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HarvestSA

Securing South Africa's Food Resources

Breaking new ground

AFGRI Agri Services, Kagiso Trust and Potatoes South Africa join forces to support new era potato farmers

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AFGRI Agri Services, Kagiso Trust and Potatoes SA have joined forces in an intitiative to encourage more smallholder farmers to become part of the commercial agricultural supply chain.

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CAPE MEDIA

Foreword

Initiatives to feed the world

Jacob de Villiers

As the world population continues to grow, with current predictions citing that there will be nearly 10 billion people on Earth by 2050, our planet is likely to face a food crisis. This fact has been well-documented by a number of global organisations, including the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. According to the World Wide Fund for Nature, South Africa alone will have to produce 50% more food by 2050 to feed an estimated population of 73 million people, an astronomical target if you think about it, particularly given the more recent challenges of climate change and economic performance.

What is clear is that the country will not meet this target if we don't come up with other solutions post haste – with one being to encourage more smallholder farmers to become part of the commercial agricultural supply chain.

The WWF estimates that there are approximately two million smallholder or household farmers compared to 35 000 commercial growers. However, these smallholder farmers, or new era farmers, face several challenges, the most critical arguably being access to land, access to support (mentorship), access to finance and access to markets.

In this issue of *HarvestSA* we look at some of the initiatives aimed at helping new era farmers to become commercially viable, with the hope of beefing up our defences against possible food insecurity. Of course, one cannot overlook the social and economic imperative of ensuring there are more successful farmers in our country.

One of these initiatives is a partnership between AFGRI Agri Services, Kagiso Trust (through the Tyala Impact Fund) and Potatoes SA, aimed at addressing the major challenges faced by South Africa's new era farmers. We believe that the agreement will give rise to a sustainable solution to these challenges.

From an AFGRI Agri Services perspective, this project falls in line with what we've been doing to support new era farmers over the past eight or so years.

Since 2012, through our training and development arm, Lemang Agricultural Services, we have assisted over 650 farmers to enter the market, establish viable and sustainable business and remain profitable.

However, we cannot afford to be complacent and are constantly assessing how we are able to extend this support to others. As an agricultural services company with deep roots in this country, we also believe that agriculture can be a key driver of economic transformation and so it is heartening to see other initiatives aimed at ensuring that South Africa continues to have a sustainable agricultural sector into the future.

Jacob de Villiers
CEO, AFGRI Agri Services

EDS NOTE

Good times, bad times

GREG PENFOLD
greg@capemedia.co.za

If ever there was a time for South African society to display that elusive but unmistakeable quality known as gees (the English translation, "spirit", doesn't quite capture the word's, dare I say it, gees), then it is now. Perhaps it is presumptuous to say so, but the present moment reminds me of the tribulations of Job. Put to the test through the machinations of Satan, the Adversary, Job had to endure all manner of torments simply to prove his faith.

In the end, despite losing everything he owned, all the people dear to him, and inflicted with painful sores to boot, Job refused to renounce his faith. Could there be a more vivid demonstration of gees than that? No community on Earth has more gees, collectively, than the agricultural community. Farmers, growers, have been through drought, famine, fire, and flood. Add the coronavirus pandemic to the mix. Already the community is displaying the leadership knowledge won from decades of working the soil. See the coronavirus management guidelines published by TLU-SA in this issue.

What will happen when the dust settles? Nobody can confidently predict the future. However, whatever happens, it will be the farmers and growers that lead the way once again. A new era of agricultural entrepreneurs is arising as established commercial farmers join hands with emerging farmers in commercial sectors such as potato cultivation, as witness the fantastic news that AFGRI Agri Services, Kagiso Trust and Potatoes South Africa have agreed to assist South Africa's new era farmers with the access to technical support, finance and markets that they need. Already, these new-era farmers have displayed that they have the gees, soon they will be standing on their own two feet on the stage of world agriculture.

It's a big stage and the audience can be scary, but with the support of these three organisations, success is within their grasp. May there be many more such ventures.

Products, insights, expertise

Villa Crop takes things to the next level

Villa is focused on a year of growth with the opening of a new warehouse and Cape regional office in Paarl, the offering of new Ag-Tech Services and investing in training and research through the University of Stellenbosch.

More capabilities

Villa Crop Protection launched a new warehouse and distribution hub, consisting of 3500m2 of floor space to store crop protection stock for the Western Cape in an official opening that took place on 3 March 2020.

This was done in line with Villa's plans to further expand its growing market share in the Cape region.

Regardless of the ongoing political and economic uncertainties and the challenges that climate change brings, Villa South Africa CEO Dan Hennessy, who is also the vice president of Winfield United, the US majority-owned stakeholder of Villa, confirmed that this was not the last investment in infrastructure Villa would make in South Africa. "We see great potential for growth in the South African agriculture industry. It has a dynamic agricultural community that has proven over the centuries that they can thrive on the greatest challenges, whether political, natural or economic," said Hennessy.

The new Villa premises were completed in December 2019. It is built on a 1.1ha plot in the Zandwyk business park just outside Paarl and also house the new Cape regional offices. "This storage space and offices are as much for the farmers as it is for Villa. Supplying products is our business and this facility enables us to ensure appropriate stock levels and quality of all our products," said Marius Boshoff, general manager of Villa Cape region and marketing director of Villa South Africa.

Products, expertise and data that lead to insight-driven solutions

Villa is already a major player across all crop markets in south africa, including adjuvants, fungicides, herbicides, insecticides, micronutrients and plant growth regulators. The company has a robust company product development pipeline with many new products currently in development.

Villa, through its US majority partner Winfield United, has the best-in-class new adjuvant systems such as INTERLOCK™, which assists with the deposition of droplets on target, the depth of canopy penetration and reduces drift. It helps the chemistry hit its intended target where it can be most effective. Another popular product, CLASS ACT™, has the benefits of CornSorb™ technology, which is a patented mixture of a unique surfactant spreader and a humectant. This technology improves uptake by the weeds, which has dramatically improved the efficacy of glyphosate and glufosinate on difficult to control weed.

Villa also offers patented technology through the MAX-IN™ Micronutrients range, which is also powered by CornSorb™ technology, and which increases the humectancy and keeps the droplets wetter for longer. This improves nutrient uptake by driving 25-50% more nutrients into the plant cells.

This type of technology, along with the expertise the company provides through its Answer Plot™ demonstrations, intern and associates programmes, expert technical advisors, training and input from Winfield United's international experts, as well as active mentoring from consultants and various training and bursary programmes, are what put the company in a position to better serve crop protection customers.

Villa uses 900 annual statistical trials, data collected from its Answer Plots™ and its

NutriSolutions 360™ and Resolutions 360™ programmes to turn data into insights which ultimately provide solutions in the field.

The ReSolutions 360™ project, for example, pro-actively monitors residue activity in export crops. This is done by using Croptical (Geosys) NDVI and EVI mapping, which allows the person on the ground to sample from key locations based on plant vigour, etc., which helps generate better statistical sampling. This determines the standard deviation of active ingredient residues and assists the farmers to manage risks with residue compliance. Villa also has a new offering in Ag-Tech and Services through the company METOS SA™, which will be providing weather stations and data from Pessl Instruments, which already has products available in five continents. These services will focus on the collection and collation of accurate data that will drive insight-driven solutions, backed by data.

Training and research

At the same time, Villa's investment in education and training also received a major boost. At the opening ceremony, Marius Boshoff announced that Prof. Nick Kotze, chair of the agronomy department at Stellenbosch University (SU), will also take up the Chair of Crop Health at SU. This chair is a collaboration agreement between the SU agronomy department and Villa Crop Protection. Villa has allocated R10.5 million for this project over the next three years.

Some of the funds will be used to provide financial support to students as well as skills development for workers and experts in the agricultural sector. Villa's education arm, the Villa Academy, has proven over the past seven years that the model is working well, and this collaboration agreement may also bring about a solution to the gap in much-needed training at levels 1 to 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). All previous Villa Academy short courses will be done through Stellenbosch University in the future.

Weather station at display at the Villa Cape office and warehouse

Breaking ground with new era potato farmers

AFGRI Agri Services, Kagiso Trust and Potatoes South Africa have joined forces to support new era potato farmers

Front, from left: Praveen Dwarika, Interim Managing Director, Lemang Agricultural Services; Mankodi Moitse, CEO, Kagiso Trust; Thabiso Ratsomo, Kagiso Trust Board of Trustees; Marion Shikwinya, Lemang Agricultural Services.
Back, from left: Mzomhle Nyenjana, CFO, Kagiso Trust; Themba Mola, COO, Kagiso Trust; Andre Jooste, CEO, Potatoes SA; Bankies Malan, Operations Manager, Lemang Agricultural Services; Teresa le Roux, CEO, Ukunika; Ross Simmons, Managing Director, UNIGRO; Moholo Selala, Head: Socio-economic Development, Kagiso Trust.

AFGRI Agri Services, Kagiso Trust (through the Tyala Impact Fund) and Potatoes South Africa ("PSA") recently signed a ground-breaking agreement aimed at addressing the major challenges faced by South Africa's new era farmers – access to technical support, access to finance and access to markets. The agreement will give rise to a sustainable solution that will involve the co-operation of three reputable players in their field of expertise to provide a holistic approach to these challenges.

Whilst initially focused on potato farming in South Africa, with the aim of establishing commercial new era potato farmers, the solution will not be limited to potatoes in the longer term, with the intention being to establish commercial new era farmers in other export crops, including avocados, grapes and apples.

"South Africa's land reform process is likely to not yield the desired success if support for new era farmers does not improve considerably. Without structured support and appropriate funding, new era farmers who venture into commercial farming are bound to fail, given that commercial farming is a capital-intensive business requiring specific knowledge and support. The battle to secure support has already forced many struggling new era farmers to rent out their land to established farmers," says Mankodi Moitse, the CEO of Kagiso Trust, one of South Africa's leading development agencies.

"If this is left unchanged, South Africa is likely to see more new era farmers being forced out of the commercial agricultural space, which will render the land reform process futile." According to Mrs Moitse, the timing of the solution was therefore opportune. "Given the potential role of agriculture in economic transformation and food security, Kagiso Trust also wants to extend its contribution beyond education and other development interventions to agriculture. As such, Kagiso Trust set up the Tyala Impact Fund, so this agreement ticked all the boxes."

One of the key elements of the solution is training. According to Jacob de Villiers, the CEO of AFGRI Agri Services, new era farmers often lack good, technical 'hands on' training.

"Through Lemang Agricultural Services, our new era farmer development initiative which started back in 2012, AFGRI already delivers support to new era farmers aimed at improving productivity through advice, information and other critical support services."

De Villiers explains that Lemang assists farmers through theoretical training, mentorship as well as technical advice and financial assistance to enable the farmer to unlock the full potential of the land.

"To this end the programme has assisted over 650 farmers who have been able to enter the market, establish viable and sustainable business and remain profitable. However, what has made Lemang truly stand out in terms of the successes achieved is the support given to new era farmers by experienced mentors, who are literally in the fields training the farmers, and with them virtually every step of their development journey."

Under the co-operation agreement, Lemang will provide joint technical assistance and training with PSA on potatoes as well as rotational crops. Lemang's assistance will further include co-funding – through AFGRI Agri Services' financial services arm, UNIGRO – as well as training and mentorship in order to develop new era farmers to become full participants in the commercial agriculture value chain and to be part of the agricultural mainstream.

UNIGRO MD Ross Simmonds says that there is still relatively little appropriate financial support available to new era farmers. "Financiers struggle to provide funding to these farmers, given their lack of financial history and access to equity, amongst others. However, given the mentorship provided through Lemang Agricultural Services and PSA, the financial support of the Tyala Impact Fund, and UNIGRO's deep agricultural finance knowledge, we are able to assist. Solutions can only be found through partnerships between companies committed to the sustainability of the South African agricultural sector."

Access to markets is another significant requirement, and here is where both PSA and AFGRI Agri Services will be key. PSA CEO, Andre Jooste, says that required off-take agreements, i.e. the assurance from a business that it will buy the new era farmer's produce, is vital. "Both PSA and AFGRI Agri Services have access to networks that include suppliers and technical partners in the co-op space to facilitate the required off-take agreements."

Jooste explains that the PSA and commercial potato producers are no stranger to the development of new era farmers, and already contribute to ensuring that these farmers gain commercial producer status through PSA's Enterprise Development programme.

"The number of hectares supported by the programme increased from 37 hectares to 320 hectares over a period of eight years. During this time, two farmers, one in Limpopo and one in the Eastern Cape, graduated to commercial status, each planting more than 30 hectares of potatoes."

He adds that it is imperative to establish successful partnerships with key role players in the potato value chain and beyond to support new era farmers.

Finally, and perhaps most critically, is access to funding, especially affordable funding. UNIGRO will be the commercial debt financier but will require the equity gap to be plugged.

"This is where the Tyala Impact Fund comes in, providing funding at development returns. In addition, the extremely low average funding rate between UNIGRO'S senior debt interest rate and Tyala's development interest rate provides an affordable repayment debt profile for new era farmers – leaving them with a sustainable farming operation yet access to cash to fund their lifestyle," explains Teresa le Roux of Ukunika Investments, which developed and proposed the solution, and is working on other, similar initiatives in the agricultural space.

"We are all very excited at this unique opportunity to work together to improve the lot of new era farmers in our country and are looking forward to making a tangible and sustainable difference to the South African agricultural sector," says de Villiers.

More about the players involved

AFGRI Agri Services

AFGRI Agri Services is a leading agricultural services company and as a partner in agriculture, we provide services across the entire grain production and storage cycle. We offer financial support and solutions as well as inputs and hi-tech equipment, supported by a large retail footprint. Our passion for the development of new era farmers, through the Lemang Agricultural Services training programme, established in 2012, is developing strong future farmers. Our vision is to unlock agricultural potential not only in South Africa but Africa and in doing so, ensure food security across the continent. We have comprehensive and intimate knowledge of agriculture in South Africa and the region. To us, it is more than a job, it's our passion.

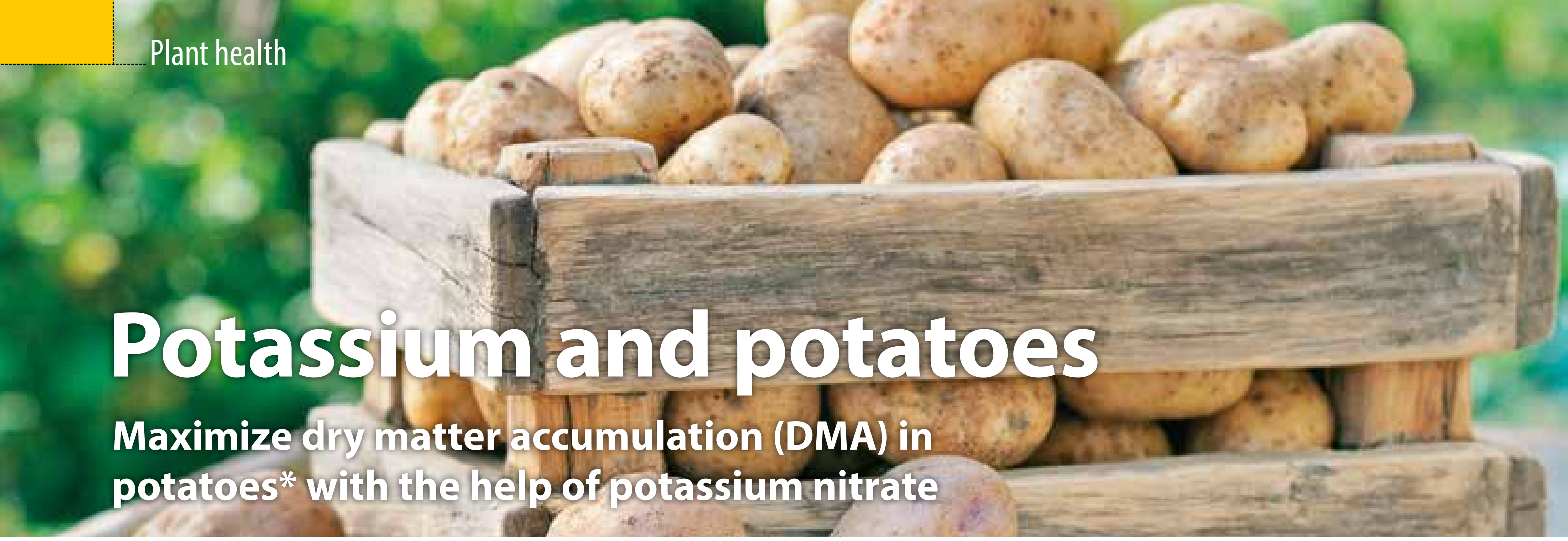
Kagiso Trust

Kagiso Trust is one of South Africa's leading development agencies working towards a prosperous, peaceful, equitable and just society. We work to overcome poverty by developing and implementing scalable, replicable, sustainable development programme models in the areas of education development, institutional capacity building, socio-economic development (SED) and financial sustainability. Over the past 30 years, we have invested over R2 billion in development and implemented over 1,831 programmes. It is the goal of our SED to establish a holistic solution for emerging black farmers through collaboration with aligned partners. Appropriate funding has proven to be one of the major challenges faced by farmers.

The Tyala Impact Fund was thus established to provide solutions for farmers on essentials including funding, market access and technical support.

Potatoes SA

PSA is a non-profit company, whose main objectives are to serve as the mouthpiece of the South African potato producers; to establish and maintain a central representative body called the Potato Industry Forum, in respect of all potato affairs in which all the role players in the potato industry can participate and in doing so set industry strategies; to institute and endorse the maintenance of a national Potato Industry Development Trust which shall collect, distribute and govern industry levies in accordance to statutory strategies as set out in the government notices; to structure any business activity or service in such a manner that financial interests and results are transparent and are made available to all interested parties independent of PSA; and to strive for the systematic development and environment friendly outlook of the potato industry, including, inter alia, the preservation of the soil and water resources, the maintenance and improvement of the fertility of the land and improvement of production and marketing methods. In terms of its role in the potato industry, PSA operates as an industry association and its structure represents a network of participating role players and individuals who are involved in various forums and committees. The vision of PSA is to build a viable potato industry in South Africa.



Potassium and potatoes

Maximize dry matter accumulation (DMA) in potatoes* with the help of potassium nitrate

Photosynthesis is one most important set of chemical reactions, or chemical process, in existence. What is photosynthesis and why is it so important? Photosynthesis is a complex set of reactions taking place primarily in leaves that use energy from the sun and carbon dioxide from the air to produce sugars (simple carbohydrates) and oxygen. These sugars provide energy for growth and along with mineral nutrition, water and oxygen, plants can grow and manufacture complex carbohydrates resulting in greater dry matter (DM) production and accumulation.

What are the factors affecting photosynthesis and thus DMA (yield / harvest)?

Sunlight. Effective sunlight consists of both light interception (the light captured by leaves on a unit area) and light distribution (the amount of light filtering into a plants canopy). Both light interception and light distribution can be calculated as the leaf area index (LAI) of a crop. LAI and its duration and dry matter accumulation are linearly and positively correlated. The greater the LAI and duration thereof, the greater the DMA with all else being equal. Other factors include:

- Daylength (photoperiod)
- Healthy leaves, leaf longevity, disease and insects
- Balanced plant nutrition
- Water balances and irrigation factors
- Ambient temperatures
- Phenotypes and varieties
- Planting date
- Soil type and rootzone health
- Seasonal differences
- Harvest maturity.

The list can go on...

Plants thus produce their own food from photosynthesis. DMA is simply the amount of that food which is converted to dry matter. This dry matter accumulation varies depending on the crop growth stage and can be determined by cutting the portion to be calculated, weighing and then re-weighing after oven drying. In potatoes, DMA occurs into all plant parts, but the amount accumulated in the tubers is of greatest importance. In the earlier stages of potato plants, DMA in leaves and tubers is equal. Towards harvest, DMA accumulates more into the tubers. In selected commercial varieties, early varieties accumulate dry matter more quickly into tubers but longer growing varieties tend to out-yield early varieties due to greater LAI (more vegetative growth) and LAI duration. Sometimes early varieties are grown for specific reasons such as market timing or climate factors, so they too are important even though perhaps producing less total yield.

In potato, dry matter accumulation is highly correlated to specific gravity (SG) which is easily determined. Normal SG values vary between 1.055 and 1.101 which correlates to 13.0% to 24% DM.

Dry matter accumulation has been studied in most crops and is most useful in determining the optimum times for fertilizer scheduling and mineral use efficiencies.

The importance of plant nutrition

Balanced nutrition is of primary importance with the right amount of mineral nutrients at the right time and the right place. For example, excessive nitrogen can reduce DMA in tubers. The form of applied nitrogen is most important in DMA. Nitrate nutrition, as a proportion of the correct total nitrogen amount, will facilitate the uptake of other nutrients (K, Ca and Mg) whereas ammonium nutrition will suppress the uptake of these elements. Nitrate nutrition also promotes DMA into tubers by being more energy efficient in the production of dry matter. Ammonium nutrition is less energy efficient resulting in less total DMA.

Excessive chloride from high potassium chloride applications will also reduce DMA into tubers.

So, the golden rule is to maximize the nitrate nutrition of the total required nitrogen and reduce chloride applications to a bare minimum, avoiding chlorides totally if possible.

Because potassium and then nitrogen are required in the greatest amounts by a potato crop, potassium nitrate (Ultrasol K Plus** and Qrop K***) along with high nitrate nitrogen fertilizers is the ideal way to achieve this, not forgetting the importance of the other mineral elements too (see also article in Harvest SA 41 pp 17-19).

Duncan Napier – SQM

**All claims in this article can be substantiated with references which can be made available on request.*

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Insuring assets

Farmers struggling to stay profitable and keep up with demand for perfect potatoes

People are consuming more potatoes, with demand largely driven by population growth, urbanisation and changes in per capita income. They're also becoming more particular when it comes to the origin and quality of their food. Farmers must deliver on these demands to stay competitive, whilst improving on productivity and cost-effectiveness in a time where farming costs are increasing. With input costs high and profit margins small, risk management is core to success in the long-term.

André du Toit, Area Sales Manager and potato specialist at Bayer South Africa, says the mitigation and management of the combined risks in potato farming can make or break a farmer. He adds there's a lot of pressure to produce high-quality potatoes – with superb appearance, high cooking quality and even a specific shape – while remaining profitable.

This isn't easy because potato farming requires high capital inputs. Farmers need sophisticated planters and lifters, as well as washing and grading equipment. Apart from the cost of machinery, seed potatoes are very expensive. Disease and pest control together with fertilizer add to the costs. Given the expense, it's imperative that farmers plan ahead, as risks like extreme weather events and pest outbreaks pose a big threat to production, livelihoods and sustainability in the long-term.

Here, du Toit outlines some of the significant threats to potato farmers:

Environmental stresses: temperature and precipitation. Unfortunately, farmers do not have control over factors like temperature and precipitation, but it remains important to take note of long-term averages and weather predictions. Pests and diseases: In South Africa, early blight, brown spot and late blight are the most important air-borne potato pathogens. Tuber – and soil-borne fungi include black and silver scurf. Potatoes are also subject to root knot nematodes and viruses. Proper knowledge is key as the margin for error is very small. Farmers should use well-tested and registered crop protection products. Advice from specialised crop protection agents can be very valuable.

How to mitigate the risks

Du Toit suggests special consideration of the following to make potato farming more sustainable:

- Soil health and the management of soil borne diseases
- Crop protection and the management of pests and diseases
- Production systems and cultivation practices
- Water management and irrigation
- The cost of energy and the impact of load shedding
- New technologies including mechanisation and the use of data.

Hanlie Kroese, Santam Strategic Partnership says Santam Agriculture is committed to offering farmers and producers specialist knowledge and continued research into the science of crop damage: "We value the

imperative role farmers play in South Africa's economy and food security.

We want to provide today's farmers with real solutions that are relevant to each individual's specific challenges and unique insurance requirements. As a leader in this industry, we are continuously evolving our offering to stay ahead of the perils of modern farming."

Kroese adds that as a partner in Agri, Santam is committed to making insurance even more accessible and affordable. "We continue to invest in effective risk management in order to make a real difference in helping farmers create a sustainable future.

We know farmers' success depends on a solid knowledge of on-farm risks and we are here to assist in mitigating these."

How Santam can help potato farmers

Santam's Agri insurance products were developed around the specific needs of the farmer, and our cover is specific to the unique risks and requirements agriculture faces.

We cover the dwellings, farm buildings, machinery, personal contents, equipment and agricultural liability.

The benefits of insuring your assets with Santam Agriculture include:

- Comprehensive cover: Santam Agriculture not only protects your crops, but also protects you from exposure to liabilities on your farms as a result of damage to your properties, spread of fire, dam wall damage, death or injuries, products liability and much more.
- Specialist solutions: We have developed specialist products to suit your unique needs, ranging from pivot irrigation systems to livestock, and from guesthouses to watercraft.
- Value-add benefits: Santam Agriculture offers farmers and producers added benefits when insuring their assets, such as access to emergency medical assistance. Santam clients who belong to registered and approved Fire Protection Associations (FPAs) also benefit from reduced premiums and excesses.

Collectively we need to do much more to assist our struggling farming communities. Santam is committed to partnering with you on this journey.

Dealing with disruption

The impact of the coronavirus

Have you ever found that people calm down when they are told to calm down, and not panic? Most of the time they do the exact opposite – and this definitely is the case with the coronavirus. There is a lot of literature on the virus, lots of fake news and lots of good advice. Sifting through all this is difficult – however, it does seem that keeping virus free is mostly in our hands (literally – keep washing those hands). There has also been a lot of news about the impact on trade, particularly fresh produce trade. Freshfel has released a good summary of the present state of play.

One impact is that the virus has messed up my 2020 predictions (thankfully). In January I wrote the following: "Although tensions in the Middle East may seem far away, they are having an impact on the oil price. A headline a week back suggested a move back towards US$100 a barrel. With the oil price dropping 30% to trade in the mid $30's per barrel that prediction is out the window."

The oil price drop has had negative consequences on the Russian Ruble which has devalued considerably after Russia announced its withdrawal from OPEC, and it is likely to continue devaluing. This will mean that imported fresh produce will become a bit more expensive in Russia, limiting opportunities in the market.

Talking about currency fluctuations, the South African Rand has also taken a hammering – which will be in favour of those in the export game (although negative in terms of imported input requirements, packaging and dollar-denominated services such as shipping and fuel).

Those exporting fresh produce at the moment are feeling the effects of delays in ports around the world – but most significantly in China (Xinyang and Shanghai reported to be the worst with congestion surcharges being introduced). Apart from the additional storage, surcharges and other costs, the delays impact on shelf life of the cargo. The million (billion?) dollar question is when this will end. Even with innovative plans by the Chinese government (dropping fuel price, opening tolls to allow traffic to travel freely, doing away with interprovincial red tape), it will take some time for the backlog to clear. The Southern Hemisphere's citrus industries are hoping this will happen before their product begins to move.

The impact of buying patterns is also having an impact on fresh produce. There are fewer people eating out, people are restricting visits to supermarkets, and there is a surge in on-line shopping. Exporters should be heeding these trends, and ensuring that they adapt their supply chains to take advantage of these trends.

The human tragedy of people dying is well reported – but does mean that people take extra precautions? The biggest impact that this virus can have on the southern African citrus industry (in my view) is if the infections balloon out of control – people working in close proximity to others (such as on farms, in packhouses, cold stores, container terminals etc.) could be told to stay at home should positive cases be identified in these places of work, meaning that work would be severely disrupted if not curtailed. It is important that business owners understand the precautionary measures to put in place to prevent as far as possible such infections happening – practice good hygiene and follow the advice of experts.

On a positive note, most people recognize citrus as a good remedy for colds and flu, and as an immune booster. This could mean that consumers stock up on citrus. Indeed, many consumers around the world are stockpiling on long life fresh produce (apart from toilet paper and sanitizers).

Justin Chadwick, CEO, Citrus Growers Association

Clean sweep

Effective alternative sanitizers

Concerns about environmental contamination and human health risks associated with fungicides occasionally lead to regulatory reviews and potential restrictions or cancelation of fungicides or pesticides. Export markets are increasingly demanding products with lower level pesticides to satisfy demands from the general public, which restricts some of the uses of conventional pesticides/ fungicides in postharvest.

There is an increasing demand for alternatives and other practices for postharvest use to minimize decay. It is also important to keep packhouses and cool rooms clean and disinfected for the season to minimize decay and fungal growth. Decco has tested different products, most recently Decco Super Clean and Decco Disinfectant.

Decco Super Clean is recommended as a detergent and disinfectant for dirt removal and disinfection simultaneously and will need to be rinsed with water afterwards. Decco Disinfectant is only a disinfectant and should be applied on surfaces previously cleaned with a detergent. The active ingredient of these products, Glutaral C11 – C15 pareth 9 (G-cide), is non-residual. The products passed the SANS 51276 (EN 1276) and SANS 51650: 2011 (EN 1650) tests for quantitative suspension for the evaluation of bactericidal and fungicidal activity of chemical disinfectants. At a dilution rate from 1:60 and a contact time of 5 minutes the bactericidal kill rate was 99.99%. At a dilution of 1:60 and contact time of 20 minutes the product had fungicidal activity of 99.99%.

Decco Disinfectant and Decco Super Clean are registered under Act no. 5 of 2008 NRCS. Both products were tested in the laboratory in vitro on green mould (Penicillium digitatum), a common fungal pathogen found in citrus packhouses. The product was mixed with a spore suspension of 1×10^4 spores/ml of the green mould fungus and pipetted on potato dextrose agar (PDA) plates. Decco Disinfectant at 12 % dilution was effective; no green mould growth was observed. Decco Super Clean was effective at 5% dilution; no green mould growth was observed.

These products were tested against a standard, Didecyl dimethyl ammonium chloride (DDAC).

Applying the lessons of history

The role of farmer organisations in successful land reforms

Former settler colonies like Zimbabwe and South Africa experienced multiple epochs of land reforms, starting with the dispossession of the 1900s and the repossession post-independence, both of which are currently ongoing. In each epoch, land reform was followed by agricultural productivity challenges by the new farmers.

After colonial settler farmers occupied land in the early 1900s, they experienced an initial decline in agricultural productivity and struggled to compete with indigenous farmers who often outperformed the new settlers. In both countries, this resulted in periods of labour tenancy on farms as white farmers struggled to cope with farming in a new environment. A set of interventions, while marginalising indigenous farmers, contributed to the success of white commercial farmers. These included vigorous state support, sound farmer organisations and the determination to make a living out of farming.

That state support benefited this group of farmers is not in question. What is important though is that this support was conditional on the attainment of a national agenda and objectives particularly during periods of sanctions. Further these farmers became independent and had sustainable farm operations achieved through active lobbying, self-regulation and aggressive market participation which kept their operations viable even after governments withdrew support to the agricultural sector. In Zimbabwe the Alvord extension services also benefited master farmers in the reserves and resettled areas.

Fast forward to the post-colonial period, both Zimbabwe and South Africa actively supported resettled farmers and even adopted some colonial institutional arrangements with mixed outcomes. Zimbabwe had marked contrasting outcomes. Early resettlement programmes resulted in a "maize miracle" and a booming agricultural sector at the back of state and donor support. However, this lasted as long as the support was incoming and collapsed under the pressures of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) never enjoyed the success though government poured considerable resources to support the farmers, which included quasi Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe support. The question is what propelled white commercial farmers to success well into the post-colonial period? What can we learn from this? This calls for serious research into institutional arrangements that supported this success.

My point is that is that apart from the wavering state support after the first wave of colonial land reform, white farmers with the assistance of the state formed sustainable institutions that self-regulated members and provided marketing, infrastructural and research services. This was the bedrock bed of the sustainable success of farmers in exotic crops like tobacco. Tobacco is a commercial

crop that was introduced in Zimbabwe from the Americas in the early 1900s. During the early years government invested heavily on research, which included sending officers to the USA to learn and master tobacco production and grading techniques. This knowledge was transferred to farmers and at first included assisting farmers with intensive extension and grading services.

In 1928, the Rhodesia Tobacco Association (now Zimbabwe Tobacco Association) was formed to spearhead tobacco production and marketing, and its activities were strengthened by a tobacco levy.

All tobacco farmers were members without exception. The levy supported the industry. In 1935 a Tobacco Research Advisory Board, now Kutsaga, was established by Act of Parliament. According to a Zimbabwe Commercial Union former president, the tobacco association became both political and economically powerful due to its successful lobbying and research activities. At the centre of its success was the ability to harness information and disseminate it to members. Also important was the ability to use the information to negotiate lucrative marketing outcomes and production quotas to avoid members flooding the market and lowering prices. For example in 1950, the Tobacco marketing Board met the British Tobacco Advisory Council to negotiate the tobacco of Zimbabwean farmers.

Farmers were a distinct community, where clubhouses were centres of relaxation and information sharing. For example the Intensive Conservation Areas (ICAs) were voluntary local groupings of farmers within an ecological setup that were operationalised in the 1940s after the Zimbabwe Natural Resources Act of 1941. Through persuasion and peer pressure, ICAs were critical in the preservation of the soil, vegetation and animal population through enforcement of good farming practices. The ICAs provided guidance on best farming practice. I opine that these were more like agricultural clusters specialized in the production of specific cash crops, with self-regulating members. Again these farmers shared information which made their farmers prosperous. Until the late 1990s, the Commercial Farmers Union had very strong lobbying power and was very influential on state agricultural policies.

Such strong institutions are the missing part of the puzzle among land reform beneficiaries. In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Tobacco Association has continued to provide advice to the few remaining members. However, their political muscle has been strongly reduced. In 2018 140 895 mainly smallholder farmers produced a record crop of 252 603 251 kilograms of tobacco on 133 000 hectares, and an average yield of 1899 kilogrammes, which was a historical record. This is comparable the start of the Fast Track Land Reform in 2000, when 8 537 (mainly large-scale commercial farmers) produced 236 946 295 kilograms on 84 857 and an average yield of 2792 kilogrammes. This does not necessarily mean that indigenous farmers are less efficient as the figures suggest. It might be a pointer to an organisational and institutional problem.

In my view these farmers lack both self-organisation and government support. For instance, in Mazowe a study revealed that of the 190 smallholder farmers sampled, none belonged to a farmer organisation. It is not surprising that deforestation prevention, the clearing of stalks after harvest and other best agricultural practices are not followed. Consequently, this has detrimental effects on yields and the environment and the welfare of farmers in general. The continued increase in agricultural land under tobacco could also affect food security in future years. The need for sound farmer organisations to that self-regulate cannot be overemphasised under the pressures presented by climate change.

Given that governments are resource-constrained, self-regulating farmers grouped in clusters could be a lesson from the colonial period which needs further research to unpack its benefit. A cluster could be a useful starting point in land-reform initiatives. A cluster system might require a re-look at the land reform policies, target beneficiaries and land use systems.

A win-win situation might require that established farmers become lead-farmers in a cluster consisting of new farmers. The major advantage would be the flow of information within the cluster, which will benefit all the farmers. As Zimbabwe, for instance, revisits at its land and agricultural policies, it could be critical to rethink legislation particularly for cash crops, which promotes farmer associations.

Dr Moses Moyo, Post-Doctoral Fellow: NRF Chair Land Reform and Democracy in South Africa, Centre for African Studies, UCT

Collective responsibility

Agritourism and other approaches to sustainable agriculture

Does climate change affect farmers? The obvious answer is "yes". How does this affect those of us who live in cities? Farming revolves around controlled food production. Food security has increased the quality of life of citizens around the world, but it has come at a cost which is unsustainable in the long term from an environmental perspective. Why?

Estimates for global population growth is approximately 9 Billion people by 2050. Food production will have to increase by 60% to ensure there is enough food to accommodate the increase in population growth.

What is sustainable agriculture? Sustainable agriculture is based on principles of not raping the land of its resources but giving back. Industrial farming methods do not necessarily follow this principle. The challenges that Industrial farming need to recognise are that unhealthy farming practices (no crop rotation, use of too many chemicals/ fertilisers, water consumption for irrigation purposes etc.) have a major impact on climate change, ecosystem destruction, water scarcity and soil degradation. Modern farming techniques and technologies are used by farmers to meet the growing need for food, but at a cost.

Farmers need stable climatic conditions, for example, regular rainfall, seasonal temperature variation (not extremes) etc. South African farmers have experienced the devastating impact of climate change already. The increased severity of droughts will lead to increased desertification and a significant problem for livestock farmers. The rise in temperatures leads to a reduction in fertility and an increase in the animals' vulnerability to disease.

So, without a doubt, climate change does impact food security by reducing the availability of food.

What can we as consumers do to create a more sustainable future for our children? The obvious answer is to reduce the amount of food wastage. Currently, approximately one third (33%) of all food is wasted. Currently agricultural production provides enough food to feed over 10 billion people, so the rate of agricultural production has increased faster than the increase in population growth. Why then are over a billion people starving? We do not need to produce more food: we need to address the inequality of access to food.

The agricultural production system could become environmentally sustainable if food were not wasted. Are farmers to blame or consumers? Both, as consumers want to buy "perfect" looking food, so the farmers are meeting the demand; however, farmers also are responsible for wasting food at the production level. Agritourism is an initiative to help farmers and consumers to interact as consumers need to understand that food is only available because of the farmer. Farming is hard work and high risk. The link between agritourism and the sustainability of the rural economy derives from the definition of this activity. Agritourism can only take place on a working farm, in other words, the main activity is farming, and tourism is a by-product.

The work that goes into producing "perfect" produce is not understood by consumers. Consumers have to take responsibility for educating themselves to appreciate the value. Whether it is "farm to fork" initiatives or accommodation facilities on farms, bridges need to be built if we (all humans) are to proactively address climate change. Fortunately, we have a number of forward-thinking farmers, like JB van den Berg, who have embraced precision, organic and no-till farming methods.

Agritourism encourages responsible environmental practices on farms, from waste to water to energy management. It is in the

interest of farmers to keep their input costs as low as possible. Farmers understand sustainability. They understand climate change. In both cases, they are at the forefront of confronting change because they are directly affected by it.

People do not like change, but there is no alternative. A change in attitude towards the consumption of food must happen.

Extreme nature and weather events have been occurring because the average temperature around the world has gone up by 1%, and in the Southern Hemisphere, for several countries such as Australia the increase is 2%.

Sean de Cleene from New Zealand is CEO of the Food Systems Initiative and a member of the Executive Committee of the World Economic Forum. He comments, "I think if you're a smallholder farmer in Southern Africa, or if you're a farmer of any kind in Southern Africa it was not that many years ago where you could quite easily predict when the rains were coming and when the seasons were. The ability to do that has gone and so we both have to be able to look at how we can mitigate against this and at the same time we have to also look at how we can adapt to that because the reality is here."

Southern Africa is to a large extent agricultural and clearly action is needed. The Wall Street Journal published an article titled "Is Southern Africa sleepwalking into a climate catastrophe?" recently that was republished in the Daily Maverick. De Cleene suggests that positive action by governments could include providing subsidies for regenerative farming practices, for example, farmers could trade on the carbon market and make additional income out of improving the quality of the soil. "Even farming areas can actually become a viable economic commodity in their own right while we need to deal with the issues around reducing carbon," De Cleene offers as a suggestion on how farmers can view climate change in a positive manner in order to find a solution.

What difference can the individual person make? If you add the committed individuals to form a team, they become lobby agents to force change.

The age of easily accessible resources has gone forever. The damage has been done. Farmers are at the forefront of climate change and have seen their input costs, for example electricity and water, increase significantly. Farming has become a risky business.

As consumers, we can make a difference by becoming more environmentally conscious while ensuring social inequalities are overcome.

Sustainability means that all humans need to ensure that our processes and systems help the planet endure rather than depleting it.

The responsibility lies with the individual, not governments, the "green" movement, or any associations.

Take responsibility now for your own actions – sustainability is that simple.

Jacqui Taylor, Founder and Director, Agritourism SA

Quarantine on the farm

TLU SA announces guidelines on handling coronavirus on farms

TLU SA got working on the formulation of guidelines on how to handle the outbreak of COVID-19 (coronavirus), directly after President Cyril Ramaphosa's announcement of a national disaster.

"We want to emphasise that everyone should keep perspective and not go overboard," says Mr Louis Meintjes, the president of TLU SA. "The coronavirus has the potential to have an enormous negative impact. The danger, however, is that the perception of the possible consequences could cause more damage than the virus itself. The decisions already hold far-reaching economic implications. It could have an even more significant impact on the sustainability of businesses, in future.

"In no way do we want to create the idea that we can ignore the situation and just carry on as normal," says Mr Meintjes. "Things are not normal, and we should act accordingly."

The minister of agriculture, Ms Thoko Didiza, on Monday 16 March, called an urgent meeting with all the roleplayer in agriculture to discuss the way forward. All roleplayers had the opportunity to give input and a task team – consisting of the department and organised agriculture – was put in place. TLU SA serves on the task team. The task team will communicate all decisions as they are unlocked.

During the ministerial meeting, the minister confirmed that auctions would continue, for the time being, to ensure the livestock industry doesn't face any further damages after foot and mouth disease knocked the sector earlier this year.

The goal is to protect food security and the agricultural economy.

The success of the government's emergency measures depends on society's willingness to implement it. Our members should take further steps to limit the possible damage of the coronavirus.

Workers:

- Inform workers of the virus and how it spreads.
- Emphasise the importance of personal hygiene and ensure soap and water is available for them to wash their hands.
- Discuss the risks of socialising in big groups over weekends, while there is still uncertainty over the momentum of its spread. Explain the benefits of voluntary isolation.
- Monitor the health of workers and their families.
- Do long-term planning of rations with a longer shelf life.

Access to farms

- Strictly apply the farm protocol for access to farms. Persons visiting a farm for whichever reason should wear face masks and properly clean themselves before continuing with the activities of the planned visit.
- Be alert of criminals abusing the coronavirus to get access to farms under false pretences.
- Consider using farms as a type of quarantine area, granting only approved access.

Crime

- Uncertain circumstances can lead to a rise in incidents of crime. You can expect crime to increase when local economies come under pressure, and there is a shortage of products on shelves.
- Take precautionary measures with protective gear like face masks and gloves when interacting with criminals or making arrests.

"TLU SA will consider added measures as the situation unfolds," says Mr Meintjes. "The main priority is to protect human lives. The rest must follow."

Restoring markets to their former glory

APAC – the regulator looking after the farmer

The Agricultural Produce Agents Council (APAC) was established in 1993 as a statutory body with the mandate to regulate the activities of fresh produce agents, export agents and livestock agents. APAC also ensures the maintenance and enhancement of the status and dignity of those occupations and the integrity of their practitioners.

APAC intends to protect the farmer's interests. Registered fresh produce agents involved in any fraudulent activities or theft are disciplined in terms of the Act (Act 12 of 1992). If a fresh produce agent is found guilty and all other options are exhausted, farmers can register a claim for monies lost against the Fresh Produce Agent's Fidelity Fund, managed and administered by APAC to ensure that farmers' legitimate and substantiated are compensated.

Farmers require protection and even more so in a regulated environment.

The principle "No farmer, no industry" means it is crucial that APAC looks after agriculture, our amazing farmers and the agents that operate within this environment in South Africa.

With regard to the future, the APAC vision is clear: "to be an innovative, supportive, proactive and responsive regulatory body".

However, there is always room for change – as a regulator APAC will engage the process to request changes to the Act to be more relevant and aligned to a changing and dynamic agricultural environment.

Proposed enhancements to the Act are submitted to DAFF who in consultation with the Minister will decide if changes are necessary, required and warranted. Much work has to be done in this regard. In recent years, much has been said about changes needed at local market level.

Fresh produce markets remain one of the industry's most important distribution channels. The commission system currently in place at markets where price is discovered through supply and demand remains one of the best in the world. This should be cherished and nurtured, but markets are no longer the beautiful and majestic trading platforms of the past.

Market authorities should revitalise markets and allow them their rightful place in the agricultural value chain.

Francois Knowles, Registrar, APAC
Please contact APAC at (011) 894-3680 or visit www.apacweb.org.za

Bringing home the harvest

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development is strengthening international relations

From fostering good relations between international trading partners is an important part of the mandate of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development. Stronger partnerships ultimately benefit all stakeholders in agriculture.

South Africa and Ghana strengthen ties

President Cyril Ramaphosa visited Ghana on a two-day working visit at the invitation of His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana. He was accompanied by a delegation consisting of Ministers and Deputy Ministers, senior government officials, businessmen and women

Minister Didiza's counterpart, Minister Owusu Afriyie Akoto, requested her to consider bringing on agri-business delegation to explore investment opportunities set for the growth of their sector.

The official engagements were preceded by a closed session between the Presidents and Minister Didiza also addressed the press at a press conference during her visit to Ghana.

President Ramaphosa commended Ghana for implementing the Planting for Food and Jobs Programme and said that South Africa will continue to draw inspiration from them as South Africa is working on boosting the production of food and raw materials for industry and creation of more jobs.

Deliberations were concluded by the political agenda that led both presidents to reaffirm their commitment to cooperate at the levels of the African Union, the Commonwealth, and the United Nations and to deepen the shared values of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights and to promote multilateralism and South-South Cooperation.

President Ramaphosa outlined the objective of the Business Forum as to strength the historical partnership between Ghana and South Africa, and to explore the untapped economic potential of their relationship.

South Africa is known to be the largest trading partner of Ghana, with the fastest import increase observed between 2016 and 2018. Therefore, both Presidents are keen on planning to connect the west African region and the SADC region as Ghana is a key hub in West Africa, and South Africa as a key hub in Southern Africa.

Their talks revolved around the expansion of the scope of the shared, inclusive regional trade. Both Presidents have made a commitment to put in place initiatives that will increase investments in each other's countries.

Business deliberations identified agriculture to have a potential for investment with its manufacturing and value-added services.

South African firms were encouraged to support Ghana's efforts to industrialise and diversify.

Farmers to benefit from training and markets in China

Minister Didiza attended the first Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Agriculture (FOCACA).

The meeting was held in China, Sanya under the theme "Join Hands for Sustainable Development and a closer New-type China-Africa Partnership in Agriculture" The first FOCACA focused on deepening of China-Africa Cooperation in Agriculture and the establishment of a closer new-type China-Africa partnership in agriculture, in support of Africa realising general food security by 2030. The forum also discussed modern approaches aimed at addressing food security challenges and exchanged views on potential measures designed towards attaining sustainable agricultural development.

The relationship between Africa and China in agriculture is a partnership of cooperation, rather than that between a donor and its beneficiaries, said Minister Didiza. Registering an average annual growth of 14%, the trade volume of agricultural products between China and Africa increased from 650 million U.S. dollars in 2000 to 6,92 billion dollars in 2018, said China's Minister of Agriculture, Minister Han Changfu.

There is exciting growth potential, he said, expressing hope that the figure will reach 10 billion dollars within the next decade. However the relationship is not only about trade. According to Han, nearly 10000 agricultural officials, technicians, farmers and students from African countries receive training in China each year. The China-Africa cooperation sets a prime example of sound South-South Cooperation. China and Africa have similar agricultural backgrounds and foundations, therefore the opportunity to conduct result-oriented cooperation through a comprehensive strategic and cooperative partnership is suitably timed.

In terms of trade, South Africa has also had further market access to China for South Africa's agricultural commodities. Further work on the agricultural trade is unfolding with South Africa expecting to conclude new protocols on exports of South African agricultural commodities to China. It is the hope of Minister Didiza that this inaugural meeting of FOCACA will increase strategic relationships between South Africa, Africa and China.

DAFFnews

What you have to know about potatoes

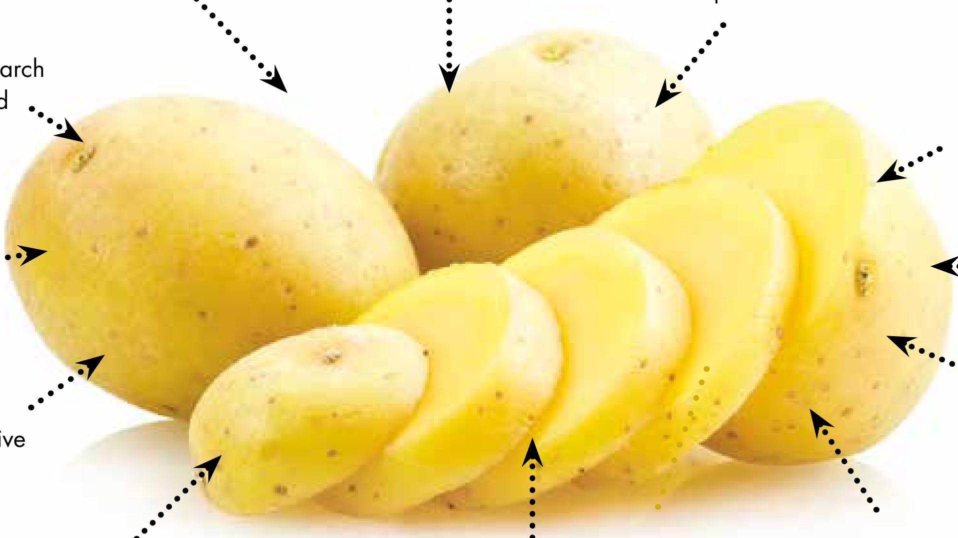
Goodness from the earth

100 g **fresh tuber** provides 11,4 mg or **20%** of the recommended **daily** intake of this **vitamin**

Good **source** of **vitamins**, **minerals**, **roughage** an a small amount of fat

Reduces the absorption of cholesterol thereby lowering plasma **LDL-cholesterol**

100 g = 1 portion starch = 1 slice of bread



One of the best sources of **vitamin B-complex**

Starchy **root vegetables**

Try to eat it **with the skin on**

Bake potatoes **without** excessive **salt** or **fat**

Feel free to **enjoy** potatoes in **moderation**

If you eat it with the **skin** on, it is a very good **source** of antioxidant vitamins such as **vitamin C**

Rich **fiber content** assist in **protection** against colon **polyps** and **cancer**

Excellent **source** of soluble and non-soluble **fiber**

Potato industry in South Africa **R27 billion** worth

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Contributes **R8 billion** to SA's economy

Annually creates Between **45 000 50 000** job opportunities

Potatoes **contain** 0,1% fat per **100g**

Potatoes are produced **in 16** production regions in the country

2,5 million tons produced annually is nearly equal to the **combined** production of tomatoes, onions, sweet corn and green vegetables

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Realizing women's rights

Women are integral to African agriculture, but there are many gaps to fill

On International Women's Day, Dr. Jennifer Blanke, Vice President for Agriculture, Human and Social Development at the African Development Bank (AfDB), addressed three critical questions about African women and agriculture.

Can you describe the integral role women play in African agriculture?
It is well known that women form the backbone of Africa's economies, and this is as true of agriculture as other areas. In many parts of Africa, well over half of the farmers are women and they are also are very active in value addition such as food processing, as well as in the agricultural service sector. And they do this often back breaking work while also carrying out the unpaid work of running households and child-rearing.

At the same time, women face an uphill battle in their access to resources. In many places they do not have the right to ownership of farmland, which holds back their ability to access finance for inputs like certified seeds, fertilizer and the equipment and machinery to maximize crop production.

International Women's Day is a time to take stock of what is needed to level the proverbial agricultural playing field. As well as helping women to access financing, the Bank is also actively recruiting women "agripreneurs" to bring their agribusiness proposals to our Enable Youth Program, including activities like the African Youth Agripreneurs Forum and AgriPitch competition. These provide a platform for young women and men with great ideas and ongoing activities in agriculture and agribusiness to scale up the scope and impact of their activities – AgriPitch competition winners take home their shares of a total of more than $70000 of competition "seed funding" to grow their businesses.

You've just been on mission looking at how the Bank's Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) initiative has positively impacted lives – including hearing the stories from women smallholder farmers. What can we learn about their experiences?
TAAT is an initiative that aims to bring the latest technologies to African farmers at scale so that they can increase yields and improve their livelihoods. For example drought

resistant maize, heat resistant wheat and treatments against pests like the fall armyworm, which has been devastating crops across the continent. Our fact-finding mission to Zambia, Zimbabwe and Sudan included town-hall style meetings where women were eager to share their experiences and challenges, and also to get information on how best to improve their crops and increase family revenue.

The discussions were eye opening as we literally walked the walk with these women farmers participating in TAAT. Dwarfed by almost two-meter high maize plants in Mushandike, Zimbabwe, smallholder farmer Gertrude Marisa was beaming with pride as she showed us her healthy maize of the season, grown from an improved variety of drought-resistant maize, which survived a recent drought and also left her stalks virtually untouched by fall armyworm. We spoke with several women with similar stories, all of whom will reinvest the greater part of their hard-earned revenue into their families and the education of their children. I have to say that it is moments like these, when we see how we are truly improving the lives of Africans, that make all of the hard work in development finance worth it.

Following the successful implementation of the 2018/19 planned TAAT wheat seed activities in Sudan, private and public seed enterprises have grown over 850 tonnes of basic seed of five popular wheat varieties, namely Imam, Goumria, Zakia, Elnielain and Bohaine. They have grown this wheat varieties on more than 8500 hectares in five wheat-growing regions of the country.

As a result of this activity, more than 26000 tons of certified seeds produced were distributed to more than 260000 wheat farmers in the following season.

Thanks to the new varieties such as Imam, Zakia and Bohain, Sudan's wheat-growing area in 2018/19 saw a sharp rise to around 294000 hectares. This is up from 201 000 hectares in 2017/18.

The theme of this year's International Women's Day was "I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights." To what degree is this theme relevant to the Bank's work?

The Bank is making efforts towards gender equality in its operations, initiatives and procurement across the continent. This priority is inter-generational, with the goal of providing all women with equal opportunity and access in areas such as education, high-tech skilling, finance and gainful employment.

Africa has the highest percentage of women entrepreneurs in the world. However, women in Africa face a $42 billion financing gap compared to men.

The Bank's Affirmative Action for Women in Africa program, or AFAWA, aims to bridge that gap by rolling out programs that create a level playing field for women in obtaining finance for developing their businesses. The recent announcement of more than a quarter-billion-U.S. dollars from France and other G7 nations in support of AFAWA will significantly accelerate this goal.

In terms of skilling, the Bank's Coding for Employment initiative, carried out in partnership with Microsoft, Facebook and the Rockefeller Foundation – which provides month-long classes in basic communications technology and other computer literacy skills – graduated its first all-women cohort of students in Nigeria last year. In 2020, we plan to roll out nine coding centers of excellence across Africa and a major goal will be to broaden opportunities for African women across generations.

AfDB

Smart farming revolution

Researchers seek to reduce costs and increase yields

A team of researchers are set to uncover the secrets in microbiomes, communities of microorganisms (such as bacteria, fungi, and viruses) that inhabit soil and will enable farmers to reduce input costs and maintaining or even increase yields.

Project leader Prof Karin Jacobs from Stellenbosch University's Microbial Ecology and Mycology lab said that it is increasingly being recognized that soil microbiomes play crucial roles in nutrient cycling, soil formation, plant growth and ultimately in the production of food.

The intricacies of life in the 'rhizosphere', with the findings set to have far reaching implications for crop production and food security.

The 'rhizosphere' can be described as the area around a plant root that is inhabited by a unique population of microorganisms influenced by chemicals released from plant roots.

Jacobs said understanding the soil microbiome has clear and very practical applications in food production. She believes that understanding and harnessing the functional power of microbial communities will enable farmers to reduce input costs, while maintaining or even increasing yields over time.

The project is funded by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) through the Foundational Biodiversity Information Programme (FBIP), which is jointly managed by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and the National Research Foundation (NRF).

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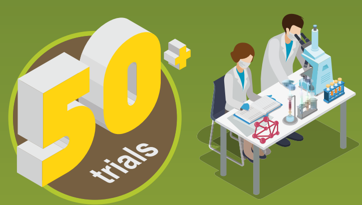
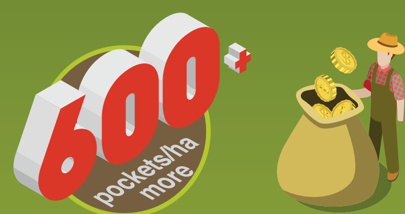


More than 50 local trials vouch for the success of POTATOPACK™.



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'Smart farming'

According to Jacobs the data generated will inform the identification of microbial profiles that are conducive to plant health, and farmers will be able to evaluate and adapt their practices to steer their soils towards harbouring more diverse and resilient microbial populations.

The results from the project will allow agriculturalists to understand how the natural microbiome can be harnessed to reduce and even replace chemical inputs for optimal yield and disease management.

Microbiomes have also been shown increase the heat and drought tolerance in crops, mitigating the effects of climate change.

The overall aim of the project is to characterise the rhizosphere microbiomes associated with two of the major crops (wheat and maize) under conventional and conservation agriculture in South Africa in terms of the microbial function and microbial species diversity.

"This study has a direct impact on the bioeconomy as it informs management in terms of inputs and practices, and optimising yields – working towards sustainable agriculture will alleviate the effect of global environmental change," Jacobs said.

South Africa's Bio-Economy Strategy was launched in 2014 as a road map on how to develop the country's natural biological resources into commercial products in health, agriculture and industry.

'Soil health tool'

Agriculture significantly contributes to the South African economy and has been recognized as a sector which could potentially drive economic growth. However, less than 12% of the country's land mass is suitable for use as arable land. Alarmingly, said Jacobs, substantial proportions of soils are subject to increased desertification, reducing the proportion of productive lands. Given South Africa's increasing population, increasing the productivity of arable lands is crucial for sustenance.

Over the last few years, there has been a significant demand on the farming sector to alter agricultural practices while simultaneously improving yield.

According to Jacobs the developments in analytical approaches such as high throughput sequencing and culture methods has helped reduce the knowledge deficit around microbial diversity and their specific roles.

"The power of this approach has been evident in the study of the human microbiome, which revolutionized our perception, diagnosis and treatment of diseases," she said.

The project is novel and its successful completion likely to result in a tool for measuring soil health.

The project, which runs from 2019 to 2021, will involve experts and students from several South African institutions including Stellenbosch University, Elsenburg College, University of Pretoria, Free State University, Rhodes University, North-West University, ARC-Plant Health and Protection Unit, and the University of the Western Cape.

The cumulative decrease in petrol and diesel so far this year will help limit the impact of the expected fuel levy increase of 25c per litre by April 2020.

This will likely contribute to positive cash flow, lower cost of production and improved profitability as petrol and diesel make up a significant amount of farm input costs.

The drop comes at a critical time as farmers start stocking up on diesel ahead of the harvesting period.

Moreover, farmers are increasingly using petrol and diesel for backup generators in light of the current power supply challenges.

Fuel and diesel are also commonly used for tillage, machinery and transportation, making them a critical component for both small-scale and commercial farmers, as well as the entire agricultural value chain. Given that 70% of South Africa's food is transported by road, the decrease in the petrol and diesel price is likely to have a positive impact on food inflation, easing pressure on consumers who are already struggling to make ends meet.

This may possibly lead to further interest rate cuts later on in the year, given the improved inflation expectations.

SANBI

Simplifying seasonal workforce management

Improve efficiency and reduce complexity around seasonal employment in agriculture

Seasonal workers are complex to manage. Obtaining sufficient workers during harvest season is incredibly complex and challenging. On many smaller farms, seasonal workers are the friends and family of permanent staff. Larger farms work with community leaders to recruit workers for them, for the payment of a fee, and also make use of labour recruiters.

While most of these recruiters are registered, many are not, which makes them cheaper but exposes farmers to the risks associated with being non-compliant. Each of these sources only has limited capacity, which means farmers are using a complicated combination of various sources in order to get the workforce they require. Farmers also have their own requirements, costs and methods, which significantly adds to the complexity of the process.

Further to this, the nature of seasonal work is manual and labour-intensive, often in gruelling conditions such as solar heat. Global compliance legislation also mandates that contracts, information and statutory benefits be loaded onto an employment system, adding further time and complexity. Adding to this, many seasonal workers are 'un-banked' and a large number of farmers do not have payment systems in place to accommodate this. Cash is typically paid directly to workers, which is again a complex and dangerous process.

Logistics and planning challenges

Adding to the complexity for farmers is the planning, logistics and time management involved around harvest season. To use a vineyard as an example, prior to the harvest, the farmer will sit with the viticulture specialist and will, for example, plan to harvest 50 tonnes of grapes per day. This is then communicated to the sellers, who will in turn plan to receive this and ensure the logistics are in place to process it. The farmer must then

procure the vehicles, overseers and workers to complete this harvest as agreed.

In order to harvest the 50 tonnes per day, they may need 120 workers in the field.

If only 50 arrive, vehicles will stand still, logistics processes grind to a halt, targets are not met, the entire chain is affected and produce is at risk of spoiling because it cannot be harvested in time. This has a huge financial impact. The weather adds to the challenge since rain may cause delays. The next day, additional grapes will need to be harvested to make up for the shortfall from the day before.

Farmers need to dynamically scale their workforce in order to meet production and logistics requirements. However, harvest is not just about speed but about quality. If workers are not careful with the produce they are picking, they could cause it to become bruised and spoiled.

This is often an issue when the workers are paid "piece work" which means their wages are tied to the volume they harvest. Wages need to be carefully managed to ensure the quality of the yield, which means that payment and quality management systems are essential.

Working with a TES provider to ensure volume, scale and compliance

A TES provider specialising in agriculture and farming can solve all of the challenges around a seasonal workforce. A TES provider has an extensive database of workers and can provide the dynamic scalability required to ensure seasonal workforce needs are met every day and that farmers only pay for the workers they need, when they need them. A TES provider also assists with vetting and verifying workers to ensure they are suitable for the tasks.

Utilising the services of a TES provider dramatically simplifies the process, as farmers can obtain all of their workers from one provider who is 100% compliant and who has all of the administrative processes in place to ensure wages are always paid on time and fairly.

Using the services of a TES provider is a win-win scenario for farmers and workers. Farmers have access to a fully compliant, entirely scalable workforce without any of the administrative hassles.

Workers are ensured fair wages and on time payment, and can also leverage the potential for additional seasonal work at other farmers by being part of a TES provider's database. TES providers also work to ensure skills development and ongoing upskilling of candidates, so there is potential to take on more managerial roles over time.

Compared to the traditional approach of obtaining seasonal labour, a TES provider can save days, even weeks of administrative effort while easing the intricacy associated with using multiple contractors and employment methods.

For large commercial farmers, the extensive reach and broad databases of a TES provider are especially beneficial.

Farmers have the ability to deal with a single contractor and one rate to ensure compliant and dynamic workforces for all of their farms, regardless of location or timing of the harvest season.

This leaves farmers to focus on their core business of bringing in the harvest and ensuring it continues through the logistics process, saving time and money while improving efficiency and reducing complexity.

William Pienaar, Agri-Business Development Specialist, Workforce Staffing

Going nuts for growth

Unlocking the potential for agriculture in South Africa relies upon mentorship

This is a story, not of a man who asked for money, but of a man who asked for mentorship and access. He planted every tree on his farm, watched them grow, and learnt that with farming, it truly is a grass roots beginning that is the precursor to success.

Gene Likhanya's start in life is not an atypical one, however it is one that is taking an extraordinary path. Born in Venda in 1984, his world was part growing up living with his father in the township of Soweto, and part with his mother in the family community in Venda. His parents did not have much money, but their emphasis on, and value for education, saw to it that they sent Gene (and his two siblings) to the very best schools they could possibly afford.

"It is not about black and white for me. It is about what happens between emerging and established farmers and players in the market. Navigating the space of exclusion as a new entrant to farming is difficult. Understandably so, when compared to those in the big league, your fledging operation pales. It is also not necessarily about grant money; but more about access, sharing it, in the form of mentorship so that the fledglings too can grow. Here is the rub, and it is not just a belief, it is something I can evidence: an altruistic aspect to business begets growth in your operation, as well as personal success," shares Likhanya, CEO, Madimbo Mac's Pty.

Likhanya's level head, self-sufficiency and healthy attitude to risk saw him joining the army when his parents were unable to afford to send him to university. Two years working in a peacekeeping capacity for the UN in Burundi taught him valuable lessons he embodies in life today; and afforded him the opportunity to save enough money to self-fund his Bachelor of Commerce degree majoring in Entrepreneurship at the University of Johannesburg. His money stretched to also buying his first 2.5 hectares of land in Tshakhuma, Venda.

"Foremost I learnt about timekeeping. Not just being on time, but for its implications: to show up for life; and make the very most of the short time we have. Second, I developed a deep capacity for empathy. Visioning the hardships people in the rest of Africa face buoyed me to make the most of every opportunity that came my way; and to practice gratitude every day," comments Likhanya.

Throughout his studies, together with his brother, he planted the 2.5 hectares to macadamia trees. They experimented, they sourced trees from all over, good and bad; they failed before they succeeded; and battled to access advice and guidance from the "major league". The woeful gap in availability of and access to resource meant it took them longer to find their way. Just over

10 years later; and having also worked as a business consultant for Old Mutual during this time; the brothers had bought (without any funding or grant money), planted and brought to full production 10 hectares of macadamias in one of South Africa's most impoverished regions. A region that relies heavily on creation of rural employment.

"I was ready to deliver my crop for processing and scoured the market for this service. GFNC stood out in their commitment and willing to engage with me. I am not remiss to the time and dedication smallholder growers ask from their processing partners, however it seemed surprisingly short sighted not to invest into emerging growers of today for the success of the processing business in future. GFNC intrinsically understands the value of this, they have heart for emerging growers and play a pivotal role in helping emerging farmers participate in the value chain," continues Likhanya.

"It is not just about 'upliftment'. Broadening the active agricultural base in South Africa is an imperative; for bottom line economic output and stability in our country; and frankly, for the future success and growth of our business. It is beyond duty to engage and support farmers like Gene through the supply chain, it is good for business too. Core to GFNC values is investing in infrastructure and growth of the macadamia industry in South Africa; and the business has consistently been at the forefront of this for over 30 years. Our mission is to grow the pie, not fight for the slice," says Allen Duncan, CEO, GFNC.

The big boys think so too; and they're not just about giving money, they want rigour, structure, accountability, and ultimately more of the Gene Likhanya type successes that our country so desperately needs. Likhanya has secured funding from the SAB Foundation, and a 99-year lease has been agreed with the tribal authorities of the Ha-Mahau region in Venda to develop 45 hectares of macadamias (which will be interplanted with cash and cover crops) over the next two years.

Likhanya has also set up his own farmer incubator programme, which has taken on board 12 emerging growers, with five hectares each (60 hectares total) in the surrounds of Ha-Mahau. Together with financial and other support from the SAB Foundation; and Likhanya with his innate understanding of the unique and varied challenges farming in the most rural regions of South Africa; the incubation's charter is to create sustainable business not only for the farmers, but for support service provider businesses in the area for the next 40 years and beyond.

In entirety the incubator initiative employs 37 temporary staff, of which 28 are female, this number shoots to 50 people when Likhanya's individual project in the same region is accounted for. He also employs 9 permanent staff on his farm in Tshakhuma. A nursery housing 50 000 seedlings is being set up in 2019 and 5000 trees are set to be planted this year, which locals will be benefiting from through skills transfer.

"You care about the Rands and cents when you farm in a community, but you don't let the Rands and cents dictate how you do business in communities. Put simply, you don't step on peoples' necks. Sometimes we need to believe in people, to give them the gap to innovate. The farm manager on my farm is female, whom before had never had a job. This is meaningful, worthwhile stuff, I want to impact society and change lives for the better".

"My vision is for this concept to roll-out at bigger scale through the value chain, but still within community farms. My focus is not on private farms, or government funding. Bringing people from fringes of society to inclusive farming is my primary motivation," Likhanya concludes.

Annelle Whyte

Vision for youth development

Emerging farmers to access between R30-R90 million over next three years in first-round of off-take agreements

Al Mawashi South Africa, the South African subsidiary of the Kuwait Stock Exchange listed Al Mawashi (KSE: KLTT), which one of the largest international livestock transport and trading companies in the world, has announced the country's first-ever live export, off-take agreement for sheep with emerging South African black livestock farmers.

The announcement, made on 3 March at Al Mawashi South Africa's East London head office in Beacon Bay, involved signing and concluding five preferential procurement off-take agreements. It forms part of the company's empowerment strategy to grow, foster and support the development of an emerging farmer live export industry alongside commercial farmers.

Based on future estimations, Al Mawashi said the off-take agreements allow for preferential procurement of 25 000 to 75 000 head of sheep valued between R30 million to R90 million over the next three years, on the condition of farmers meeting specifications of live export.

Mr. Mandisi Nofumba, who rears sheep in Richmond, Northern Cape said:

"We need more opportunities such as this one that will provide opportunities for emerging farmers to grow and commercialise their businesses. At some point, we have to outgrow the emerging farmer phase and join the big league of commercial farming."

This agreement will enable me to expand my business and has opened us up to new avenues, Mr Nofumba said.

"Through the Al Mawashi deal, we are also busy with proposals to develop a training centre in Richmond in the Northern Cape province where our focus will be on training youth in the agricultural sector," he said.

According to Mr. Gcina Madasa, "emerging and commercial farmers are allowed a great opportunity to participate in a new industry." Madasa has been farming in Elliot for 16 years.

"It allows farmers access to a sustainable market. This also presents an opportunity for farmers to improve the quality of their breed. It puts us in a position to plan our breeding product in a consistent way. We are exploring initiatives to create a collection point from other emerging farmers for Al Mawashi," he said.

Since establishing its South African operation in 2019, Al Mawashi has built the largest feed lot in Southern Africa, 40 kilometres outside the Port of East London.

It has procured, transported and shipped 56 000 heads of sheep from South Africa to Kuwait offering market-related rates to 150 South African livestock farmers. This, in turn, injected approximately R155 million into the Eastern Cape's regional economy in under 12 months.

The company also achieved a 0,2% live animal transport mortality rate during its voyage in October 2019, well below the international benchmark of 2% on board its accredited, twin-tier, and ventilated livestock vessels in 2019.

"The company has supported distressed South African farmers whose livestock was in danger of dying, because of feed and water shortages as a result of the draught, offering market-related prices. To be clear, these animals were destined for certain death by drought-induced starvation."

Mr. Ally said the company is also exported a mixture of mutton and lamb carcases of 240 232 kg to Kuwait.

Al Mawashi South Africa's Kuwait-based parent company, is Australia's largest buyer of sheep, and the company has been in existence for 47 years.

The company announced on the Kuwait Stock Exchange that it will seek out reliable sources of live sheep in the future, and established its first operation on the African continent noting South Africa's potential as a source for food security for countries in the Middle East.

Al Mawashi operates various abattoirs in the Middle East, supplying meat to the UAE, Oman and Kuwait. The company is further expanding its reach into other countries around the Persian Gulf.

"We are looking to engage and sign more emerging and commercial livestock farmers in South Africa over the next few months. We have set an ambitious target of building our South African business to turn over R1 billion per annum by the end of 2025," announced Mr. Ilyaas Ally, Managing Director of Al Mawashi South Africa.

"Our operation has a direct multiplier effect on various industries in the value chain including animal welfare transport, animal medicine, feed and shipping industries, as well as government."

"We are excited to announce the off-take agreements, and will offer and introduce layers of support to the farmers. Importantly, through the off-take agreements, we essentially remove barriers of entry for farmers into new global markets."

Ally said: "The message that we want to get out to red meat exporters in the country is that we are not taking away your business or a market. We are simply opening up an entirely new market for the country, which never existed before."

Ally said South Africa also needed to be educated on aspects of live export for slaughter industries, which is as "old as the age of dawn, but has become highly modernised and sophisticated to comply with animal welfare standards."

"Animals are routinely shipped via sea, and there is nothing strange, novel or cruel about this practice. We will work closely with organisations promoting animal rights helping them to understand the industry. Similarly, we will not take lightly any reckless activism, defamation and in some instances, skewed or misrepresented media reporting on the industry."

Eastern Cape Development Corporation's (ECDC) head: trade, investment and innovation, Thabo Shenxane said: "This is exactly why ECDC promotes trade to ensure that benefits acme to everybody that lives in the Eastern Cape."

Beyond our lifetime

Ensuring the Farm is in good hands when you are gone

Today we give thanks for the food on our table, for the clothes we wear and for the farmers who make this possible.

A will is sometimes described as the most important document a testator/farmer will sign in his lifetime. The fruits of a lifelong dream, hard work through droughts, disappointments, tough times and stress are given away or passed on with the stroke of a pen.

Your will is your last wish regarding what should happen with your estate after your death.

The question the farmer asks, is: Who will inherit the land? Will the heir be able to take over the farm to manage and preserve it for future generations, continue the farm as a business, and will it be successful? Will the farm be an inheritance or simply another case of easy come, easy go?

The first, and most important, step is … bequeath the farm to the right person.

About three years ago I met a farmer who made a very wise statement:

Bequeath your land to the child who has the will and the ability to farm, and he/she will provide for the other children.

Farming is a passion. It is a love for the land. It is a calling and not just another job. It means persevering through droughts and price fluctuations, natural disasters, uncertainty about safety, and political instability. The chances of the person with the right DNA being successful are much greater than when the Farm is (traditionally) bequeathed to the oldest child. The Farm needs someone who is passionate about farming and who will make the right decisions in the interest of the farm and the family.

The Farm would also like to continue as a business, reach its full potential and be preserved for future generations – without the burden of financial obligations. The biggest obstacle is LIQUIDITY. Assets are valuable, but can they be liquidated? When an estate is wound up the Master of the High Court won't accept tractors and cattle as payment … he seeks cash or will liquidate assets.

Leaving an encumbered farm/farming operations to the new generation is not prudent.

Your will must therefore be PRACTICABLE without assets having to be disposed of to cover debt and estate costs such as executor's fees, valuations, transfer duty, income tax, estate duty, funeral costs, medical expenses, sureties, special bequests and matrimonial property claims, mortgage bonds, loans and claims against the estate. Cash bequests to spouses and children are also important.

Is the farm merely land or is it a farming operation? Farming operations are a business with land, farm implements, livestock, crops and intellectual capital. So test your succession plans with a professional person who can give you and The Farm the best advice. Lack of planning, or a wrong, ill-considered, emotional decision could means the end of family wealth. Just image – the son inherits the farm without livestock, while the daughter inherits livestock without a farm.

Your will is also that of your Farm and not only a document stipulating the distribution of your assets.

If you are of the opinion that the fruits of your labour should continue as a business after your death, make sure

… the right person inherits,

… adequate provision has been made for liquidity, and

… your will is executable.

Willem Barnard
Business Manager Sanlam Limpopo
Cell no. 082 578 2664

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