed while the workers have to spray at night – you have to make sure everything is as it should be.'

Valuable advice for any business, one would say.

'When South Africa started to change, we realised our time had come to not only work the land, but to own it.'

- Vaaltyn Pieterse



Intaba

'The Mountain' for the people

A little more than ten years ago, the farming community of Op-die-Berg Piketberg, realised that something had to be done about the high level of unemployment among especially women during the off season when all the fruit has been harvested. The farmers' association together with the community of workers and citizens living literally on the mountain approached Henry Leslie, who has more than 33 years of management and production experience, with a request to find a solution. They had fruit and they had labour, but no money.

Value adding in terms of producing jam and bottled fruit seemed the logical solution. In 2000 people were invited for interviews for which about 500 people turned out. 'There were about 30 people whose attitude, skills and experience made them suitable for

this project,' says Henry. For one year they received training in a variety of business concepts. During this time some people decided to quit and in the end nine directors were chosen with Henry as the managing director. In 2001 they registered their company, Die Berg Vrugte Verwerking, and received financial assistance to the value of R300 000 from a donor.

Due to the fact that most of the directors are members of the Moravian Church, they were able to purchase an old Moravian school building at a much lower price which left them with money enough for the minimum of equipment and most urgent restoration of the buildings. However, it left them with no working capital. A gift of fruit from the neighbouring farmers enabled them to be on their way.

‘Intaba’s suffered numerous growing pains, some almost crippling us, but we’ve come so far and we will not give up.’

- Elouise Josephs



Elouise Josephs

For salaries there was definitely no money in the kitty. The nine members worked like this for a year after which six of them decided this was no way to make a living – only Henry,

Elouise Josephs and Solly Jansen remained. They doggedly continued making jam when they had orders. ‘We had come so far, we simply could not give up,’ says Elouise, who today is the production and HR manager. ‘We tried another avenue and paid for a stall at the Bien Donné farmers’ day but returned with a loss of R150.’

However, this was not in vain: three months later the CSIR contacted them after having bought some of their products at the farmers’ day and offered them a grant of R1 million. ‘We used this to upgrade the factory and buy new equipment. But we were still not out of rough waters and we even sold ginger beer and hamburgers in town to pay for electricity and water,’ remembers Elouise.

Consequent assistance and training from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and the Department of Economic Development and Tourism guided them on and in 2007, seven years after their shaky start, Woolworths contracted them for jam for their Special Occasions range. ‘We were so emotional when the 2000 bottles aimed for the Christmas season left our premises,’ says Elouise. ‘They were happy with our quality and ordered another batch for Mother’s Day the next year.’ Their products contain only high quality fruit and no additives. ‘Our best sellers are our orange marmalade, the green fig preserve and the apple sauce and we are so proud when we see our bottles on the shelves of high end retailers.’

Since then the Melissa’s coffee shop chain has contracted them for bottled fruit and some of their preserves and jams are exported under the Something South Africa brand. ‘We’ve decided not to focus currently on creating and establishing our own brand,’ explains Henry, ‘as it’s more important to utilise the markets we have than to spend our resources on an

own brand.' Elouise adds: 'We've appointed a food technologist to experiment with new recipes such as the bottled small purple figs which we believe will become very popular. But we've also decided not to stray from our core business. For this reason we do not transport the finished product or produce fruit ourselves.'

'Market access remains our biggest challenge and our first priority is to create sustainable jobs. We dream of opening satellites in areas where specific fruit are produced – for example a facility for the processing of cherries produced in Ceres. The Department of Agriculture is currently assisting us with our HACCP certification and we've attended a very significant Making Markets Matter course through them,' says Elouise.

'We've given up on a lot of things,' says Elouise. 'But the success of the project in making a difference in the community, kept us from giving up. We now employ twenty people and each of them is constantly being prepared for the position above them. During the low season we also give jobs to several women from the community who would otherwise be unemployed.'

Landi Goliath, 23 years old, has been a permanent worker at Intaba for the past 3 years: 'Intaba has changed my life. I learned to be responsible and to persevere. With Intaba, I grow every day. I've learnt the importance of basic business concepts and the intimate relationship between Management and us as the workers, gives us security and hope for the future. I will remain here because Intaba will be successful.'

Jacques van Wyk, 36 years old, has been with the group for 8 years: 'Although the past eight years with Intaba cannot be described as an idyllic island vacation, I'm proud to say that the growing pains of Intaba have taught real valuable life lessons: about persisting when it all seems hopeless, about having patience and about the importance of relationships. And I've learnt to make jam! In this way I get to be creative, to experiment with different fruits and unconventional flavour combinations.

Intaba has enabled me to be the bread winner for my family and the confidence that Management shows towards me and my work, makes me stand tall.'

Intaba has become a mountain of steadfastness for those who work there. And for those who buy their products and those who hear about them, they're a beacon of hope.



'Intaba has enabled me to be the bread winner for my family and the confidence that Management shows towards me and my work, makes me stand tall.'

- Jacques van Wyk



Klein Ezeljacht

There is nothing better than farming

The January Overberg landscape is stripped bare of anything green. The wheat and oats have been harvested and only the dry stubble remains. Sheep group together in the searing heat – and then an unanticipated oasis appears, almost like a mirage, a dream of green.

You've arrived at Klein Ezeljacht.

The valley in which Klein Ezeljacht nestles is fed by the Sonderend River – translated to 'river without end' – and the soil offers the perfect foothold for apple and pear trees. Some 28 ha boast row upon row of dark green foliage, spotted with the red, yellow and green of swelling Royal Gala and Golden Delicious apples and Packham's Triumph and Forelle pears. For the sake of diversification André also farms with sheep

and about a 1 000 SA Mutton Merino completes the picture.

'When I was 6 years old I told my mother that by the age of 45 I will be a farmer on my own piece of land,' says André Cloete who rents Klein Ezeljacht from the Department of Land Affairs. From his CV you soon realise that everything he did from then on, prepared him for this day. After a two-year agricultural diploma at Kromme Rhee Agricultural College, he completed a course in Agricultural Irrigation Design at the Cape Technikon after which he was employed by Elgin Co-operative. In 1993 he applied for and landed the job as assistant manager on an Elgin farm where he remained for 14 years. 'I was forever searching for the ideal farm for me,' he says. 'And then in 2007 Klein Ezeljacht (871 ha) came on the market. It was a

‘When I was 6 years old I told my mother that by the age of 45 I will be a farmer on my own piece of land.’

- André Cloete



healthy running concern with 22 ha under deciduous fruit trees, had irrigation water for 52 ha, and 260 ha of dry land grazing – and it asked what I had to give.’

With the backing of Capespan and Two-a-Day André entreated the then Department of Land Affairs for assistance to buy the land. The Department consequently bought the property for him to lease. Despite the whisperings of frustrations and uncertainty concerning ultimate ownership, André’s passion for this farm as well as the production figures generated from it, simply screams ‘success!’.

André is not a run of the mill emerging farmer. ‘You have to think like a commercial farmer,’ he says. He is involved in organised agriculture, serves as director on the board of Two-a-Day and is part of a reference group which represents black farmers in the Western Cape to government on a National level. He is also deputy chairperson of the Caledon North farmers’ association. ‘My dream is to utilise this farm optimally,’ he says. ‘I’d like to push the hectares of fruit up to 50 ha and in the harvest season I’d like to employ 100 casual workers.’

More than 60% of André’s fruit is being exported, while the rest is sold locally and used for juice-making. Tru-Cape and the Two-a-Day group market all his fruit and export it with theirs to America and other European countries. ‘I’d really like to export my own fruit directly, but the risk is very high – I’m not ready for this. My main focus is on the production side of the farm – to put the highest possible quality fruit on the market.’

The Department of Agriculture’s inclusion of André in their Market Access programme has meant a lot to him. Although he already exports his fruit through Two-a-Day, this exposure has proven invaluable. ‘The visit to the markets of the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway and Sweden really opened my eyes as to what the expectations of the consumer and the overseas buyers are. You realise that the overseas markets demand extreme quality,’ he says.



A successful farm naturally not only holds benefits for the farmer. André permanently employs nine workers and about 30 casual workers during the harvest season. Social upliftment is part of André's fibre – he, for example, regularly employs men who are on parole: 'One can really make a difference by giving someone a chance to begin again. My farm manager, Willem Claassen, is one of the men who has grabbed this opportunity with both hands and who has risen from casual labourer to senior farm manager – and in

addition he was runner-up in a previous Farm Worker of the Year competition.'

According to André part of his success comes from their humble lifestyle, 'This keeps the pressure in check when prices are down or Nature gives you a backhand.' His positive go-get attitude and his evident love of farming are key to his success and inspire those who cross his path.



Chamomile

Woman, Mother... Successful farmer

It all started with a woman from Philippi selling a few dozen eggs from her house – only to immediate family and friends. Then coffee shops and small bakeries. ‘And then the entrepreneurship bug bit me,’ says Wadea Jappie.

‘My father was a business man and he taught us the principles of planning, dedication and discipline to work when the others went to the beach.’ The demand for Wadea’s organic eggs soon grew beyond her wildest expectations. ‘We called our business Chamomile because in its root it means “strength in adversity” – and so it has been. Many times the challenges and frustrations seemed intent on dragging me down, but I would not give up. I learned about chickens and the feed they needed from the internet and friendly suppliers.’

From 100 chickens in 2003, Wadea expanded to 3 000 layers towards the end of 2011 – from 80 eggs per day to 4 000 eggs per day. They are currently undergoing an environmental impact study as they plan on having 10 000 chickens by the end of the year and farming with more than 4 999 chickens requires such a study. In addition to the 1,6 ha they own, they’re renting 22 ha from the Department of Rural Development.

‘I also started planting danya (coriander), an ingredient present in all Muslim kitchens, and sold it to local butcheries.’ In 2004 they planted a patch of chillies but when the original buyer pulled out, she urgently had to find an alternative buyer. ‘I literally took the telephone book and looked under ‘fresh’ for a market of some kind. I found Freshmark, a division

‘The people have to eat. We have to farm. We will go on.’

- Wadea Jappie



Wadea Jappie

of Shoprite, and phoned them. They miraculously agreed to take my chillies – the start of a whole new direction for me – and our long-term relationship got off the ground.’ Soon they were supplying Freshmark with danya and radishes – up to 100 packets a day. And today she employs 10 permanent workers on the vegetable side and supplies Freshmark with carrots, cabbages, radishes, danya and cauliflower.

‘Our biggest challenges are the rise of input costs – to plant 22 ha asks for a major cash flow – and the difficulty to get people who are willing to work bent double the whole day. This industry has the potential to give work to many people but you have to be resilient and strong to continue,’ she says. ‘One of the other stumbling blocks is the lack of water in the Philippi area. We have to start looking at a water scheme as the levels of ground water are so low that boreholes that previously gave water at 30 m, now have to go as deep as 80 m. Wind contributes further to the increased use of water as we need to keep the soil wet when the wind blows, otherwise the sand blasting damages the vegetables.’

But despite these issues that they deal with daily, Wadea and her family have their heads up. ‘We’re fortunate to receive assistance from everywhere: especially the knowledge gained from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture’s Marketing Matters programme is invaluable. They’ve given us tools to ease and improve our record-keeping system in terms of traceability and administration.’ They also belong to the local farmers’ association, and a neighbouring mentor, Johan Terblanche, strengthens them in their marketing endeavour. They make use of his established packaging shed and shares transport to the markets with him.

It is no wonder that Wadea won the Western Cape Female Farmer of the Year for Informal Markets in 2006 and in 2009 the Emerging Farmer of the Year for the Western Cape trophy of the Agricultural Writers Association. 'My achievement as a farmer, while being a woman and a mother, shows the sky's the limit.'

'My biggest joy comes from seeing our palettes loaded onto the truck with bags and bags of crispy vegetables and herbs. When I see them on the shelves, I can say proudly: those are mine, and me and my children and our workers have put them there.'





Koopmanskloof

A corner of peace in the winelands

Koopmanskloof, one of the largest wine farms in the Stellenbosch region, with its proud peacock on the wine label is where Rydal Jeftha has kicked in his heels, made his mark and is making a lasting impact. When Rydal tells you of the farms, the 100 ha of private nature reserve and its people, it is with such passion that it is hard to believe that this is not his own farm.

Rydal's rise to where he is today as Managing Director of Koopmanskloof Vineyards, started at Lourensford Estates in 1981. From there the natural step was Ceres Fruit Processors and then on to Capespan. It is here that Louis Kriel former Head of Unifruco and Vinfruco saw his potential and recruited him to join Thandi Wines – his first wine position. 'I really struggled with the decision of whether this move made any sense

considering my background, but I realised wine is a value-added product and with my involvement in the wine industry I would have the opportunity to add value to the lives of other farm workers, including me.' Thandi then became the first wine brand in the world to obtain Fairtrade certification and the first Fairtrade wine to win a Gold Medal at the prestigious London International Wine Challenge which really made inroads in the market for the Thandi wine brand.

The Koopmanskloof empowerment story began when Stewie Smit decided in 2004 to sell Vredehoek, one of his six farms, to his workers. By means of an LRAD grant 68 workers consequently became the sole owners of this farm which are managed for them together with the rest of the Koopmanskloof infrastructure. Rydal was appointed in 2007 by the

‘The reality of a wine farm is that you continuously have to improve your infrastructure, and plough back.’

- Rydal Jeftha



Rydal Jeftha

Koopmanskloof Board and became the CEO of the company.

The workers also own 18% of the Koopmanskloof operational company. ‘Naturally it is a challenge for them to realise the long-term benefits of this situation,’ says Rydal who has 30 years experience in the agricultural environment. ‘Any person wants to see especially financial benefits as soon as possible, but the reality of a wine farm is that you continuously have to improve your infrastructure, and plough back. The children will eventually benefit, but we need to make the sacrifice now while earning a salary.’

However, the fact that all the farms are Fairtrade registered, gives the Vredehoek owners an immediate dividend. ‘There is a price premium on a Fairtrade wine and according to Fairtrade policy some 50c of every litre sold goes directly to the people,’ he explains. ‘This money is available for social upliftment initiatives undertaken by the workers. So far school fees and uniforms, solar geysers in all houses, sports equipment and crèche infrastructure and transport have been funded out of the Fairtrade Premium.’

With Rydal at the helm, Koopmanskloof produced Fairtrade certified wines are being sold in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, USA and China. Rydal, as Managing Director, also fulfils the role of Marketing Manager. ‘Until I came here in 2007 Koopmanskloof only sold bulk wine, and now our labels are enjoyed in lucrative international markets.’ Rydal also benefitted from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture’s Marketing Access Trip in 2010. ‘It may take up to two years to establish a brand overseas and it’s hard work.’

The Koopmanskloof and Vredehoek wine ranges were introduced in 2009. ‘We sold it based on its quality and value for money – the BEE story behind it or the Fairtrade link is not enough to build a brand on,’ he says. Rydal frequently participates at international wine shows: ‘You have to know whom you want to meet and make sure you have an appointment for



them to visit you. The competition is immense and you have to differentiate yourself and make contact with influential people.'

Today Rydal has a 33% share in the Koopmanskloof operational company. 'This farm is indeed like my own: from the diverse collection of people connected to it, to the special terroir which comprises different

altitudes and soil types, and the no less than 11 cultivars planted on the farm.'

This is clearly a success story about one man with a vision, but also of 68 workers whose plight have changed dramatically with the ownership of Vredehoek – a true 'corner of peace' for them all.



Kranskraal

One woman and her Karoo farm

This farmer's wide smile and enthusiasm when talking about her sheep, is infectious. You will not find a mighty farming enterprise on this farm – yet – but you'll be met with a love of the land and a drive to grow and expand. 'When I was a little girl, opening the farm gates for my father and working with the sheep was the ultimate joy,' says Allie Gordon, of Kranskraal, a farm just off the main road between Beaufort West and Fraserburg in the Groot Karoo. 'Highest praise came from my father when he said, "Allie, you're a girl but I trust you on the farm".'

Life took her away from her love affair with the land but after the death of her husband and 13 years spent as a nurse, she returned to the farm. 'After the death of my father, no one tended the farm and from time to time I spent my holidays here and fixed what I could,'

she says. 'However, there was no water or electricity and it was difficult keeping things going from so far.' On 5 April 2005 Allie came back for good – starting her farming enterprise with 50 sheep that she'd bought. She drilled for and found water and applied for and received electricity.

The flock grew at a rate of 60% per annum in the first 5 years and has stabilised at 370 for the last two years. 'My main aim is to improve the herd to stud quality.' Setbacks come in the form of Rift Valley Fever (Slenkdalkoors) resulting in 32 deaths, flash floods washing 45 sheep downstream or jackal killing 25 sheep but Allie handles these obstacles simply as part of the life of a farmer. 'When you're able to take your sheep to the market and receive a good price for them, it makes up for the troubles you've



Allie Gordon

‘In the beginning I had no knowledge or experience – just my love of the land – and now I’m a farmer on my own farm.’

- Allie Gordon

experienced.’ She markets her sheep at Karoo Lamb in Beaufort West as well as Roelkor. But she also knows that you can’t put all your eggs in one basket: Allie also sells wood from the farm during the winter months, makes and sells jams from the fruit on the farm and prepares and sells hand cured sheep skins.

Although it is necessary to dose and vaccinate the sheep, Allie also makes use of natural remedies when caring for her animals. For extra fodder, the sheep graze on the vegetation along the banks of the Koekemoer and Koos Louw Rivers.

‘The assistance I got from the Department of Agriculture has been priceless,’ she says. ‘Their encouragement gave me hope and they helped me with water tanks, water troughs for the animals, and material and labour to erect the fences. I also had training in Small Stock Herd Management. They’re always available with advice and ideas.’

‘The Karoo is not for softies. Floods, droughts and pests can bring you to your knees, but you simply have to remain positive,’ she says. ‘It is after all a blessing to be able to walk in the veld and see your ewes giving birth to healthy lambs. That’s why I stay.’

Allie recently won the coveted award for Western Cape Female Entrepreneur Smallholder.





Biesiebos

From illegal to fully viable

This is the story of illegal harvesting turned into a sustainable commercial enterprise. Biesiebos is a community of black and coloured people outside the seaside town of Pearly Beach which has been plagued by extremely high unemployment rates for years. For years harvesting the scrunched-up, but edible flower of the sour fig with its very tart syrupy insides, kept the wolf from the door.

Harvesting sour figs – or ‘suur vygies’ – on the surrounding farms and land belonging to the Walker Bay Nature Reserve somewhat eased the financial burden of this community. But this also brought the long arm of the law down on them. In order to counteract the overharvesting of sour figs, permits were required ever since 1975. ‘When Operation Neptune started to clamp down on marine

poachers in the area, they also targeted us,’ explains Hendrik Latola, director of the non-profit U’Zenzele Community Development Organisation under whose wing the sour fig project resides.

‘The main harvest season runs from October to March,’ says Hendrik, ‘thus it was ideal for people who needed money for the Christmas season, or for school fees, books and clothing at the start of the New Year. We realised we would have to approach the authorities for a legal way of harvesting and together with CapeNature an approved process was agreed upon and we received our permits in 2008.’

The agreement entails that no kids younger than 18 years are allowed to harvest, and only 20 people can enter a field at one time, which will decrease the

‘One of our biggest challenges is to unite the involved communities under one banner.’

- Hendrik Latola



chances of the plants being pulled out or trampled during the harvesting process.

‘We received a grant from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture to start a pilot project whereby we tried to establish new plants,’ says Hendrik. ‘Unfortunately no research has been done to guide us and we made many mistakes: for example we cleared alien trees from the 1,5 ha area to be used for planting using a bulldozer, which took away valuable topsoil. We also wrongly thought that the newly-established plants would not need much attention and water. But through their continued guidance I believe we will make progress.’

Despite the difficulties of establishing a new area for their own harvesting purposes, the 2008/09 harvest of 35 days brought them about 26 tons, converting to a total income of more than R350 000. ‘We are happy that we’re earning an income, but it frustrates us that the price per kilogram is so much out of our hands,’ says Hendrik. ‘We receive between R3 and R12 a kg; in Cape Town it goes for up to R35/kg and in Durban up to as high as R89/kg. We’d like to become a market force to be reckoned with. We want to be the one’s determining the price and not those coming in from the outside.’ As there are 180-250 people, mostly women, directly involved in the harvesting, this money has to stretch far. ‘Some 30% of the income has to be set aside for the logistical and administrative processes, as well as the quality controller we have to employ, but the largest part goes directly to the community. Each harvester is paid according to the weight of the figs he or she has harvested.’

‘We are very excited about our future,’ says Hendrik. ‘We want to focus on gaining maximum benefit from our natural environment, but simultaneously on sustainability, which means that we will strictly adhere to the prescribed harvesting procedures.’

‘One of our biggest challenges is to unite the involved communities under one banner. Also, marketing and



price negotiations are not something that we know enough about. The Department of Agriculture is helping us in this regard. We also realise that value-adding should be the way to go – this remains one of our dreams.'

Not only has the legal harvesting of sour figs in this area brought relief to the families of the Biesiebos

community, it has also significantly reduced sour fig poaching in the area. It seems that the partnership between the Biesiebos community, CapeNature, neighbouring farmers and the Western Cape Department of Agriculture is proving to be beneficial to all.



Thokozani

In celebration of ownership

Thokozani, the name chosen for the Diemersfontein empowerment project, means 'a celebration'. 'And indeed we have reason to celebrate about what we've achieved since Thokozani was launched in 2007 with 35 staff shareholders, including its white managers so as not to artificially split the workforce. Thokozani currently has 75 shareholders,' explains Denise Stubbs, the Director for Business Development. Denise is also largely responsible for the marketing of the wines.

But Thokozani is not only about wine. 'We do not have all our eggs in one basket: we have our own branded wines, but we're also in the property and hospitality sectors.' Thokozani runs the conferencing facilities at Diemersfontein and owns half of the hospitality accommodation (based on number of

rooms) on the Estate after having built a few four star cottages. The company's biggest capital asset comes in the form of property and not wine. The acquisition of the property and building of the cottages were financed through vendor loans, bank loans, staff contributions and with the help of external investors. It is estimated that the current value of the Thokozani property assets exceed R10 million. The fact that most of Thokozani's assets are linked to real estate means that, no matter how the wine or conference businesses perform, the workers have shares in a valuable, long-term appreciating asset.

Thokozani is owned by three groups of investors: the staff (who owns 30%), Diemersfontein represented on the board by David Sonnenberg (40%) and external investors (30%) with Jacques van der Heyde, a co-

‘Here the exposure gained from the Market Access Programme of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture went a long way in putting our wines out there’

- Denise Stubbs



founder and the Managing Director of African Capital Property Portfolio (Pty) Ltd, one of the leading Black-owned commercial property investment companies in South Africa, at the fore. Every worker with at least one year's service and a willingness to participate, was given between R5 000 and R20 000 worth of shares in Thokozani depending on their seniority. One condition was that they stay and work on the farm for at least five years. Despite the long-term nature of the endeavour, the business is already showing a small profit and declared its first dividend in December 2009.

The expert wine-making team of Diemersfontein is responsible for producing Thokozani's wines – thus reducing overhead costs and ensuring high quality. 'Our wines are doing really well internationally in the US, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, the Czech Republic, South Africa and Botswana,' says Denise. 'Here the exposure gained from the Market Access Programme of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture went a long way in putting our wines out there. The Programme has effectively empowered me to boldly promote our story and our wines. And we are received well.'

'Our vision is to become the most successful wine-producing business on the African continent,' says Jacques van der Heyde. 'Thokozani has the potential to grow its business exponentially for several years and compete globally. The partnership with Diemersfontein Wines provides access to the global market through established distributor relationships in more than 20 countries on 4 continents; and the goodwill and credibility earned through the company's sincere commitment to empowerment and development of the large number of workers in its shareholder base engenders the support of key external stakeholders including government, capital providers and strategic business partners. In addition, the combined business experience, competencies and networks of the company's management and external investors provide the necessary capacity for the creation of a truly global business.'

Diemersfontein owner, David Sonnenberg's view of the process of establishing a successful BEE company is insightful and well worth considering in similar situations. 'Having lived for 20 years in the UK the urge to return to SA at the millennium to develop Diemersfontein became overwhelming. We had this connectedness with SA at a very deep level – and the heritage of our wonderful 3rd generation Estate (bought by my grandfather in 1942). There was always the feeling of missing out on such a seminal phase of South Africa's history. Coming back would be dependent on our ability to participate as fully as we could with the transformative processes in South Africa, and we were privileged enough to have Diemersfontein as the obvious arena in which to express ourselves, and try our luck at building a business.'

'Thereafter the establishment of the Thokozani Company became a logical extension of the three businesses we were involved in, i.e. wine, property and hospitality – so we crafted, with the help of our own staff team and our external partner Jacques van der Heyde, a company that potentially could participate fully in most elements on Diemersfontein. I believe we have managed to help raise the self-esteem of a few youngsters in our team by creating opportunities for training and promotion – and appoint black people to management positions.'

'We also acknowledge that there is the business (or non-altruistic) benefit of having a vehicle that creates compliance with current BEE legislation – and we believe that despite the many questionable expressions of this policy, at its root it is an honourable idea. With many years to go before we can truly say our model is a success, we can nevertheless be proud of our learning curve! There are no quick fixes or magic solutions – just steady work at building capacity in an environment where the ability to tolerate disappointments is as important as showing energy and creating new avenues for expressing creativity.'

David defends his 40% slice, saying he needed to tie himself to the commercial success or failure of the fledgling enterprise, at least in the development phase. 'I did it because I saw BEE companies often become quite isolated,' he says. 'The whole purpose is to create a mentorship, not just hive off a bit of your farm. It should also be in my commercial interests that should Thokozani thrive, hence my retaining a healthy chunk of it.'

'Of course our dream is to eventually buy Jacques and David's shares,' some humour from Denise. 'But we know this will not happen overnight – we will be patient. And in the meantime we are grateful for the support we receive from both of them.'





Trevor's Farm

A dream comes to fruition

'This here was a wheat field when I first came here,' reminisces Trevor Abrahams. Today row upon row of rich green foliage spotted with sumptuous nectarines and peaches grace the eye as far as you can see.

'I knew that the LRAD plan to give a farm to a large group of people was not for me. Rather give three or four people a bare piece of land and let them build it up with hard work and determination. You have to be a farmer in the marrow of your being. Farming is not about making lots of money or driving 4x4's – it's hard work and it demands will-power and passion,' he explains.

Trevor, a former teacher with a MA degree in education, grew up on a farm in the Warm Bokkeveld. Being the child of a teacher, he knew he wanted more

than the life of a farm worker. 'Tertiary education gives you the skills to understand difficult scientific material or research findings and this has given me an advantage on the farm,' he reflects.

During his time as teacher in Ceres, his affinity for farming found expression in his small-scale operation on the local Municipal communal land. 'Subsistence farmers only collect things,' he says. 'You obtain a few head of cattle, a few pigs and what you make by selling them; you simply plough back into food for the others or more animals. But for some this satisfies a need.' Not for Trevor though. When Trevor became frustrated with the slow process of transformation within the education system, he called it farewell and joined a local abattoir as manager – one step closer to agriculture, as he puts it. For nine years Trevor

‘Farming is not about making lots of money or driving 4x4’s – it’s hard work and it demands will-power and passion.’

- Trevor Abrahams



Trevor Abrahams

worked in the secondary agricultural sector – but at least he worked with farmers. Towards the end he was human resources and production manager of two factories.

During this time his eyes were always on available land and when prof Kader Asmal, the late Minister of Water Affairs, enquired about emerging farmers in the area who could benefit from subsidised water from the Koekedouw Dam scheme, Trevor and the sixteen other communal farmers were the only one's to step forward as an 'association' of some sorts – with Trevor as the chairperson. Based on the willing seller/willing buyer concept, government grants enabled six groups to ascertain land. Trevor and his family made up one of the beneficiary groups and initially bought 17 ha with their grant.

When Trevor was called to make a contribution in 1998 during the opening ceremony of the dam, Robert Graaff, a local producer and packer with a substantial fruit operation in the valley, approached him and offered him his mentorship and friendship – an agreement which has stood the test of time. 'Robert's assistance has, through the years, shifted from the orchard to the marketing side of things,' Trevor says. 'I get the feeling that my business is almost just as important to him as his own. Trust is paramount in such a relationship.'

When the banks turned down Trevor's request for a loan, he had to hear that he would be a high risk client and the fruit industry was experiencing a low point. 'Robert helped me with a loan account of close to R1 million which I have already paid back. That's trust. There are different levels of goodwill,' he says. 'And Robert went all-out to make a real and lasting difference.'

Although Trevor's fruit are included in the exports of Robert Graaff, the Market Access training programme and overseas trip provided by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture proved to be invaluable. 'Overseas fresh produce markets are not simply interested in the BEE story behind the fruit – they



ultimately want quality – and that’s my focus. Even though one has to understand your markets and especially foreign markets such as Russia, Belgium or Switzerland, one does not have to be the marketer as well. You can and should buy in marketing expertise while you focus on what you do best.’ Trevor packed about 500 tons of fruit from 39 ha in the 2011 season and with the addition of a new farm that he just bought near Wolseley, he plans to up this figure to 900 tons.

His kicks come from knowing that he has contributed towards putting the best quality stone fruit on the shelf for consumers to enjoy. ‘It’s like giving birth to the next generation of fruit – season after season. Making your choices: when to do what in the orchard, which new plant material to invest in – and then the utter satisfaction of having the fruit after three years, right at the time when the consumer wants it.’

From standing alone in an old wheat field to employing 40 people – Trevor has indeed come a long way. ‘We

as farmers have a responsibility to make a significant difference in the lives of one of the most neglected communities – our farm workers.’

‘The assistance I received from the Department of Agriculture, Land Affairs, Water Affairs, the Deciduous Fruit Industry and my mentor, Robert Graaff, has proven to be invaluable and I am eternally grateful to them. I have successfully moved from being a subsistence farmer to being a producer of quality fruit with a foothold in the overseas market.’

**‘You have to be a farmer
in the marrow of your being,
to grow from subsistence to
small commercial.’**

- Trevor Abrahams



Uitvlugt

We have what it takes

Lionel Martin is a farmer through and through. His extensive experience started some thirty-eight years ago when he was appointed farm manager on a Grabouw apple and pear farm. His next step was senior manager at Lourensford in Somerset West. 'I was ready to step up when Lourensford owner, Christo Wiese, sold one of his farms, Uitvlugt, to the Department of Land Affairs in 2008,' says Lionel. 'The Department transferred the farm to 138 permanent employees through an LRAD grant and I was appointed head trustee and farm manager.'

Of the 138, twenty people were already working on this particular farm, situated a few kilometres outside Villiersdorp. The farm is planted under Golden Delicious and Granny Smith apples of which 53 ha of trees are in production. They've established 5 ha of

Royal Beaut apples – a newer, popular cultivar and plan on planting 5 ha of Packham's Triumph soon. 'When we took over the farm in August 2008, the orchards were really under the weather and have not undergone the necessary winter production practices,' says Lionel. 'We had to work hard to get them ready for the harvest early the next year.'

Lionel's right hand is Hans Kouter whose 35 years of experience makes him invaluable as production manager. 'We have a five-year contract with Lourensford to supply our harvest to them,' explains Hans. 'After the five years, which ends in August next year, we would very much like to export our fruit by ourselves.' Currently 80% of Uitvlugt's fruit is packed in Lourensford's packing store which is situated in Somerset West, one hundred kilometres from

‘One has to have a strong character in this industry, and experience and vision – we have all that. We’ll take this farm into the future.’

- Lionel Martin



Lionel Martin

Uitvlugt, and exported to various countries in Europe and the UK. The Uitvlugt Farming Trust already has an import-export license and is GLOBALGAP and Nature’s Choice accredited. ‘Our biggest moment came when our first container filled with 1 330 boxes of Granny Smith apples left the Cape Town harbour aimed for the shelves of a supermarket giant in the UK,’ says Lionel.

Lionel’s exposure trip to Fruit Logistica Berlin and the Netherlands in 2011 opened new possibilities. The trip was funded by the Fresh Produce Exporters’ Forum, the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and the NAMC. ‘This is the most impressive fresh produce trade fair in the world and I was overwhelmed by the strong competition against which we have to fight for a space in the market.’

No operation such as this one is without its teething aches. The fact that only 20 people work this farm, while the rest of the group is employed on the other Lourensford farms, creates certain feelings amongst those involved: on the one hand those living and working on the farm experience the excitement of doing their own thing first-hand, while those working elsewhere feel excluded from the action. On the other hand the people employed on the other farms, find it almost impossible to give their input via sweat capital due to the distance and a lack of transport, while those on the farm expect it of them according to the agreement.

Such a large group of people also had to learn to trust their leaders. In addition, the long-term nature of farming is sometimes difficult to understand and accept. ‘For example, last year was the first time we made a small profit, while the group wanted the farm to change their lives right from the start. It’s getting better now. They trust the managing team and I do believe the situation will improve,’ he says.

‘Our biggest challenge is that we need to expand in various ways,’ explains Lionel. ‘We need housing for the more than 200 casuals that we employ each



harvesting season. Currently we're renting a hostel, but this is not a permanent solution.'

'But our dreams and determination will keep us going,' he says. 'We get our kicks from pushing up the tonnage of the old trees despite the fact that they are about 26 years old. And seeing how the correct pruning, fertilising and irrigation practices yield the desired results.' The group plans on establishing an additional 30 ha of pears and hope to receive funding from overseas donors. 'We also dream of seeing our

own logo on the boxes. I receive many emails from European and African countries for our fruit - I'm sure we'll be ready when the time arrives.'

'One has to have a strong character in this industry, and experience and vision - we have all that. We'll take this farm into the future. I will always remember a statement of a previous minister of Agriculture: "It is not the knowledge, but the use of it which is productive of real benefit".'



Vuyani Klipkraal

From the community, for the community

The Nelspoort community some 50 km outside Beaufort West in the Groot Karoo has always seemed to show elements of the Cinderella fairytale: the unappreciated sister with all the odds stacked against her. But the presence and success of the Vuyani (meaning 'joy and happiness') Klipkraal (name of the original farm) Trust has given this story a happy ending.

Nelspoort, once home to one of the country's most well known TB sanatoriums and which later became a psychiatric hospital where the British Royal family paid visits, threatened to become a ghost town after the hospital was significantly down-scaled in 1998. During this time the farm was transferred to the National Department of Agriculture. However, the people who used to work at the hospital also lived in

town and when Government built more houses during the early 2000's, still more people moved there. Today around 3 500 people populate this Karoo town – and almost 90% of them is unemployed.

Almost eight years ago when the farm which supplied the hospital with fresh produce and meat was transferred to the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, a project was initiated by which those that were employed by the hospital (290 people + 25 farm workers) could either receive a severance package or become part of the Trust managing and farming the land surrounding the hospital. The agreement entailed that the farm will be farmed to the benefit of the community – supplying them with affordable vegetables and meat. Being a R80 per taxi trip from Beaufort West meant that shopping was an

‘Our mandate from Government was to try to rebuild the farm to its former glory, create jobs, and reduce poverty within the community.’

- Hennie Oerson



expensive outing.

‘From 2004 to 2009 we received government assistance from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture in many ways: training, infrastructure, etc,’ says Hennie Oerson, who worked as Head of Personnel of the hospital for 20 years and is now the general manager. ‘Our mandate from Government was to try to rebuild the farm to its former glory, create jobs, and reduce poverty within the community. The Department employed CASIDRA as our implementing agent and they helped build capacity amongst the trustees, transferred valuable skills and supported us throughout.’

‘Together with CASIDRA we developed a five-year business plan and we are proud that we fulfilled our mandate. Southern Cape Land Committee, an NGO with whom the community has had a long relationship, were also very strategic in supporting and assisting us with the necessary information and done some training on institutional arrangements. We were not farmers but we wanted the idea to work.’ The group faced numerous challenges during the starting years: a lack of business prowess hampered their progress; an inability to make their own decisions caused some to feel unempowered and available funding sometimes had to be spent in haste before the end of the financial year.

‘But since our five-year agreement has expired in 2009, I’m happy to say, we have been relying on our own funds completely – we have been farming sustainably for more than three years.’ The Trust continues to rent the land from the Beaufort West Municipality.

Today you’ll find a Nguni stud consisting of more than 40 animals, 640 breeding Dorper ewes with more than 400 lambs, more than 500 laying hens and a capacity for 1 000 broilers. ‘We’ve established a red meat and a white meat abattoir – a facility also used by farmers from the area. In addition to official registration of the abattoirs, a qualified inspector was required – a qualification which Hennie studied for



and obtained.

The number of challenges has not decreased since then – farming in the Karoo holds its own set of trials: droughts, floods and diseases such as Rift Valley Fever (Slenkdalkoors) plague them; and the community is mostly negative towards the project as they continuously demand lower prices, yet is loath to become involved. ‘We are really looking at ways of involving the community, especially women, and enabling them to earn their own money,’ says Anghenick Jonas, the chairperson of the Trust. ‘We’re currently considering outsourcing some of the entities and we have to investigate obtaining ownership of the farm. After all, we’ve proven that we are dedicated and that we’re succeeding.’

According to Anghenick, many lessons were learnt along the way: ‘You have to have passion for what you’re doing, you have to persevere and have vision otherwise you’ll give up halfway. Being involved in

this project has broaden my horizons and I’d like to share the business and farming training I’ve received and the experience I’ve gained with others in similar situations. We’ve had emerging farmers visit us – we are not an island, we are keen to share with and learn from others.’

Klaas Jonas is responsible for the herds: ‘This project has given me a responsibility, I’ve grown in so many ways and walking amongst the animals really makes me happy. When the Department of Agriculture down-scaled I could have taken the package money and retired, but what would I have achieved sitting at home doing nothing?’

Piet Rietels, in charge of the chickens, agrees: ‘I’ve been given a new direction in life.

The ‘joy and happiness’ that radiates from the Vuyani Klipkraal Trust is impacting the whole community.





Abundant Inspiration

Charlene Nieuwoudt

Commissioned author

Having worked for the Western Cape Department of Agriculture for several years, I've come to understand the challenges that emerging and commercial farmers face on a daily basis. I know of their frustrations, their expectations and their joys. And we all know that without a viable market even the most perfect bunch of grapes or the largest possible harvest simply means no money in the bank. The objective of the Department's Market Access Programme is to unlock markets for the produce of farmers in need of assistance and these 15 stories give testimony to the success of this programme.

As I've also experienced the suspicion with which Government supported development projects are often regarded, I'm only too happy to reassure any such sceptics that these 15 projects truly inspired

me. The people benefiting from the Department's expertise are worthy agriculturists with a tangible love for the land and the industry.

As with any entrepreneur and any business and indeed any farming operation, the continued success and survival of these enterprises cannot be guaranteed. But I'm absolutely convinced that failure will not come to these producers through a lack of commitment or hard work. Producers, investors, agricultural departments from other provinces and ordinary citizens of South Africa will do well to learn from the people whose stories have unfolded on the pages of this book.

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