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Kallie Schoeman of Schoeman Boerdery with his wife Elvia Schoeman

photo by Liezel de Villiers

FOREWORD

Family businesses form the backbone of most countries' economies. South Africa and the South African citrus industry are no exceptions.

Forty percent of the fortune 500 companies are family owned. Large international businesses are family owned like BMW, Samsung and LG. In South Africa we think of the Ruperts, Oppenheims and the Ackermans as businesses where the family are majority shareholders.

The oldest family business in the world is known as Kōngō Kumi. This is a Japanese temple building operation founded a mere century after the fall of the Roman Empire in 578 B.C. For more than 1400 years it has survived extreme changes in Japan's culture, government and economy as well as the onslaughts of wars and natural disasters. Their Motto: Adapt and be flexible in a constantly changing world. Keep your family values and appoint competent leaders.

The challenges for all types of family businesses are universal, all over the world. Succession planning remains one of the biggest challenges. Therefore only 30% of family owned businesses will change hands from the first generation to the second. The success rate from the second to the third is only 14%.

This book with real case studies in our industry illustrates how various family farming businesses address the challenge of succession within their businesses as well as how they are extending succession within their businesses beyond their families to be inclusive of their employees and broader community.

For succession planning, always keep in mind the inevitable. Change is the only constant and this applies to the family, the business and the macro world markets which include competition and protectionism. Treat the business as business, the family as family and ownership with respect.

May this book inspire you with your visionary succession planning in order to be a blessing to your family, your community and your country.

Kallie Schoeman

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ALG ESTATES

Citrusdal, Western Cape



Photo: Suzaan-Mari Horn

The late Gerrit van der Merwe Snr. (centre), with his wife Lizette van der Merwe and his granddaughter Stella Warnich.

Subsequent to this interview in October 2018, Gerrit van der Merwe Snr passed away very unexpectedly in December 2018.

Under these extremely sad circumstances, his comments about succession are particularly poignant. Gerrit was one of the pioneers of free marketing and a strong proponent of the deregulation of the South African Fruit industry. He was also one of the founding members of the Western Cape Citrus Producers' Forum (WCCPF) which was formed by Western Cape citrus growers for collective exports to the USA.

"We always had huge respect for our father but the overwhelming response that we have received, both from our local community and the farming sector and his international business colleagues and friends has shown us the difference he has made to our community and industry in his honest, understated, get-the-job-done way," says Gerrit's daughter Sebastine Warnich. "One of the things that has become very clear following his passing was that our father taught us far more than we had realised to date. We are extremely grateful for the years we have spent benefitting from his expert mentorship and we will continue to build on what he had established as his legacy. His advice to us was never to become disheartened and never to stop planning for the future. He also advised us to look after our people and to leave the world a better place for the next generation. He certainly practiced this advice as his legacy has indeed left the world a better place for the next generation," she added.

The Van der Merwe family of ALG Estates has a long tradition of farming in Citrusdal and six generations have farmed in the valley since 1750. A decade ago ALG Estates had 400ha of citrus and following a period of rapid growth they are now a considerable business with 900ha of citrus orchards spread across four production regions. At the helm of the business is owner Gerrit van der Merwe Snr. and the members of the younger generation of the family that have joined the business are his son Gerrit Junior as production manager, his daughter Sebastine Warnich, who runs the farm crèches and tourism divisions of the business and his son-in-law Hendrik Warnich, who is the Managing Director of ALG Marketing.

On the day of the interview on October 2018 confidence in the agricultural sector and succession in the family's agricultural business were certainly the order of the day as both Gerrit van der Merwe Snr. and Jnr. had come to the interview from signing the purchase papers for a new farm in the Citrusdal Valley and the mood was jubilant when they arrived.

"The process of preparing for succession truly starts when your children are young," said Gerrit Snr. "You need to teach them and train them about the various aspects of the farming operation little by little as they grow. It is a long-term process to reach the point where you can hand over the business to an experienced and capable person. Exposure to the industry and a broadening of horizons at an early age sets the foundations for an understanding and appreciation of the massive extent of the broader international citrus and fresh produce industry."

He believed that it was a fine line to follow to hand over control of the business, allowing for the next generation to gain experience but without costing the company money. "This process takes a good deal of time and requires an ongoing good working relationship with open and honest communication. It is very important for the older generation to bear in mind that they need to treat the next generation entrants into the business like professional people in regard to respect and remuneration."

Gerrit Snr. stressed that family members who join the family business must be willing to join the business and be capable of the position that they take on. "Family members that take on a position in a family business are also custodians of the business for the next generation. When your time of involvement with the business passes, you should be in a position to hand over a better business to the next generation. As part of a family business, this is your responsibility. The family needs to be proud of their business."



Above: Hendrik Warnich, Sebastine Warnich, the late Gerrit van der Merwe Snr. and Gerrit van der Merwe.

"In order to enable successful succession it is important that youngsters joining the industry are given the correct guidance and allowed to grow and the older generation plays an important role in making this possible," said Gerrit Snr. "The citrus industry has also grown rapidly during recent years and this remarkable growth has also created a shortage of skills in the industry which in turn creates opportunities for people with the appropriate skills."

Gerrit Snr. also explained that all three of the next generation in the family that are involved in the business have been through different processes before joining ALG in their various current positions and that this had prepared each of them for the role that they fulfil. Alwyn van de Merwe is currently studying law at the University of Stellenbosch. Looking ahead he is likely to spend some time working within the fruit industry before joining the family business.

Gerrit van der Merwe Jnr. is in his mid-thirties and is the Managing Director of the ALG Group. After completing his honours degree in management accounting, Gerrit Jnr. spent some time working for Fisher Capespan (Now Capespan North America) in the USA before joining ALG Estates in 2008. His view on succession is that it is much broader than family succession. "Building a business in Africa is to create jobs and uplift the community. Citrus farming is a very labour intensive type of farming and we have to invest in our community. Our Empowerment project Cedar Citrus was initiated nearly 20 years ago between ALG Estates and 36 members of the Cedar Citrus Workers' Trust and started with 36 ha of citrus. In 2016 ALG sold them additional land at a very low commercial value and also provided them with the water rights that they required to extend their orchards and today they have 92 ha of citrus. They are excited about their future prospects and we have advised them to work at growing their citrus productions to 100ha before they consider investing in the value chain."

Gerrit Jnr explained that with regard to community development, ALG Estates follows a multi-pronged approach to provide for the educational, medical and social needs of their community and believe in building capacity from the bottom. "We provide education to toddlers and pre-schoolers of our staff's children in our crèche and pre-school facilities and also provide after school care facilities for scholars while their parents work. This also provides a good discipline for the children from a young age and as time

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progresses this also leads to a more disciplined workforce and in turn, this is part of succession. For the future of our business and community, education is of vital importance. There are currently eight of the children of our staff who are studying at tertiary education facilities on bursaries provided by ALG Estates. We provide ongoing skills education for our staff. Our social and environmental policies are guided by the values of the Fair Trade and Farming for the Future initiatives. We are proud of our family history and extremely grateful that ALG Estates is able to create opportunities for us, our staff and the broader community.”

Sebastine Warnich and her husband Hendrik both joined the family business in 2016. Before joining ALG Estates, they were both working within the fruit industry’s corporate environment. Hendrik was employed in fruit marketing and completed his degree in B. Tech. Agriculture at Elsenburg College. After completing her degree in Human Resources Management at the University of Stellenbosch, Sebastine worked in fruit export logistics for around 10 years. “We were invited to join the family business and it took us two years to make this decision,” says Sebastine. “We accepted the invitation with the aim of making a contribution to the family business and help it to grow for the future.”

Hendrik explained that ALG Marketing is a separate company from ALG Estates. “I previously worked the fruit marketing department for Univeg and Zest Fruit exporters. I completed a diploma Agriculture at Elsenburg and followed this with a B. Agric. degree through UNISA with the idea to become a viticulturalist. This did not work out and I became involved in the fruit marketing industry,” he added.

“Moving to Citrusdal was a big decision for us,” says Hendrik. I grew up in Moorreesburg so I knew what rural living was like. The living is easier than in the city. One of the many advantages to our rural lifestyle and working for the family business is that we no longer spend two hours each day in the traffic! ALG Estates is a big business with a family heart.”

Hendrik and Sebastine have three young children. They both stressed that it is indeed a privilege for the children to grow up in the farm environment. “They are potentially the future of this business and growing up seeing how the business works is the best way to prepare them for the future,” says Sebastine. She explained that her responsibilities within the business are the preschool and crèche, as well as the tourism division, managing the campsites and self-catering facilities on the ALG Estates farm and she also assists her parents with their personal administration.

ALG Estates has community centres on the properties and these facilities are regularly used for church services as well as other community activities. The proceeds returned to ALG Estates from Fair Trade premiums are also used to sponsor community projects as identified by the staff on the Fair Trade committee. The Business’s corporate social responsibility extends to the wider community as ALG Estates has also recently sponsored the expansion of a crèche/development centre in their local community.

Sport is also important at ALG Estates, both for the children and adults. There are sporting facilities on the farms and ALG Estates has its own rugby, netball and soccer teams. The rugby team competes in the Boland League. The farm provides sports equipment, team uniforms and transport to the tournaments. The children play team sport and have the opportunity to develop their skills at sport and they mature. Currently there are two youngsters whose parents are staff members who are attending the Rugby Academy at Stellenbosch.



Willem September, Tiekie September and Dirk Dirks of Cedar Citrus

CEDAR CITRUS

At Cedar Citrus Tiekie September, Willem September and Dirk Dirks, three of the beneficiaries of Cedar Citrus, were excited to talk about the growth of their farming operation. Cedar Citrus was established in 1999 between ALG Estates and the 36 members of the Cedar Citrus Workers’ Trust. ALG Estates donated the land to Cedar Citrus and held 50% of the Cedar Citrus shares. Each of the workers received a grant of R15 000 from the Department of Land Affairs LRAD fund and pooled the grants as their contribution towards funding the new project which represented 15% of Cedar Citrus and the IDC (Industrial Development Corporation) held the balance of 35% shares in Cedar Citrus on behalf of the beneficiaries.

In 2013 the beneficiaries were able to buy out the IDC share with their earnings and Cedar Citrus now has a 50% stake in the company. More recently Cedar Citrus has bought additional land and now has 90ha of citrus. The business is growing and today they are 32 beneficiaries. The beneficiaries also received a big, powerful tractor from the government as well as two ploughs.

“We are very excited about Cedar Citrus and about our opportunities for the future,” says Tiekie September. Dirk Dirks is the supervisor at the ALG pack house and he is a director on the board of Cedar Citrus. “We are very grateful for the opportunities that we have been given,” says Dirk. “We hold responsible positions and we need to take important decisions as there is a lot of expectation from the other beneficiaries. We grew up knowing citrus and today we have been given the opportunity to progress to management positions. Gerrit Snr. and Gerrit Jnr, been in valuable mentors to us in this process.” Willem September was smiling and grateful. “We have been given a brighter future through our involvement with Cedar Citrus. For that we will always be grateful to the Van der Merwe family and ALG Estates.”



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Orchards at Citrusdal with the Cedarberg in the distance

MOUTON CITRUS

Citrusdal, Western Cape

What is generally known as Mouton Citrus does not tell the full story of how this family-owned business has transformed itself over the past few decades. It has developed new international and local partnerships to remain at the forefront of agri-production and marketing in the country.

Mouton Citrus is part of a group of companies under Mouton Holdings (Pty) Ltd, with Mouton Citrus (Pty) Ltd and Carmien Tea (Pty) Ltd as its main subsidiaries. The Mouton family has a long history of farming in the Citrusdal Valley and the family holds the controlling shares in Mouton Holdings, along with the broad-based Mgro Trust, with a 12,5% share in Mouton Holdings. The other empowerment partner is Masimong Fruit & Agri (RF) (Pty) Ltd, which is a partnership between the Land Bank and Industrialist Mike Teke's Masimong Group. This company has a 35,5% share in Mouton Holdings.

The Mouton Citrus Group has such a strong empowerment focus. In terms of empowerment shareholding, Mouton Holdings and therefore its main operating arm, Mouton Citrus, with 48% empowerment shareholding, is one of the most empowered commercial fruit producers in South Africa. "By including Broad-based inclusive, black institutional and black entrepreneurial empowerment, we have aligned ourselves with the requirements for the future of South Africa," says Executive Chairman Johan Mouton.

"Our sole purpose is to create and grow a profitable, sustainable, competitive and empowered company based on sound business principles. We are well established as a leading producer-packer-exporter of quality citrus and rooibos tea with the ability to grow from this base through alliances and joint ventures," says Johan. The core values of the Group include integrity, excellence, commitment, respect and stewardship and through its long track record of people development these values have become embedded in the Group and forms a huge part of the success of the company.

Boet Mouton, Director Packing and Marketing and his brother CP Mouton, Director Production and Development, play key roles in the future of Mouton Citrus and it is clear that company succession from one generation to the other is in place.

Carmien Tea markets the business's Rooibos tea under the Carmien Tea brand. Although this is a well-known brand in South Africa, most of the income generated from Carmien Tea is from exports. Carmien Tea is the brain child of founder and MD Mientjie Mouton, with Lize du Preez, daughter of Johan and Mientjie Mouton, set to continue the tradition.

Madele Mouton, CP's wife, is responsible for the company's corporate social responsibility and environmental stewardship, as well as managing the Mouton Foundation. The Foundation's work is crucial to the future development of Mouton Citrus, with a very strong emphasis on people. All Mouton Citrus farms, for both citrus and rooibos tea, have been Fairtrade accredited since 2007. The Group also has strong partnerships with international retailers and their foundations, namely the Albert Heijn Foundation and the Waitrose Foundation. Initiatives include the construction of community facilities and facilitating community development, education, youth development and health care programmes. The Foundation is funded through contributions from these retail foundations, Fairtrade premiums, Mouton Holdings companies and government funding and parent contributions.

The Mouton family recognises that the investment in people can only be successful on the back of a successful business. "For us it is not really so much about handing over to new generations, but rather to work hand in hand through unique contributions by all of us to explore new synergies," says Boet Mouton. "We are at the exciting time in our development where we can make a significant contribution to the growth of our community and our country. It is only possible if you have the economy of scale to create the scope for more opportunities."



Andiswe Mdinwa; Packer at Brakfontein Packhouse

"We need to consider succession not only in terms of management control but continuously for the wider stakeholders in the business," says CP Mouton. "This includes our employees who are shareholders as well as the broader community in our area. Through skills development and training we empower people who work for us. This provides them with the opportunity to earn more generous salaries as well as to become involved in decision-making within the business. This opportunity for growth has been embraced by many of our employees and it has an impact on the future for their dependents as well as on the community."

The Mouton Citrus strategy of growth is built on retaining a competitive advantage and undertaking the right acquisitions or renting farms with a turnaround strategy. The company also focusses on the development of new generation orchards and the implementation of best practices and technology. Mouton Citrus also forms partnerships with selected growers to increase market supply and integrate operations into the value chain by increasing packing, juicing and supply chain efficiency.



The Moutons of Mouton Citrus, fltr: Abraham (Boet) Mouton; Director of Marketing, Carel (CP) Mouton, Director of Production, Johan Mouton; CEO and Madele Mouton (wife of CP Mouton); Head of Corporate Responsibility

“Key to our future is how to design your business management structure to continuously grow the business to create enough scope and how to enable the incorporation of young, fresh talent,” says Boet Mouton. There is a focus on drawing top class people to enable the business to grow and flourish. As an international business with diverse shareholding Mouton Citrus values the importance of keeping up with global trends. This includes scientific know-how and leadership at all levels within the business. “We are privileged to have some remarkably skilled managers and operators as colleagues. Many of them are increasing in scope each year and positively challenging the industry norms in terms of what is possible for a specific individual,” comments CP.

Mouton Citrus are continuously striving for the “orchard of the future” with a focus on production practices and use of technology which occurs in close harmony with nature, enabling precision management. Advanced open hydroponic low flow drip irrigation systems ensure optimum water use and leads to savings of up to 50% from traditional methods. This provides the best possible water use in a country like South Africa which is semi-arid and everything has to be water wise. Higher capital investment is offset by tree rejuvenation, increased canopy size, higher crop index, better control over plants, less leaching and an expanding area of control by multi-skilled workers and managers.

Mouton’s marketing strategy is to position it as a preferred direct supplier to global retailers and select target markets. It is important to have the ability to service the retail shelf for the full season and new cultivars are continuously evaluated in order to select the best varieties for tomorrow’s consumer.

Alongside the Mouton orchards are huge tracks of natural vegetation. Conserving the Fynbos heritage and advancing biodiversity is an important part of the business, as well as the sustainable use of fresh water and measuring and managing the company’s carbon footprint. “We constantly strive to achieve synergy between our agricultural activities and nature by using natural resources in sustainable and responsible ways. This goal is essential to the success of our business model,” says Madele Mouton.

“To be successful in the international arena we have to play by the rules of the International Produce Game and through hard work we have built up supply programmes with top Northern Hemisphere customers. With our current position and the entrepreneurial spirit within the corporate structure we are well placed for the future,” says Boet Mouton.



Employees at Mouton Citrus, fltr: Daniel Fransman; Production Team Leader (retired), Pieter Janse; Production Team Leader and Frans Loff; Tractor Operator.

Mouton Citrus provides opportunity and prosperity for much more than just the Mouton family and shareholders. “It is clear to us that there is nowhere in the world where we as a family would be able to make as big a difference to people’s lives than what we are all doing right here,” says Boet Mouton. My father always strived to be more than just a citrus farmer. He believes strongly in custodianship for generations to come by having a strategic focus on balancing corporate and family governance. This is what drives us.”

HEXRIVIER

Citrusdal, Western Cape

Hexrivier is a citrus farm situated in the far north of the Citrusdal Valley. This beautiful, long-established farm has been owned by the Visser family for several generations. Following a challenging restructuring process in 2010 which has left farmer Martli Slabber and her family with a smaller production unit before, she and her family have succeeded in changing focus and finding a competitive edge for this family farm through serving niche markets with quality organically produced citrus.

Visiting the orchards on Hexrivier is certainly a memorable experience as the production practices and appearance of the orchards have a very organic appearance. “For organic production we keep interventions to a minimum,” explained Martli. She added that as many of the natural processes are left undisturbed as possible. The green cover crops and weeds between the rows harbour insects, many of which occur naturally in the surrounding fynbos vegetation and which feed off citrus pest insects and create a natural control process in the orchards. Our visit was out of season, there was only immature fruit on the trees and we even found a herd of cattle in the orchards. “Organic mowers with fertilising as an added benefit,” says Martli with a laugh.

Until ten years ago the farming operation consisted of a partnership between Martli (Visser) Slabber’s family and her cousin Dirk Visser. In 2010, however, Dirk Visser decided to emigrate to Australia and wanted to sell up his share of the farming business. “Following the economic downturn in 2008, by 2010 we had a considerable debt burden,” explains Martli. When Dirk wanted to sell his share of the business this was unexpected and came as a shock. To survive they needed to restructure and downscale.

This process was very tough and what is left of Hexrivier is now much smaller, even less than half of its previous size. The original size of Hexrivier was 540ha but after the restructuring Martli’s immediate family was left with 120ha of citrus as well as a partnership in a mango farm next to the Clanwilliam Dam. “I am one of five sisters and at one of the most difficult times during this process my two younger sisters Martine and Melissa, both highly pregnant at the time, arrived on the farm and offered their help. One of the very positive developments has been that all four of my sisters including Margarethe and Comina have subsequently become much more involved in the farming process.” She explained that this hands-on and emotional support meant a great deal to them on the farm during this difficult transition time. “My husband Reinhardt was not previously involved but at the time when we restructured I asked him to become the farm manager. It has not always been easy but we have made it work and we run the farm together.”

“What has been very positive since then has been the development of our organic farming operation,” says Martli. “As the size of the farm was reduced considerably and we could no longer compete on size within the marketplace, we needed to re-evaluate our circumstances and find a new niche to differentiate ourselves and establish a competitive edge. For us, this has been organic farming.”

Hexrivier supplies the European market with organic lemons and has chosen to focus on lemons as the prices for organic lemons generally remains quite stable over time as the supply is relatively limited. Martli explains that most farmers say that organic farming cannot be done on a commercial scale but added that at Hexrivier they have faced the challenge and they are one of very few organic citrus producers in the Western Cape. “Although the method of production is unusual our farm workers have embraced this practice and remain extremely supportive,” says Martli. “We are well situated within the valley to practice organic production as we are bordered by the river on two sides of our farm which protects us from spray drift from commercial farmers in the close vicinity.” “Only a small part of our property is arable land and our orchards border on the veld which is the pristine natural fynbos floral kingdom of our region. Organics is about creating biodiversity.”

“Succession is very important to us as our family has been on Hexrivier since 1750 and the Vissers first planted citrus here in 1916. My father started farming here in the 1950’s and although he is no longer involved in the running of the farm, he still lives here and takes an interest in our farming activities. Our farm is owned by a family trust and my four sisters and I are beneficiaries of the trust. I am therefore creating a legacy for the broader family,” says Martli. She added that the legacy of the family business is innovation. The Vissers switched from brandy to citrus in 1916, her grandfather installed the first water cannon, and Dirk snr has been at the forefront of the development of microjet irrigation, one of the first farms to install irrigation automation, and one of the first to see the potential of open hydroponic drip systems. “Pushing the envelope is part of our business culture. At Hexrivier they are not just growing a legacy for themselves but are working with others in the community to facilitate growth and to assist other people to become successful fellow farmers.”



The extended Visser family of Hexrivier. Martli Slabber (back row, centre with green scarf) with her parents Dirk and the late Jacqueline Visser, Martli's family as well as her sisters Margarethe Visser, Professor Martine Visser, Melissa Middleton and their families. The Visser sisters are all trustees of the DJ Visser Trust, which owns Hexrivier.

“We are proud of people who worked for us who have become independent,” says Martli. “An example of this is Andries van der Poll, the former manager on Ruigerivier, the empowerment farming project started by Hexrivier in 2006 when the Hexrivier Workers’ Trust bought 70% of Ruigerivier. After managing Ruigerivier and other farms in the interim, he is now farming his own farm.” Previously Hexrivier owned a 30% share in our empowerment farm Ruigerivier and the Hexrivier permanent employees owned the balance of 70%. At the time of restructuring a neighbour, (Mouton Citrus) took over the 30% share in Ruigerivier.

The restructuring process was very difficult on the farm workers employed by Hexrivier. The division of the workforce caused a lot of social upheaval. “Our workers had a tough time but they supported us through these difficult

times,” she explained. “We truly value their contribution and friendship. Our farmworkers receive a share of the profits when we make a profit.”

Looking into the future Martli imagines that the person that will be farming this farm is likely to be somebody who can think entrepreneurially, and has a passion and knowledge for organic production. “Our organic productions have grown considerably and organic farming is both a very new field and an old field. As there is currently not much established knowledge about organic farming practices, we are learning as we go along and bit by bit we are becoming more knowledgeable in this field. The great challenge is to upscale organic systems, which are currently mostly done on smallholdings. Patrysberg verpakking does most of our packing, their commitment to quality, excellent service and transparency is outstanding. Our organic fruit is packed by Goede Hoop Citrus, who has dedicated a packing line to organic fruit.”

DENAU

De Doorns, Western Cape

Denau is situated in the Hex River Valley in the Western Cape. This farming operation has 155ha of citrus, 220ha of table grapes and 140ha of wine grapes, and is rapidly expanding their citrus orchards. The total size of Denau's farming units is approximately 3000ha but as they are situated in a mountainous area, the arable land approximately 550ha. Denau belongs to the Naudé family and is managed by Chairman Pieter Naudé and his three sons Fanie, Marinus and Pieter Jnr. who represent the fifth and sixth generations of the Naudé family who have farmed in the Hex River Valley since the mid-19th century. Denau is also the marketing brand of the business and is an anagram of the family's surname, reflecting the family's pride and commitment to their family farming business.

The expansion and consolidation of what is today Denau was started by Pieter Naudé in the 1980's and is continuing in a rapid growth phase. The business has also moved from simple fruit production to be an integrated grower, packer, shipper and marketer of fruit. Although the Hex River Valley is traditionally a table grape production region Pieter Naudé was the first grower in the region to see the potential of citrus production in the region and first planted 50ha of citrus orchards in 1989.

Pieter and his wife Maretha have three sons Fanie, Marinus and Pieter and a daughter, Alet. Alet is not involved in the family activities and has her own coffee shop and guesthouse in Worcester. Fanie joined the farming business in 2005, Marinus in 2007 and Pieter in 2012 and the decision by Pieter's sons to become part of the farming operation and develop the business as a single unit together was an important factor in prompting the considerable expansion of Denau to its current size.

While Denau is a family business with traditional values, it is run according to modern business practices. All members of management, including the Naudé family members, have the relevant tertiary qualifications for their positions. The business is progressing along a structured hand-over process from one generation to the next. Denau functions according to correct corporate governance protocols with a competent directorship and an operational Exco.

Fanie Naudé is 37 and is the CEO of Denau. He completed a B.Comm. Degree in Economics and Management Science at the University of Stellenbosch. After graduation he spent nine months working for Mack Multiples in the UK as a fruit quality and stock controller followed by five months as the South African representative in the UK and EU for Exsa Fruit Exports. Fanie returned to South Africa and joined the family business in 2005. While he was assisting Pieter on the farm, he also completed an MBA degree at the University of Stellenbosch Business School. Fanie is married to Laetitia and they have three young children. In 2018 Fanie Naudé was elected as the Chairman of the Board for SATI (South African Table Grape Industry), the producer representative structure of the South African table Grape Industry.

Marinus Naudé is 34 and is the Head of Table Grape Production at Denau. Marinus completed a B.Sc. Honours degree at the University of Stellenbosch and before joining the family business, he had the opportunity to work and gain

experience in a table grape packhouse in Egypt for a harvest period. Marinus is married to Elmien and they have three young children. Pieter Naudé Jnr. is 29 and is the Head of Citrus Production at Denau. Pieter completed his B.Comm. Honours degree in Management Accounting at the University of Stellenbosch. Before joining the family business he worked for Moore Stephens in Stellenbosch for six months. Pieter is currently still continuing his studies to complete a CIMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants) qualification. He is married to Marizanne.

"It has always been my dream to farm with my three sons," says Pieter Naudé. "The Naudé family has farmed in the Hex River Valley for around 150 years and I see the current generation as custodians of this continuity for the future. When I started farming as a young man at Welgemoed in 1976 with 28ha of table grapes, it was always my intention to expand my farming operations. Over the years I bought additional land and expanded the operation steadily. However, when all our sons made the decision to join the family business and to preserve the farming operations as a single unit, we realised that we would need to expand the business considerably to accommodate this increased capacity within the family business," explains Pieter. "We currently have 220ha of table grape production and our current target is to expand our citrus production to reach a similar size as well."

"We are rapidly expanding our soft citrus orchards and our plan is to grow our produce to a critical mass which is large enough to justify the construction of our own specialised soft citrus packing facility," explains Pieter Jnr. "This will allow us to extend our control of the value chain beyond production. We believe it is important for us to grow our productions to remain competitive in an ever increasingly competitive market." Denau has recently bought a wine grape farm at Rawsonville and plan to replace the wine grapes with soft citrus over the next two years.

Marinus says that he is proud of what his father and brothers have achieved by making the decision to work together and sticking to this despite the challenges. "What has really helped in this situation is that each of us have very clearly defined responsibilities within the business without any grey areas. Moving forward successfully together requires ongoing good leadership, communication and hard work. We are mindful of keeping business and family separate and we realise that the growth and success of the business is more important than each of us as individuals," says Marinus.

"Growing up on the farm and working with my parents during school and university holidays was a way of life for my brothers and I and we developed a great love for this lifestyle and an appreciation for what my father and his forebearers had established," explains Fanie. "As a result we never saw ourselves doing anything else other than farming and we have never regretted this decision."

Pieter Naudé Snr's father passed away when he was 15 so he did not have a father's mentorship when he started farming. He therefore has a deep understanding of how important his role is as a mentor to his sons within the

family business. Initially when they joined the family business he mentored each of them individually on a daily hands-on, practical basis. As they became more competent and the business grew and developed along corporate lines, Pieter withdrew gradually from the day-to-day activities and has taken on more of an advisory role. He explained that the rapid growth within their business made the family realise that they needed additional capacity. They have since appointed additional professional people to the business staff complement and are following the trend of replacing consultants with in-house specialists. Pieter Snr. admits that formalising a corporate structure and sticking to corporate procedures with family members was very tricky, especially when this was initially set in place. “As the business needs to progress with the generational succession process, it made sense for me to withdraw from involvement in day-to-day activities sooner rather than later,” he explained. “I attend the Exco meetings and participate in planning and for the rest I generally keep an eye on things and remain available to provide guidance and advice.”

The business expansion prompted the family to revise and improve the structure of the business entities to match the needs of the growing Denau entity. Over time Pieter sought advice and received guidance on this from a range of consultants and this process has now been largely completed and implemented. The Naudé family has also established a family constitution with the approval of all the family members which serves as a declaration of intent. This describes the family and what the family’s expectations are of each family member as well as of possible new entrants into the family’s business.

Managing the family and working relationships within a family business is complex and in order to avoid further complication, the Naudé family have a family rule that the brother’s wives are not involved within the family business.

Succession at Denau extends beyond the Naudé family to their workers, their most valuable resource. “Fruit farming is highly labour intensive and we realise that without a well-trained, productive workforce we would not be able to operate our business,” says Fanie. Denau has a permanent workforce of 300 workers and during the harvest season they employ an additional 250 seasonal workers. The business recognises the importance of the contribution that their staff make to the farming operation as well as the company’s responsibility to their feeling of well-being and contentment.



The Naudé family of Denau in their young orchards. fltr: Fanie Naudé, Pieter Naudé, Marinus Naudé and Pieter Naudé Jnr.

Denau nurtures good working relationships with staff members through correct ethical practices and continuous improvement of living standards. Through ongoing training they provide skills development and personal growth opportunities for each staff member. Denau provides access to healthcare for the workers and has three crèches for the children of their workers, caring for the babies and pre-schoolers while their parents are at work. The crèche provides age appropriate early child care programmes for the youngsters as well as providing them with three balanced meals per day. Denau has an after school care facility which provides the scholars with assistance with their homework and skills development. They are also in the process of constructing a large new crèche and after school care facility for the children of their employees which will have the capacity to accommodate up to 200 children.

In 2003 Pieter Naudé used the opportunity to empower the Denau employees through the LRAD (Land Redistribution and Development) funding mechanism of the Department of Land Affairs. Subsequent to further developments, today the Denau Workers’ Trust owns 100 % shares of the farm Alpha, a 17ha farm in the Hex River Valley purchased by the Denau Workers’ Trust in 2010. Initially Denau provided some transitional support systems but today this BEE initiative is an independent farming unit. Denau has very recently completed the process of positioning themselves for a filial level BEE partnership and expect to proceed with this initiative in the near future.

Environmental sustainability and stewardship are fundamental principles for all the activities at Denau. The company implements the principles and practical applications of Good Agricultural Practices in a quest to produce safe and healthy fruit within the parameters of the economic, social and environmental sustainability. These include the protection of the fauna and flora in the natural habitat adjoining their farms, water source protection as well as ensuring water security for Denau’s personnel and product. In a quest for increased sustainability, Denau regularly check their eco-friendliness and carbon footprint levels through audits and work towards improving these standards on an ongoing basis.

“We realise that we are privileged to be the beneficiaries of a legacy of a family farming tradition and the structures that have been put in place will certainly provide us with guidance for successful succession to the next generation,” says Fanie.

KOMATI FRUIT GROUP

Letsitele, Limpopo

The Komati Fruit Group is the biggest privately owned grower and exporter of citrus and subtropical fruit in South Africa. Previously known as the Bosveld Group of companies, Komati Fruit started in 1954 when TM Thalwitzer (senior) bought the farm Die Vlakke in the Letsitele area where he farmed with citrus. His son Milaan Thalwitzer joined the family farming business in 1965 and Milaan, supported by his wife Antoinette, later took over the farming operation and started expanding the business to the massive operation it is today.

Komati Fruit produces and markets their own fruit from more than 5 500ha under irrigation of which 4 300 is citrus. Komati Fruit also produces avocado's, bananas, mangos, macadamia nuts, blueberries, litchis and sugar cane on their production units situated in Limpopo and Mpumalanga at Letsitele, Hoedspruit, Burgersfort, Politsi, Nelspruit, Malelane and Komatipoort. Shareholding within some of the Komati Fruits units is inclusive of Black Economic Empowerment transactions. In season the company employs up to 3 500 people and provides ongoing training and educational programmes for staff. Clinics and crèches provide childcare and health care services. Employees also have access to sport and recreational activities and the company also offers a range of community focused projects.

This family owned enterprise is owned by the Thalwitzer Family Trust and managed by Milaan Thalwitzer and three of his sons-in-law, Piet Smit (married to Albi), Marinus Neethling (married to Antoinette) and Cornel van der Merwe (married to Milanie). Piet Smit is the CEO of Komati Fruit Group, Cornel van der Merwe is the Marketing and Packaging Director and Marinus Neethling is the Production Director

Milaan Thalwitzer is in his late seventies and explained that the succession process of handing over responsibility to the next generation has been ongoing for decades and is now largely completed. He and Antoinette have four daughters and by the 1990's he had already started planning for the succession of the farming operation. He saw the potential of his sons-in-law, who were all employed elsewhere at the time, joining the business and made

the decision to recruit them. "I headhunted all three of our sons-in-law who are involved in the business," says Milaan with a smile.

Piet Smit joined the family business first in 1998. He is a lawyer by training and had previously worked in the legal profession in Pretoria before joining the business. Marinus Neethling farmed on his family farm for several years before joining the business in 2004. Cornel van der Merwe worked for Outspan and later Intertrading for eight years and joined the business in 2005.

Initially Piet, Cornel and Marinus each managed a farming unit within the business but as the farming operations began expanding rapidly, it became clear that it would be better for the company to grow as a combined, corporate unit. Each of them brought specialised skills to the business as Marinus had good experience within the production sector, Cornel had experience in the marketing sector and Piet experience in the legal and structural side of the business. Following this the formal corporate company structure was formed with Milaan Thalwitzer as the chairman of the board of directors, Piet Smit as the CEO, Marinus as the director responsible for production and Cornel as the director responsible for marketing and packaging. Milaan explained that with the issue of family succession in mind, he consulted attorneys and PricewaterhouseCoopers who assisted him to establish the family trust deed and formulated a structure and constitution that has been implemented within the business for the family.

"The Milaan Thalwitzer Family Trust is at the top of our corporate structure. The uniqueness of our structure is that the beneficiaries are family groups not individuals. We have four daughters and their four family trusts are the beneficiaries of the Milaan Thalwitzer Family Trust. The Komati Group Holdings corporate structure is proving successful. Komati Group Holdings (100%) belongs to the Milaan Thalwitzer Family Trust and Komati Group Holdings reports to the trustees of the family trust. I am the chairman of the Komati Group Holdings board and along with Piet, Cornel and Marinus as directors, we also have two external directors."

Piet, Cornel and Marinus agree that they work well together with mutual respect and added that the corporate structures that have been put in place certainly assist in guiding their working relationships. "Milaan is visionary in his thoughts and has had the vision and foresight to put all these structures in place as he has," says Marinus. They also agree that their unique situation as brothers-in-law places them all on the same footing within the family and within the company. Cornel pointed out that the working relationship might have been more complex if there had been a Thalwitzer brother as this would have changed this dynamic. "The fact that we are married to three sisters and, as their parents are the founders of the business, their relationship with each other and the family creates a unifying force," says Piet.

Milaan stressed that as a group, Komati Fruit believes in principles of healthy corporate management structures and principles as this ensures that the disciplinary governance and processes work successfully. The good communication structures and management practices ensure that they receive sufficient feedback on a regular basis to keep up to date on what is happening throughout the company. Although the company has production regions spread across Limpopo and Mpumalanga, the head office and administration is centralised at Letsitele. They have their own internal internet system between the various production units and farm offices and the finances, administration and Human Resources, are processed at the head office. Komati Fruit has its own company secretary and the engineering division here as well. In order to ensure effective communication over the distance between production units they make use of video conferencing systems. Komati Fruit has its own plane and a pilot that the top management uses to travel between the farms and attend meetings.

"As a family we have also formulated and established a family constitution and a great deal of time and effort went into this process, explains Milaan. "The constitution is important as it provides guidance on crucial issues such as who appoints the managing director and other directors of the company, how will financial reporting be handled, how will dividend payments be scheduled, and who can apply to work for the company, to name a few."



The Komati Fruit Group family, fltr: Marinus Neethling, Antoinette Neethling, Cornel van der Merwe, Milanie van der Merwe, Milaan Thalwitzer, Antoinette Thalwitzer, Piet Smit and Albi Smit. This photo was taken in 2014 when the Bosveld Group (part of the Komati Group) won the prize for South African Farmer of the Year for 2014.

The family constitution has been set up to highlight the custodianship of the family business for future generations of the family. The family worked together to set out clear rules for family members, where each family member and the grandchildren fit into the structure and what their responsibilities are. It also outlines the conditions under which family members from the next generation could join the company, stipulating that it is preferable that they should complete tertiary education and work for another company for at least two years before applying for a job with the company.

“Our family constitution is a declaration of intent established by our family. It outlines what the family expects from each of us as family members but is not a legally binding agreement,” explained Piet. “The sisters are the representatives of each of their nuclear families within our family constitution.”

Piet also pointed out that Komati Fruit is currently in the transition phase as they are preparing for the next generation of the family to join the business. “In order to ensure the long-term success of our company, we researched various models of continuity of South African and international companies before formulating this structure. We have enough opportunity to provide employment for the next generation but they will not necessarily become directors of the company. Some years back members of a large Argentinian family farming business, Ledesma, visited us to find out our corporate and family structures. In the end we also learned a good deal from them and one of the important lessons was that it was vital to define what our expectations are of any potential new family entrants to the business. Not everyone has the same

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abilities to be directors or senior managers in the company but there is a wide range of opportunities for family members in positions at various levels within the company.”

Cornel added that the constitution’s principles and conditions also provide clear guidance for the family’s children who are growing up with an understanding of this concept as well as their place within the structure. “We also invite our older children to attend trust meetings so that they see the structured way in which we address each other in this formal setting so that they can develop a better understanding of this formal corporate environment which exists parallel to our family life,” he explained.

“Our children are farm children,” says Marinus. “They live on the farms and they are exposed to the operational side of farming from an early age. They know that they are welcome to join the family business and what is expected of them in order to do this and they also have the choice to choose their own careers. This has all been put in place the best way possible. There are so many opportunities in many directions within our business and we hope that some of our children will choose to join the family business as continuity is very important for the future.”

“I have realised that it is very important for me to give over control of the business as I am approaching 80,” says Milaan. He added that he does not want to hold back the younger generation from their plans for the future and that he is increasingly withdrawing from day-to-day management. He no longer has an office at the company head office but works in his office at home. “I appreciate that I am still always consulted on issues and I always say that I am willing to give my opinion as long as it does not represent a veto vote on a particular matter. This is simply my opinion and they can still make their own decisions.”

“I have real peace of mind that things within the business are running smoothly and that I am able to scale down my involvement,” says Milaan. “We are a great team and the management personnel that our directors have put in place are also an excellent team. Our business philosophy is to appoint the best people for the job and to ensure that they receive the best remuneration and this is a big part of the success of our business. We look at an applicant’s qualifications and ability and appoint people on merit. We have many black people in top positions and I see a great realism amongst the black people that we have appointed. We are growing rapidly and have large annual turnovers and we need top people to ensure that we maintain the momentum and remain successful.”

Piet explained that the backbone of agriculture everywhere in the world is still the family farming business. “As leading farmers in our field of fruit production, we also need to be leaders within our industry and also in our local communities. Our business is situated in rural farming communities and as we employ many people and strive to attract the best people for the job, it is important that our farming communities are pleasant places to live. Over the years our company has developed corporate structures but we have worked hard to retain the traditional values of a family business.”

Komati Fruit is proud of the corporate social responsibility initiatives that they undertake on behalf of their workers. Their focus on environment custodianship is reflected in the company’s slogan Nurtured Nature. “We realize that the extent to which we look after our soil directly determines its production capacity and therefore this is a fundamental principle for our farming practices and we do this for our survival,” says Marinus.

“I am very optimistic about our future despite the county’s current political problems. We do not support the proposed change to the constitution regarding expropriation without compensation. We do however believe that there should be a redistribution of land in South Africa and our company is proactively involved in land reform initiatives as we are making a successful contribution to the land reform process,” concluded Milaan.



Young Mandarin orchards, Mpumalanga

MILANIE VAN DER MERWE

Milanie van der Merwe is the only one of the Thalwitzer sisters who is actively involved in the Komati Fruit business and it is indeed fitting that her position as the manager of the company's nursery is vital to nurturing the future of the company's productions.

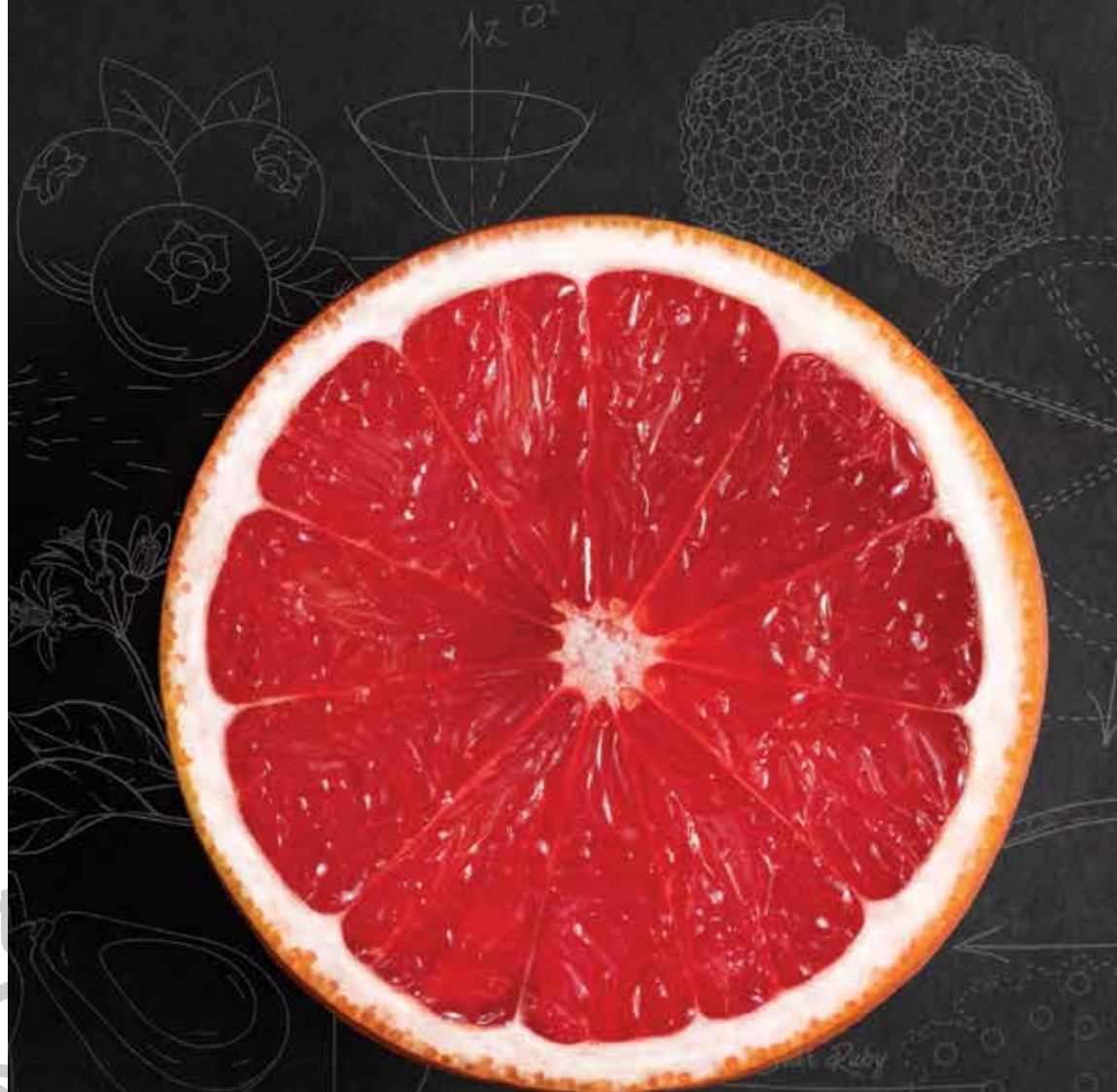
She explained that she runs the Komati Fruit nursery on Riverside Farm at Malelane in Mpumalanga which supplies all the small trees for citrus and other fruit production for all the Komati Fruit farms. The nursery is a Citrus Accredited nursery which means trees must be certified in accordance with a quality management system and are audited twice a year for this purpose by the Citrus Improvement Scheme (Citrus Research International).

Ten years ago the nurseryman on the farm left this created a position. "I was interested to help at the nursery and the rest is history," says Milanie with a laugh. "Since I started running the nursery, it has doubled in size and output. These trees are vital to the future success of the business and so in the nursery we need to ensure that we are producing top quality trees."

"When we decided to join the family business and move to the farm, one of the deciding factors was that we would have a more relaxed lifestyle. Our home is on the banks of the Crocodile River and we have a view of the river and the Kruger Park beyond. Most evenings we see game from our home and I am extremely grateful for God's providence. Although our lifestyle is more relaxed, the work environment remains quite stressful as we realise that we are working for ourselves."

When asked about her family Milanie says, "We are a very close family and fortunate to be there for each other. My sisters and I are very close and between us and our husbands, there are some strong personalities. Despite this, we work well together and when problems arise we work hard at sorting this out and then get on with being a loving, supportive family."

"We were taught from an early age that we as privileged children should always care for others. This was part of our culture growing up and all these ethics are in place in the next generation as well. My father Milaan has a great deal of experience and wisdom and my mother Antoinette loves her role as mother and grandmother. The examples that they have set for our family will guide us into the future."



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Nurtured Nature

EASY FARM

Thohoyandou, Limpopo

Easy Farm is a citrus and banana farm on the Southern slopes of the Soutpansberge near Thohoyandou in Northern Limpopo in an area where there are few other commercial farms. This is the farm of agricultural pioneer Israel Nemaorani, who started farming here in 1990 and received his title deed in 1994. The total size of Easy Farm is 220ha and today Easy Farm has 150 ha of citrus (mostly Valencias) and 70ha of bananas. The farm also produces mangos and in addition to the fruit production the family also farms with pigs. The farm is doing well and in December 2018 Easyfarm planted 10ha of citrus (Benny Valencias). Water has been a problem and they have sunk a borehole which delivers a good water capacity.

Over the years Israel and his wife Eunice Nemaorani have worked hard and sacrificed much to create a legacy for their family. While Israel has been developing the farm, Eunice has developed the family's dry cleaning business and business complex buildings in the town of Thohoyandou 35km away. Israel Nemaorani is 72 and his wife Eunice is 64. They have five children, two sons and three daughters. Their sons are Lavhengwa (36) and Muhoyo (29) and their daughters are Dakalo (39), Khavha (37) and Gumani (32).

I am getting to the point where I am slowing down and handing over the responsibility to the next generation," says Israel. "I am in the process of handing over the dry cleaning business to Muhoyo. He is doing well, lives near the business and I still remain involved to assist him. Lavhengwa and his wife Meme have been assisting me on the farm for ten years and have now largely taken over the running of the farm. The farm is to be transferred to Lavhengwa and he will own and continue with the farm. Our daughters each own part of the business complex and Dakalo lives in the family's house in Thohoyandou."

Israel says that he and Eunice have created something for their children and that things are in place for them. "We are grateful for the opportunity to have been able to create a legacy to leave for our children. We live close to the farm and we plan to retire there. We have 13 grandchildren and as most of them live close by, we see most of them regularly."

Eunice explained that while she has not been involved with the farm, over the years she has taken responsibility for the dry cleaning business. "My husband is a hard worker. He is on the farm every day and does not take a day off, not for Christmas, New Year or even Sunday and he built this farm himself from scratch. He is successful because he is very strict, keeping a strict control over the budget. Although we never lacked for anything his strict control over the budget is why we are here today. He always paid for the children's education. I pray that my children will follow in the footsteps of Israel," says Eunice. Israel chuckles and replies: "Behind every successful man there is a successful woman."

Lavhengwa and Israel have been working together on the farm for ten years. "When I had finished school I wanted to go to Pretoria to do business management," says Lavhengwa. "Two weeks before I was planning to go to Pretoria, my father convinced me to go to the Lowveld College in Nelspruit to study agriculture. After I graduated I did some short courses through the University of Stellenbosch and I spent some time with the Du Roi group at Letsitele where I worked in the production sector, in the nursery and in the pack house."

Lavhengwa believes that having worked somewhere else before returning to the farm was good because he gained invaluable knowledge about citrus farming in the process. "There have been times that my father and I have clashed but we sort this out and it has become easier over time. I admit that I was young and big-headed when I arrived here," says Lavhengwa with a laugh. Lavhengwa and Meme have four children, three daughters and a son who is the eldest, aged nine. Meme helps with the administration in the office.

Lavhengwa explained that from the age of six years old, he was at boarding school in a number of boarding schools in Johannesburg and completed the last part of his high school at Weston Agricultural College in Durban. "I grew up without really knowing my father as he was always at work. I only really got to know him when I started working with him on the farm."

"I would like our children to grow up in our home and get to know us, our environment and our community," says Lavhengwa. "We do not want to force our children to take an interest in agriculture but our son does enjoy being on the farm with me." Meme agrees and says that their son will be very excited to see the new tractor that had arrived the previous day.

Meme says that growing up she never imagined that she would be involved in agriculture. "Lavhengwa assists me with my admin responsibilities and makes it easy for me," she says. "My friends think it is strange that I am involved in agriculture and cannot understand why I am not looking for another job. I answer them by telling them that as a farmer my husband is a very important person to them as he is feeding them."

Lavhengwa explains that there is very little interest in agriculture in the area and that none of his friends are interested in agriculture. He believes that the government has a big responsibility to expose people to the positive possibilities that are offered by agriculture and thus to create an interest in agriculture. "The interest in agriculture needs to be created amongst young people by bringing high school learners to see the opportunities offered by agriculture," he explained.

"The opportunity that my father has presented us with is a true gift. I am 36 and have friends who have died and others who are in prison so I am extremely fortunate to be the receiver of the legacy my parents have provided for us. If I am honest, at times being involved in a family business has presented its challenges but we have persevered together and ten years later, I am still here and ready to take over the business," says Lavhengwa.



The Nemaorani family of Easy Farm, fltr: Meme Nemaorani, Lavhengwa Nemaorani, Israel Nemaorani, Eunice Nemaorani and Gumani Nemaorani.

Gumani Nemaorani is 32 and the youngest of Israel and Eunice's daughters. She matriculated at DSG St Mary's in Pretoria and completed her Bachelor of Commerce B. Com. Degree and her Honours in Tourism Management at the University of Pretoria. She has been working in the banking sector in Cape Town for several years. "I am currently preparing to further my studies at the UCT Graduate School of Business and the course is a certificate course in Coaching and Development, starting in March 2019. I am extremely grateful for what our parents have created for us. They are now taking it easier and as they have prepared the way for us, it is now it is up to me to add on to the foundation that they created for us."

"My wife and I love living here and I love the farming lifestyle. After working in the city, coming back here to my childhood home was truly a homecoming. I look forward to retiring, seeing my children settled and seeing my son continuing with the farm," concluded Israel.



Easy Farm entrance boards

GROEP 91 UITVOER

Letsitele, Limpopo

In 1984, at the age of 35, Burgert van Rooyen and his wife Irma took the brave decision to uproot their young family in Johannesburg and move to Letsitele in Limpopo. With their three children, Henk, Anriette and Janine, they were fortunate enough to buy a small citrus farm in Letsitele at the peak of a severe drought, when the Tzaneen dam was only 4% full. With only his experience as an Industrial Engineer to fall back on, Burgert embarked on a new career as a commercial citrus farmer. Right from the outset, he learnt an invaluable lesson, that in the face of adversity, there are always opportunities to grow.

The unusual name of the business, Groep 91 Uitvoer, was chosen in 1991 when Burgert established a partnership with his brother-in-law Johan Barnard in order to acquire a new farm. The partnership prospered until 2010, when Johan Barnard decided to exit the business, creating an opportunity for the second generation of Burgert's family to enter the business. Today, Groep 91 Uitvoer (Pty) Ltd. is a family business that farms on 720ha of citrus and 120ha of Macadamia nuts, with the company's head office near Letsitele in Limpopo. Burgert (70), his son Henk (42) and his two sons-in-law Kobus van Wyk (49) and Jan-Louis Pretorius (42) are the four equal shareholders and directors of Groep 91. Groep 91 Uitvoer is a farm management and export company, while the farms it operates are owned by property trusts of the Van Rooyen family.

Henk is the production manager, Jan-Louis is the marketing and financial manager and Kobus is the technical manager. When reflecting on what makes their business successful, they stressed that the structure, positions, roles and responsibilities of their business are designed to support its commercial objectives, not to accommodate family members.

Groep 91 Uitvoer does not have a CEO and the four shareholders discuss issues at their weekly EXCO meeting where each of them reports back on their division of the business. Burgert is the only non-executive member of the EXCO and explained that he has purposefully stepped back.

Successful Succession

"Every generational transition in a family business presents the opportunity for a family business to reinvent itself," explains Burgert. "For this to be successful it is necessary to have a willing and professionally qualified and experienced new generation with intent as well as existing leadership that is prepared to delegate responsibility fully to allow the reinvention process to run its course. Succession planning and generational transition require principles and structures to be defined long before they are actually needed and long before emotions cloud good judgement and we have been proactive in preparing for this process." Jan-Louis Pretorius responded and added that Burgert fulfils a very important role within the business. "Burgert holds the institutional memory and knowledge of our business environment and performs a vital function through his mentorship."

Business Principles

The philosophy at Groep 91 Uitvoer is that a vested interest, such as shareholding, is also a key component to successful succession. Waiting and hoping to inherit something one day is not a strong enough incentive to drive a new generation towards making sound short-, medium- and long-term decisions for the business. "What makes our model unique is that when we as sons and sons-in-law joined the business, from the start we became equal shareholders in the business," says Kobus van Wyk. "This was not a gradual handing over process and we needed to step up to the plate immediately and add value from Day

One." This approach is clearly working as Burgert commented that the next generation shareholders have brought fresh perspectives and a youthful energy and confidence to the business. "My son and sons-in-law chose to leave their professional careers and lives in the city and join the family business in Letsitele," says Burgert. Each of them chose to buy into the business to become a shareholder in Groep 91 Uitvoer and is committed to the business.

"For each of us, joining the company represented a huge learning curve and through hard work and with much guidance from Burgert, we have found our direction and we have grown the business," says Henk. "We look forward to expanding the business further in the future and there are many opportunities to do this."

The shareholders agreed that it was important for them to work towards an element of financial independence from the company. They also believe that as individuals, the shareholders should be able to exit from a family business through selling their shares without damaging the business.

Involvement within organised agriculture at a local and industry level is also an important principle for the shareholders of Groep 91 Uitvoer. This assists the business to remain on the forefront of industry developments and also creates a platform for the shareholders to serve the industry and community. Jan-Louis is currently a CGA director and Kobus is directly involved in organised agriculture at a local grower organisation level.

Next Generation shareholders

Henk completed a B. Comm. degree in Hotel Management at the University of Pretoria. He spent a period working for Capespan and after this he had been running his own business. Henk and his wife Karin live on the farm.

Kobus is a professional engineer by training and is originally from Pretoria where he grew up, matriculated and graduated from the University of



The Groep 91 Uitvoer Team, fltr: Jan-Louis Pretorius, Burgert van Rooyen, Henk van Rooyen and Kobus van Wyk

Pretoria. He is married to Burgert's daughter Anriëtte and they live on the farm. They have two daughters, Sophia (12) and Irma (11) and a son, Jac (7). Kobus provides a mechanical and technological supportive function to the production division.

Jan-Louis is married to Janine, Burgert and Irma's youngest daughter. He is from Johannesburg and completed an Honours degree in Marketing at RAU (Rand Afrikaans Universiteit) as well as a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) through the Gordon Institute of Business Science in Johannesburg. Following his studies, he worked within the corporate environment in the banking sector for 12 years. Jan-Louis and Janine also live on the farm. They have two daughters, Klara (12) and Amelie (8) and a son, Jan (10).

Family

The shareholders all agree that managing relationships within a family business does not happen by itself and that it takes courage, discipline and maturity. "We are first family and then business colleagues so the very clearly defined structure of the business and our various roles and responsibilities makes it easier to manage these relationships," says Burgert. "For the business to be successful we trust and rely on each other to get the job done. We work together, socialise together, take care of each other's children and take note of each other's security, so during work and after hours we are in fact a small community and therefore we work hard at managing our personal relationships." He also explained that as they rely heavily on each other, effective communication and maintaining mutual respect for each other remained the key for success. The family also has a separate family forum and holds formal annual family meetings to address specific family related issues.

The family is also purposefully trying to raise a next generation with neither an entitlement nor a forced responsibility for that matter to join the business one day. For anyone, including family, to join the business, there has to be a role for the individual, the individual must be adequately qualified for the role and he or she must choose to fulfil that role.

Employee Welfare

The shareholders of Groep 91 Uitvoer see the definition of family extending beyond the immediate Van Rooyen lineage and it is their intention for each employee to feel connected to the Groep 91 family. In that sense, every member of the family is guided by the same set of values, policies and expectations and deserves the same level of respect.

Groep 91 Uitvoer has 231 permanent employees and annually employ an additional 450 seasonal employees. "We are an integrated part of our community and we enforce a strict policy of employing only South African citizens, both into full-time and part-time positions. This in an attempt to address large scale unemployment in our area. Unemployment in our community is a massive social and economic challenge and we share in the responsibility to resolve this," explains Burgert. "Our value of mutual respect forms the basis for our relationships with our workforce. As a result of respect and effective communication and relationship management, we do not have strikes or unions on our farms."

The company's organisational structure is flat which favours the empowerment of individuals with skills and responsibility. This places a large focus on training, development and mentorship at all levels. Groep 91 Uitvoer runs active

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programmes from basic literacy through to technical specialist training and even personal leadership. Effective two-way communication is a key ingredient to fostering a healthy work environment. The combination of an experienced committee system and an emphasis on visibility and accessibility to the leaders/owners/directors have yielded good results in this regard.

The shareholders of Groep 91 Uitvoer and the Van Rooyen family take a genuine interest in their “family” of employees and their loved ones. This has been a golden thread running through the business since Burgert and Irma founded the farming business in 1984. It was also the founding reason for the establishment of the well-known Kaross traditional Shangaan embroidery business which is situated on the farm and was founded in the 1988 by Irma van Rooyen.

Corporate Social Investment

The Kaross Foundation NPC was established in 2017 to take Groep 91 Uitvoer's Corporate Social Investment to a new level in terms of impact, sustainability and professional governance. Establishing this Foundation has been the realisation of a long term objective of both Groep 91 Uitvoer and Kaross.

The Foundation focusses strongly on education in all its different forms and investing in people, helping them acquire skills and knowledge. The Foundation creates a platform for community integration across racial and economic boundaries and supports a culture of volunteering. Its beneficiaries include both Groep 91 and Kaross' direct employees, as well as the rural communities where its employees and their families live. The initiatives of the Foundation are viewed as a life-long investment into the intellectual capacity needed to grow the business in future. These initiatives are funded by Kaross, Groep 91 Uitvoer, the Albert Heijn Foundation and the Waitrose Foundation.

The foundation has four directors. Jan-Louis Pretorius represents Groep 91 Uitvoer and wife Janine, who is the managing director of Kaross, represents Kaross on the Foundation's board of directors. There are also two external board members in Obert Machimana and Yasmeen Moosa.

The philosophy of respect which resonates throughout the business also extends to their relationship with the environment. The company's production practices are founded in responsible environmental stewardship as environmental sustainability is vital to their continued existence.




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NOORDGRENS ESTATE

Weipe, Limpopo

Noordgrens Estate is situated on the southern bank of the Limpopo River as far north as one can go in South Africa. The river is both their primary water source and the border between them and Zimbabwe. The Limpopo Valley is clearly excellent for citrus production as at this point along the river there are citrus plantations on both sides of the river. It is difficult to believe that the first citrus that was planted on this massive estate was only planted in 1990 as today Noordgrens Estate has 1000ha of citrus orchards, spread between this property and the business's farm at Tomburke.

Bertus Dillman has been farming at Noordgrens since the early 1980's when his father-in-law JJ Smith and a partner, Hans Willemse, bought the property in 1981 and started establishing the farm. "My father-in-law JJ Smith was originally from Zimbabwe and my wife Maryna and I met each other when we were at school together in Salisbury (Harare today)," says Bertus. He explained that he and Maryna were married and living in Pretoria where he was studying to be a draftsman at the time when his father-in-law bought the farm. "He realised that he would need help and asked me to join the business to assist him. At that stage his sons were still at school and they joined the business later. Initially I just worked for the business and only acquired shareholding when my brothers-in-law joined the business."

When the farm was bought it was an entirely undeveloped game farm. They slowly started clearing of some of the land and started producing wheat and cotton which were the standard crops produced in the area at the time. At around this time the returns for the cotton industry dropped sharply due to the imports of cheap Chinese clothing and they were looking for an alternative crop. "As we had seen that the

Zimbabwean citrus growers across the river from us on the north bank of the Limpopo were doing well with citrus production, we decided to plant citrus," explained Bertus. The first citrus was planted on Noordgrens Estate in 1990 and the first harvest in 1994 yielded 30,000 cartons.

In 1993 the partnership came to an end and the farm was divided in two between JJ Smith and Hans Willemse. At the time Hans's sons were joining the family business and it made sense to split the operation between the Smith and Willemse families. The Willemse family are still Bertus's good neighbours.

"After the split, along with my father-in-law, initially my fellow partners and directors in the business included my three brothers-in-law, Frans Smith, Jack Smith and Piet Smith," says Bertus. In 1998 Frans Smith decided that he wanted to go his own way and start his own farming business. The family assisted him to start a farm in Botswana. This formed part of his share of the business and he took over this farm and Noordgrens Estate bought his share of the business.

In an effort to diversify their productions, in 2000 the family bought Good Luck, a farm with 100ha of sugar cane farm near Komatipoort. This forms part of the Noordgrens Estate business unit and Piet Smith moved to Komatipoort to manage this farm. Today this farm has 1000ha under irrigation.

From when the first citrus was planted at Noordgrens Estate, the family focussed on citrus production and steadily continued expanding their citrus orchards. They stopped growing wheat and cotton and by 2007 the annual citrus harvest yielded a million cartons.

In 2008 Jack Smith decided to leave the family business and Noordgrens Estate bought his shares in the business. In 2010 Bertus and Maryna's son Francois joined the family business within the production division, after he had completed his degree in Agricultural Economics at the University of Stellenbosch followed by a year working for Capespan in Belgium, as well as a year spent working on another citrus farm. Francois is now in

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Bertus Dillman (left) of Noordgrens Estate checking on his pumps on the southern bank of the Limpopo River. With him is Andrew Mbedzi of CGA's Grower Development Company.



The extended Dillman family of Noordgrens Estate. Back, fltr: Francois Dillman, Maryna Dillman, Bertus Dillman, Leatitia Dillman and Lara Dillman. Front, fltr: Adriaan Rood with Emmerson Rood, Vernè Rood with Axel Rood.

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his mid 30's and is the production manager for all Noordgrens Estate's citrus, at Noordgrens and also at their other citrus production unit at Klipbokspruit.

In 2012 Noordgrens Estate also bought out JJ Smith, the founder of the business. "He and my mother-in-law Hannie Smith retired to a small farm they bought at Vivo," says Bertus "Following this, the two partners and directors in the business were my brother-in-law Piet Smith and I. In 2013 Adriaan Rood, our son-in-law joined the family business. We needed a bookkeeper within the business and Adriaan and Piet Smith do all the bookkeeper and administration for the business."

In 2014 the business bought another citrus farm, Klipbokspruit. This is also on the Limpopo but situated some distance south west of here at Tomburke, near the Botswana border. In 2016 Piet Smith's son Francis Smith joined his father in the family business on the sugar cane production unit at Komatipoort. "In 2018 I retired and relinquished my directorship and today the three directors of Noordgrens Estate are my brother-in-law Piet Smith, my son Francois Dillman and my son-in-law Adriaan Rood."

Bertus and Maryna's children are Francois and Vernè. Francois is married to Leatitia and Leatitia works in the Estate offices in the mornings. They have a two-year-old daughter, Lara. Vernè is married to Adriaan and Vernè also works in the Estate office in the mornings. They have a two-year-old son, Axel, and a four-year-old daughter, Emmerson. "My wife Maryna has always been directly involved with the farming business and Leatitia and Vernè are continuing with this. As it is 60km from here to town, it would be difficult to employ someone from town to assist with the administration so their contribution in the office certainly add value to the business," says Bertus.



The Limpopo River is South Africa's boundary with Zimbabwe. Noordgrens Estate borders on the Limpopo for several kilometers and the river is also the Estate's principal water source. From this vantage point at Noordgrens Estate looking north across the river, there are citrus orchards visible in the northern bank in Zimbabwe.

The younger generation are in the process of taking over and as they have all been involved in the farming process for some time now, they work well together and are running the business very successfully. Bertus explained that prior to his retirement they worked hard at putting all the business structures in place to guide the transition process so that everyone had a clear understanding of the business principles and their responsibilities within the business. He added that although he has officially retired, he is still involved, mostly in an advisory capacity and he takes on specific projects.

One of our biggest challenges is having sufficient water to irrigate our orchards. Over the past 20 years the decline in the levels of the Limpopo River have been very marked. This is both due to less rainfall as well as increasing water needs due to the expansion of irrigation projects drawing water from the river. The other considerable challenge that Noordgrens faces is finding and keeping South African labour. The farm is far from town and other amenities so this is a challenge. Noordgrens has 140 permanent and 400 seasonal workers. "We give preference to South African employees when we are appointing people but as we do not get enough South African workers applying, most of our workers are Zimbabwean people. In order to employ Zimbabwean workers we have to get permits for them and they have to have their passports stamped at the border post. They come to live here and return to Zimbabwe from time to time.

Noordgrens provides the opportunity for staff members to empower themselves through training. In our pack house there are several supervisors who have been promoted to this post from the normal worker level. We provide our workers with ongoing training but as most of our workers are not South African, our initiatives in this field do not count towards our BEE score card. Also, as the general level of education amongst the Zimbabweans is often better than that of the South African workers it is often the Zimbabweans who show more potential for promotion," says Bertus.

Previously the Estate sold fruit through Waitrose in the UK and through the Waitrose Foundation they implemented social projects such as sport development and adult literacy. The Estate also has a clinic on the farm which was established by the estate in conjunction with the Waitrose Foundation. It is run by the government and provides primary health care to the whole community.

"On the matter of environmental stewardship, we incorporate this into our farming principles," explains Bertus. "The declining water levels in the Limpopo prompted us to build storage dams on the property several years back and this has become a sanctuary for birdlife. Besides the cultivated section of the farm, we still have 1700ha of undeveloped bush and a sizable section of the farm which is fenced and managed as a game farm."

"In terms of the current political debates around land, our view is that we cannot let political threats to land ownership stop us from continuing with our farming projects. However, I don't think that it is wise to set a limitless horizon on the ownership of agricultural land in South Africa as families did in the past. We do not extend our horizon beyond 15 years as we do not know what the future holds."



Noordgrens Estate entrance sign

LAEVELD SITRUS GROUP

Letsitele, Limpopo

The Laeveld Sitrus Group is an extensive, diverse and highly successful agricultural business and has its headquarters at Letsitele in Limpopo. The group has 1430ha of citrus produced both in Letsitele area as well as in the Western Cape. Laeveld Sitrus also has 127ha avocados, 147ha bananas and 165ha macadamia nuts in Limpopo and Mpumalanga. In addition to crop production Laeveld Sitrus also produce livestock including a considerable herd of Bonsmara and breed game, including the highly prized Sable Antelope. The farm is owned and managed by Pieter Vorster and his two sons Ben and Gerhardt Vorster. Ben Vorster is the director responsible for the marketing, finance and administration of the business and Gerhardt is the director responsible for citrus production. Both Ben and Gerhardt are in their late 40's and take most of the responsibility for the operation as Pieter Vorster stressed that he is no longer actively involved in the business. Laeveld Citrus also has 50% share in two farming operations: BJ Blyde, a farming operation with 650ha citrus and 60ha mango's in the Hoedspruit area and BJ Vorster Game Breeders which farms with Sable Antelope in the Letsitele area.

Pieter Vorster who is in his mid-seventies explained that his father Ben (BJ) Vorster was one of the first commercial farmers in the Letsitele area and was the founder of the family business. When Ben was young he worked on the mines but later came to farm on the banks of the Letaba River at Letsitele. From humble beginnings, ploughing with two oxen, he built up his farm to a considerable unit over time. The first citrus was planted in the early 1960's and these were the first Valencias in the area. Pieter explained that his older brother Edward Vorster completed a M.Sc. degree and that when he had completed his schooling, he attended Teacher's College of Pretoria and became qualified as a teacher.

"When I completed my studies I was not keen to go into teaching and asked my father if there was an opportunity for me to join the farming business.

Initially there was not enough irrigated land to support two farmers but we had the farm The Plains which was a stock farm without irrigation. My father said that if we could organise and fund the laying of a pipeline from the river to The Plains, this could be developed into a citrus farm. We invested in this project, managing to de-bush the land with oxen and labour. The Plains became our family's home and where my wife Bets and I lived and raised our family."

Pieter explained that he and his brother continued farming with their father and that they were blessed as their operation grew well and over time they were able to buy additional land bit by bit and expand their farms. Their father was also a politician and progressed to become a member of the Transvaal Province Executive Council. He felt strongly that there should be a high school in Tzaneen and as a result of his continued motivation for this, when the school was built, it was named Ben Vorster Hoërskool (High School).

"My father passed away in 1976 when I was in my mid-thirties," explained Pieter. "Besides the emotional consequences of our loss, we also lost our mentor and the massive estate duties that were payable made it necessary for us to sell our share in the only game farm to cover this cost. Edward and I continued farming together for a further 20 years, expanding our operations during this period. When our sons started joining the business in the mid 1990's, working with uncles and cousins within the same business became a bit complicated so Edward and I decided to split the business. The farming operation was large enough to split into two units so we divided the land and assets equally and started farming on our own. I established Laeveld Sitrus in 1995 and Edward established Mahela in 1995. We do still have joint business concerns with the Mahela Group, namely BJ Blyde and BJ Vorster Game Breeders. The BJ Vorster entity we had kept after our father's death and we have decided to use this entity through which we operate our joint venture business."

Flying is a shared passion of the Vorster family as Pieter, Ben and Gerhardt as well as their uncle Edward and four cousins from Mahela all fly both fixed wing aeroplanes and helicopters. The two families own three aircraft and a helicopter. Ben Vorster is has been involved in organised agriculture from soon after joining the family farming business in 1993 and is currently the Chairman of CGA (Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa). After completing his schooling at the Ben Vorster High School in Tzaneen, he studied Agricultural Engineering at the Pretoria Technicon and joined the family business directly after this.

"From my early childhood days I knew that I wanted to be a citrus farmer," says Ben. "I was very fortunate to learn a lot about the citrus industry from a young age. This started from my enjoyment of driving the farm tractors and I also later learned how to spray the trees. I also drove around at night monitoring the irrigation which at that time was still flood irrigation and this is how I learned about every aspect of the whole production cycle. Growing up on a farm as a typical farm boy I never wanted to do anything else. My father and grandfather were my biggest inspirations and I knew that I wanted to be like them. My parents gave me the opportunity to choose my own career and that was the easiest decision I ever had to make and here I am today proud to be part of our massive industry."

Gerhardt Vorster also attended Ben Vorster High School after which he attended the Pretoria Technicon where he completed a National Diploma in Agriculture Plant Production. The course consisted of two years of theory and one year of practical and he was able to do this practical year at Laeveld Sitrus. "I grew up here in this milieu and becoming involved in the farming operation was the natural path to follow and I have never regretted this decision," says Gerhardt. "We also really enjoy the simple, rural lifestyle and my wife and I believe that this is one of the better places to raise a family." Pieter and Bets Vorster have three children; Ben, Gerhardt and Hannelie and they have 10 grandchildren. Ben is married to Anneri who is a



fltr: Ben Vorster, Pieter Vorster and Gerhardt Vorster of the Laeveld Citrus Group with their Sun Gold brand packed cartons of citrus.

dentist with a dental practice in Tzaneen. They have three daughters: Lihani (17), Azel (14) and Nina (8) and a son, Erhard (11). Gerhardt Vorster is married to Leoni and they have two daughters, Elreze (12) and Dunay (9) and a son, Aldré (4). Hannelie Smit has two sons and a daughter. Her oldest son Rikus has recently completed his Engineering degree and will be joining the family business. Her second son Gerhard is currently completing a B. Comm. Marketing degree and he plans to work for his father Pieter Smit. Her daughter Elzette is currently in her first year of a B. Comm. degree at North-West University, Potchefstroom.

Ben says that he, Gerhardt and his father work hard at working together. “The more opinions we have on an issue, the more ways there are at looking at a problem and opportunities of tackling it in the most effective way. We look after our business by each of us taking responsibility for our division and by trusting and relying on each other to do this.” Pieter says that he has stepped back and handed over responsibility but makes sure that he is still available to his sons for his opinion if they ask him. The Vorster family is deeply committed to conservation and environmental stewardship and this is central to their farming ethic.

“Citrus farming is extremely labour intensive and we are very reliant on our workers for the success of our business, says Gerhardt. “We maintain a good relationship with our workers and many of the families of our workers have

been employed by our family for generations. Our Human Resources manager Irene Jordaan is proactive at assisting our staff members and we offer a range of ongoing occupational skills and life skills development programmes to our staff members including adult literacy programmes.”

Ben explained that Laeveld Citrus has an annual competition between their different staff villages for the cleanest staff village. When the winning village is chosen, the village committee presents management with a specific infrastructure improvement request (for example a community hall or additional bathrooms) and they budget to build these improvements annually. Laeveld Citrus also encourages and supports sport and organises and funds a very well supported local soccer league between the local farms. As part of broader community service, they provide support and undertake general maintenance at a local community primary school. Laeveld Citrus also assists with tertiary education as they provide placements for agricultural students from the University of Mpumalanga who need to complete a year of practical experience.

“Farming is not easy but it is certainly very rewarding,” says Ben. “Every year is different, each year with its own set of challenges, you learn at the mercy of nature, you need to adapt and make new plans and that is what inspires us. We are extremely thankful for the legacy that we have received and are continuing our expansions into the future.”

ALICEDALE FARM

Tshipise, Limpopo

Peter and Lynette Nicholson have farmed at Alicedale since 1984. The farming operation is situated near Tshipise, in the northern part of Limpopo Province and has 850ha of citrus. More recently Alicedale has also purchased 200ha of land at Buffelspoort near Rustenburg where the business is developing a blueberry production unit. All three of Peter and Lynette's children and their spouses are involved in the family farming business.

Peter is a strong believer in setting the correct values which are applicable to everyone within the farming business and broader community. "Values discussed amongst a group of people becomes the culture which drives the thought process. As the leader of the Alicedale Farm community, I work with the rest of the community to set a culture, a behavioural system that determines the future. We all have the choice whether to add value to others or take value from others. We choose to share with our neighbours, not reap from them."

The Nicholson family has a long history in the area. Peter's great grandfather arrived in South Africa from Ireland and played an important role in the early history of the area. Nicholson was also the Minister of Lands in the Union of South Africa's first cabinet and was a Member of Parliament for the United Party in the Soutpansberg. Although Peter's great grandfather and father owned farms, they were sold when his father was young, and Peter did not inherit a family farming business.

"My parents raised their five children to believe that the only inheritance we would receive would be a sound value system and a good education to make it possible for us to earn a living," says Peter. "We were all educated at university. I studied Civil Engineering at the University of Pretoria and then I did my compulsory military service and ended up in the Air Force at Ondangwa in Namibia. By doing more than what was expected of me, I was offered the opportunity to build the Air Force base at Louis Trichardt. This was in the early 1980's and I also had my own construction company building blocks of flats."

Peter then tells the romantic story of how he met his wife. "I was horse riding and fell off and broke my arm. I was sent to the hospital where I met a delightful young nurse, Lynette, who became my wife. We got on immediately and Lynette and I were married in 1983."

Peter explained that their family's return to agriculture at Alicedale happened through his wife's family as Lynette's mother was one of three sisters who had inherited Alicedale. "Initially we became involved with the farm when I bought one of the aunt's share of the farm and started farming here. I later bought out all the family shares in the farm. The farm is 1600ha in total with water rights for 500ha. We came to Alicedale in 1984 and at that point there was 35ha of citrus and the farm had a very big burden of debt."

For some inspiration on how to kick start the farming operation, Peter visited a kibbutz in Israel and saw how effective drip irrigation could be. "When I returned home, I experimented by planting 10ha of tomatoes with drip irrigation and the results were extremely successful. The production norm for tomatoes at the time was 35 tons per hectare and we were able to achieve 100 tons per hectare!" This was the start of their development. They then developed 40ha of tomatoes on new ground annually. Each year they would establish citrus on the cleared land which had been used for tomatoes the previous year. The tomato cash crops contributed well towards the citrus establishment costs. This rapid expansion was driven by survival – making the farm profitable and paying off the debt.

"Our citrus orchards were expanding rapidly when the deregulation of the fruit industry occurred. I saw this as a major potential threat to our business and to mitigate this threat, I became involved in the organised agriculture side of the citrus industry. I spent a year of my life doing this and then stepped back."

"The rule of law within a country is paramount to confidence in investing in agricultural land within that country," explains Peter. "More than 20 years ago I was involved in a farm in Zimbabwe and lost this farm due to the failure of Zimbabwe's rule of law. I was also involved in a joint venture with a government farming operation in Mozambique, but this came to an end when the rule of law was upheld. This happened when the previous Portuguese owner received the land back as the rule of law honoured his 99-year lease from before the civil war in that country. These experiences taught me a valuable lesson. As South Africa's rule of law is now still under discussion, this is a matter for serious consideration. In order to mitigate this risk, Alicedale has bought a farm at Grafton in New South Wales in Australia and there is established timber on the property. We plan to start harvesting the timber in two years' time and then plan to plant macadamia nuts on the farm. We choose to be in South Africa and drive the future of South Africa but see the farm in Australia as an insurance policy in case the rule of law in South Africa should rule against us."

Peter and Lynette's children are all involved in the family business. "We brought them up with the same values that I was raised with and the legacy of a good education. Our children are all well qualified and after their studies they all started their careers working elsewhere independently of the farm. Joining the family farming business was their choice."

The eldest is their son Peter John who is 34. He is qualified as an industrial engineer and he runs the Alicedale berry farm at Buffelspoort near Rustenburg. He is married to Melissa who provides financial and administrative support for the berry farm. They live on the farm at Buffelspoort and have a daughter, Kate, of thirteen months.

Next in age is their daughter Laura who completed an accounting management course. She is 33 and is the Financial Director for Alicedale. She is married to Jan Ernst Joubert who is a chemical engineer. They have a daughter, Teagan, who is two and are expecting a little boy.

Their youngest is Christie who has a teaching degree and is the Personnel Director for Alicedale. She is 29 and is married to Kelvin Smit who is an industrial engineer. They have a son, Jason, who is two and a daughter, Lyneveigh, who is six months old.

"Our daughters and sons-in-law live with us and part of my day's planning is to spend an hour with my grandchildren. We also make time to see our family at Buffelspoort as often as possible."

Peter points out that as it is not correct for any family member to work for another one, they have organised the business structure to avoid this. The business is divided into



The extended Nicholson family at Alicedale Farm

RIGHT: Back, fltr: Kelvin Smit, Jason Smit, Christie Smit. Front: Peter Nicholson with Teagan Joubert and Lynette Nicholson with Lyneveigh Smit.

TOP LEFT: Peter John Nicholson, Melissa Nicholson and their daughter Kate Nicholson.

TOP RIGHT: Jan Ernst Joubert, Laura Joubert and Teagan Joubert.

projects and individuals are appointed as project managers. Jan-Ernst and Kelvin are focussed on the principle of continuous business improvement and take responsibility for projects that involve either expansion or improvement initiatives.

“We are farmers in Africa and part of the Alicedale culture is that we want to help create prosperity for our neighbours and other members of our community,” explains Peter. “Soon after the land claims were registered against our farm and other farms in our area, I invited all the claimants and all the neighbouring land owners to a meeting to see if we could set up dialog between the two groups. By a process of elimination, we established who was prepared to participate in change. The only ones who remained in the discussion was the Nicholson family and the Nemamilwe family. The Nemamilwe family is one of the families that claimed land on part of our farm and entered into dialog with us.”

“The topical issues in our discussions were land and land utilisation and this is what we have focussed on. A united front is better than dividing something into the sum of its parts. In this process we created an environment for their children and family to participate in a well organised business. My point of departure is that it is better to solve a land claim than to fight it and through working together we have become friends. As part of our discussions we decided that from that point onwards, any land that Alicedale bought in the area of land claimed by the Nemamilwe family, we would share with the Nemamilwes.”

Alicedale has since entered into a joint venture with the Nemamilwe family in the purchase of two citrus farms which were running concerns, purchasing 120ha in 2015 and 140ha in 2018. These were both in an area claimed by the Nemamilwe family in which each shareholder has a 50% share. Alicedale and the Nemamilwe family each contributed 50% to buy the farm and guarantees for the Nemamilwe loans were provided by Alicedale. Alicedale leases these properties and the income from the Alicedale rental assists the Nemamilwe family to pay back their loan. This initiative was established without any government involvement.

“There are several members of the Nemamilwe family who are working at Alicedale with us as our colleagues,” says Peter. “We are providing assistance to fund university studies and several of the Nemamilwe family members are employed by Alicedale as senior personnel. We also employ a significant number of their family members as general and other workers. We also provide other training opportunities for family members.”

Some of the Nemamilwe family members are professional people who are not directly involved in the farming operation. Utilising grant funding from the European Union, an independent consultant completed a training session with the Nemamilwe family to assist them to specify which of the family members are officially named as part of this initiative. This also explored the long-term financial prospects of owning this land and how these family



members and their children could benefit from land ownership.

In addition to this initiative, we want to provide involvement in our business for our labour. In regions that had not been subject to land claims, Alicedale has purchased land to share with their labour and is currently in the process of setting up the trusts within which this initiative will be structured.

Peter believes that the South African agricultural sector would benefit significantly from an official Charter for Agriculture. “However, we are building the policies that do exist into our relationships with our labour. Alicedale has 600 permanent employees and during our 10-month harvest period, we have an additional 1200 seasonal workers. We have also set up a farming women’s labour trust and a farming men’s labour trust and we are in the process of establishing an investment company in which these trusts and Alicedale will hold shares. We are considering including a third shareholder in this entity. Our country needs places for people to invest and we want to become attractive for investment.”

“The long-term plan for Alicedale as a family business is to get our children and grandchildren and partners to focus on tomorrow,” says Peter. “I am focussing on preparing the family and the family business for long-term sustainability,” he concluded.

SCHOEMAN BOERDERY

Marble Hall, Limpopo



This year (2019) marks the centenary of the establishment of Schoeman Boerdery and the company's directors honour and value this remarkable history. Here they are with the busts of the previous four generations of men from the Schoeman family. The directors are, from left to right, Kallie Schoeman, Hendrik Schoeman, Kobus Fourie, Brent Parrot and Jacques Roos.

Schoeman Boerdery is a considerable, large-scale and diversified farming operation based in Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo. It has citrus production units and a fertiliser production unit, Agron at Marble Hall in Limpopo and the business head office is at Delmas in Gauteng where Schoeman Boerdery also produces maize, soya beans and dry white beans on a large scale. The business has 1400ha of citrus, 8000ha maize and soya production as well as 2000ha of bean production. The company also manages grains produced by other growers on their behalf and receives, processes and markets maize and soya beans on behalf of producers at the Schoeman Boerdery silos at Delmas. Dry white beans are produced under contract by 152 commercial farmers and 22 small scale farmers in 5 provinces for the canning industry, the so-called baked beans in tomato sauce. This joint venture produces 70% of the local crop.

Schoeman Boerdery has various comprehensive, ongoing transformation initiatives. Two examples of these are Umsizi and Zamukele. Umsizi is an alternative approach to Land Reform where employees establish their own

backyard vegetable gardens. To date 157 on-farm gardens have been established and 89 of these sell their surpluses to the community. Over 500 off-farm gardens are running in 14 villages in the former Lebowa Homeland areas to supplement income and provide a healthy diet. www.umsizi.o.za

Zamukele was established to provide small-scale farmers with skills and mentorship for dry bean production. Schoeman's support consists of technical support, access to both local and international markets, assistance with finance and procurement of seed and fertilisers. This year 22 farmers will plant 600ha of dry beans, creating jobs and food security.

Kallie Schoeman joined his father's farming business in 1974 and with the support of his wife Elna he has expanded the family business considerably in the decades since then. Today Kallie is at the helm of the family business and their son Hendrik Schoeman is responsible for the citrus production at the company's large Moosrivier citrus production unit at Marble Hall. Hendrik completed



The extended Schoeman and Fourie family. BACK, fltr: Hendrik Schoeman, Brent Parrot and Jacques Roos. FRONT, fltr: Elna Schoeman, Kallie Schoeman, Kobus Fourie and Madel Fourie.

an Honours degree in Industrial Psychology at the University of Pretoria and although he was initially hesitant to join this considerable family business, he did so in 2008 and after the initial steep learning curve, he has not looked back since.

The Schoeman family of Schoeman Boerdery has played a prominent role in South African history as Kallie Schoeman's father was none other than the statesman Hendrik Schoeman who served both as the South African Minister of Agriculture (1970) and later Minister of Transport (1985). The farming business was established by this Kallie's grandfather Karel Schoeman in 1919 so in 2019 they are celebrating the 100th year of the existence of Schoeman Boerdery.

While Kallie and Hendrik represent the third and fourth generation in the farming business, the family business ownership and involvement is even broader as Kallie's sister Madel Fourie is a shareholder in Schoeman Boerdery and husband Kobus Fourie is the company's financial director. Kobus and Madel has three daughters and the husbands of two of her daughters are involved in Schoeman Boerdery. Brent Parrot is CEO of the Delmas operation and is married to Christelle Parrot and Jacques Roos is the company's Non-Agribusiness Commercial Manager and is married to Madel Roos. "We have moved beyond a patriarchal system to a cousin consortium," says Kallie with a smile.

Kallie grew up in the agricultural environment and has invested his entire career in the success of Schoeman Boerdery. He is truly passionate about family and the successful succession of family businesses. In December 2018 Hendrik and his wife Caroli had their first child, a son called Benjamin. Benjamin represents the 10th generation of the Schoeman family in South Africa and the 5th generation since the establishment of Schoeman Boerdery. In the pursuit of establishing guidelines for the successful succession and future sustainability of Schoeman Boerdery into the future, Kallie explained that the extended Schoeman and Fourie family had spent a great deal of time and effort setting up a very detailed family constitution.

"Our Constitution has a vision, mission and value statement and is the family's dream for the future. This will be handed to successive generations to guide the ongoing lifecycle of the family business," explains Kallie. "Each couple in the family worked through chapters that deal with various issues and made their contributions to this process. Following that we met and wrote the collective family dream for the future in the context of our shared family history and this created the context and framework within which we could write our family constitution."

This document addresses fundamental issues which relate to the family's relationship with the business and the continuity of the business. Amongst others, the document outlines detailed answers to questions such as who is considered family (blood family), which is more important; family or the business (they concluded that they are a business family, not a family business), what is expected of family members who want to join the business (they have set the bar high and very clearly), how are remuneration levels established for family members who are employees (according to the reasonable and fair Patterson system of remuneration), how is family conflict within the business addressed (they coined a phrase 'the iceberg of conflict' and described circumstances in which a facilitator would be used), how to prevent close family members from reporting to each other in a boss/employee context and many, many other important issues.

"We need to ensure that any family member joining the business is capable of the role which they need to fulfil and we have an article in our constitution about the conditions a family member who wishes to join the company would need to meet," explained Kallie. "They need to complete matric and a tertiary education followed by employment in the commercial world for a number of years before they can join the family business. Once they join the family business, they will start at the bottom in an apprenticeship and develop from there. We need to take care that we do not fall into the trap of the Peter Principal to promote people beyond their own ability."

Jacques Roos agrees and explains that the ideal situation for them would be to have competent, qualified family members in the business. "We have grappled with the idea of whether we should create the expectation that there is a job for our children or family members within the business as for a successful business their place in the business needs to be earned like with any employee. We believe that it is important to provide our children with exposure to the operational side of the business on an ongoing basis in order to stimulate their interest in the business."

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One of the other questions that was posed was what comes first - family or business? Elna explained that the usual gut emotional response to this question is family. "However, we sat down and thought about this logically and came to the conclusion that without the business we would not be able to sustain the family. Therefore we have made the definition that we are a business family as opposed to a family business. We also realize that when the family grows, the size of the business needs to grow as well," she stressed.

"In the process of defining family members within the business context, we concluded that this was confined to blood relatives," says Brent Parrot. "This is important because in the case of divorce this has the potential to create massive problems in the business." Kallie explained that they have also created a family forum with a chairman and a secretary which holds regular meetings which is the platform to discuss personal, non-business family issues.

"I believe that within both a business and family context, culture supercedes everything," says Jacques. "Retaining and emphasising the value of regular family gatherings sets the tone for the next generation. Our children are growing up within the family situation and it is of fundamental importance to maintain family relationships. Within any business or family relationship you can only move at the speed of trust."

The family constitution and revised business ethic also emphasises the shift away from the traditional patriarchal business environment to a more interrelated and inclusive environment. "We needed and have adapted to a different management structure to accommodate this fundamental change," says Kallie. One of the family constitution's other stipulations is that family

should not report to family, particularly not a wife reporting to her husband. A possible solution for this can be defined by a personal performance contract which sets parameters and strategic intent and each person can evaluate their own performance. However, this still remains potentially problematic.

Kallie explained that the constitution has also made provision for how and when succession planning should take place. "We determined that by about the age of 55 the head of the family business should start with a "handing over of the baton" plan. By 60 they need to start coaching the successor and by 65 they need to delegate and scale down considerably. I often refer to Raymond Ackerman's comments on this topic and he says an elder has a specific role to play but that this should not be overplayed."

On the business side, the usual process is followed of directors reporting on the position and progress of the business to the family shareholders. The company's board of directors includes non-executive non-family members. They play an important role as they have no emotional involvement, they bring objectivity and balance to decision-making.

Kallie believes that the three principles that support a successful business are trust, care and respect and they work together like the legs of a three legged pot. "If you break one of these legs the pot falls over and the food falls on the floor. Trust is important for better or worse. Care is also important when there are problems and family problems can be dealt with in the family forum. Respect is important as it is threatened by rivalry, doubt and jealousy. We aim to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and remunerate everyone as they should be and to take care of their living needs."

Environmental custodianship is very important to Schoeman Boerdery and is a central ethic within their farming practices. As their farming operations around Delmas exist within the same geographic space as the coalmining industries in the area, they take a robust, proactive stand to protect their environment from the negative environmental effects which are often associated with mining.

"Our mission is that throughout the generations we should be a blessing to our people, our community and to our country," concluded Kallie.



Schoeman Boerdery's silos and the site of their headoffice at Delmas in Gauteng

MAHELA GROUP

Letsitele, Limpopo



fltr: Francois Vorster, Pieter Vorster, Edward Vorster, Eddie Vorster and Barend Vorster of the Mahela Group

The Mahela Group is a massive and highly diversified farming operation, based mainly in Limpopo and Mpumalanga but including operations elsewhere in South Africa. The Mahela Group has 8420ha of land and rents a further 1363ha. The group farms 1300ha of citrus, which is the Group's main crop, 189ha bananas and 150ha avocados as well as macadamia nuts, kiwis and litchis. In addition to fruit cultivation the Mahela Group also has considerable game and livestock farming enterprises.

As part of their Black Economic Empowerment initiatives, the Mahela Group has a partnership and rental agreement with the Rietfontein Homeless People's Trust at Ohrigstad to plant 110ha of citrus on the land owned by the trust. This forms part of a project to establish 300ha of citrus at Ohrigstad. Khomanani Mahela is an empowerment project 50% owned by the Mahela Workers' Trust and 50% by the Mahela Group and farmed jointly by these two partners. The land was donated to the project by the Mahela Group. They have 860 permanent and around 1000 temporary employees and recognise that their

employees are their most valuable resource. The company provides ongoing education and training programmes for their employees, as well as healthcare and child care facilities and sport and recreation.

This prominent farming business won the Limpopo 2018 Farmer of the Year award. The company's headquarters are at Letsitele in Limpopo, where the company has its origins. Edward Vorster is the chairman of the Mahela Group and the business is managed by Edward and his four sons, Barend, Pieter, Eddie and Francois.

Edward is approaching 80 later this year but remains fit and motivated. He explained that he represents the second generation and his sons the third generation within the farming business, adding that the farming businesses of the Vorster family at Letsitele were founded by his father Ben (BJ) Vorster and supported by his wife Toekie Vorster. Ben had been employed by a British mining company during the World War II and in 1942, the mine summoned

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the miners to sign up as soldiers to join the South African troops in North Africa, in order to fight for the British cause. As Ben's father had been interned as a prisoner of war during the Boer War, he refused and was given 24 hours' notice to leave the mine. He and Toekie moved to Letaba and, with some help from his father-in-law, he was able to hire a small piece of ground. He acquired two oxen, cleared the land and started farming with tomatoes and potatoes. The original farm was very close to the Mahela offices and initially Mrs Vorster took tomatoes to the Letsitele station to send them to the market on an ox-drawn sleigh. "I was a young boy when we moved here and initially we lived in a tent," says Edward. From these humble beginnings in the 1940's the Mahela Group has developed, founded by Edward in 1996 and the Laeveld Citrus Group, founded by his brother Pieter Vorster at the same time.

After completing his schooling and prior to joining the family farm, Edward studied at the University of Pretoria and completed B.Sc. and M.Sc. Agriculture degrees in Citrus Production. When Edward joined the farm, his father was also a politician and became a member of the Transvaal Executive committee and had to spend time away from the farming business. "My father passed away in 1976 when I was 37. My brother Pieter and I then farmed together for 20 years and during this period we undertook considerable expansions to our farming operations. We worked well together and when our sons started joining the business in the mid-1990's we decided amicably that it would be simpler to split our business. We divided our farming operations and I established Mahela as my farming enterprise and in 1996 Pieter started Laeveld Citrus. We are neighbours and have a good family relationship and we still continue with joint venture farming operations (BJ Blyde and BJ Vorster Game Breeders) with Pieter and his family's Laeveld Citrus Group."

Barend and Pieter both joined the family business in 1993, Eddie in 1996 and Francois in 1999. Barend is the CEO of the Mahela Group and takes care of marketing and finances. Pieter is responsible for corporate services and development, human resources and current affairs. Eddie is responsible for all citrus production. François is responsible for all subtropical fruit which includes bananas, avocados, Macadamia nuts and kiwis.

Eddie Vorster is the Mahela Group's citrus production director. "For us as brothers to farm together works well as each of us has a clear set of rules and responsibilities and we trust and rely on each other to take full responsibility for their particular division," says Eddie. Our company's structure provides guidance and we sort out our differences because there is a lot at stake. The company has an open door communication policy for all employees to discuss any issues directly with top management. We do not enforce a formal corporate structure and encourage people to approach us directly. Our values include being soft on people but hard on rules and values."

"It is a rewarding challenge to keep these progressive young men busy and moving forward," says Edward proudly, adding that the involvement of each of his sons in the farming business has been highly successful. Although I am scaling down my involvement in the business I am always available for advice but I do not stand in their way." Francois Vorster agrees and says that Edward lets the brothers do their own thing. He will give them advice when he thinks it is necessary but lets them learn from their mistakes. The children grew up on the farm and they attended boarding school in Tzaneen, which is 30km away. They loved the farm life. They loved the space to explore on their bicycles and were always interested in the wildlife on the farm. There was no pressure placed on them to join the family business. Each of them made this decision themselves. "I wanted them to complete tertiary education and work elsewhere in the commercial world before joining the family business," stressed Edward.

Barend is the eldest and is in his early 50's. After school and military service he completed a B.Sc. in Agric. Horticulture at the University of Pretoria. Before joining the business he did a Post Graduate Internship at Ohio State University in the USA. Barend is married to Lizel and they have two sons and two daughters: Edri (24), BJ (22), Zani (18) and Lume (16). Edri is currently working in Stellenbosch for Zest Fruit, a marketing company in which Mahela is also a shareholder. BJ is completing a degree in Industrial Engineering at the University of Stellenbosch and Zani is in her first year of tertiary studies and has just started a degree in Marketing, also at University of Stellenbosch.

Pieter is three years younger than Barend and completed a National Diploma in Plant Production at the University of Pretoria. After completing his studies, he went to California and worked on a large cattle ranch. Pieter is married to Lindie and they have three sons: Tiaan (21), De Wet (19), and Meyer (17). Tiaan is currently doing his studies in Industrial Engineering at the University of Stellenbosch. De Wet has just started his studies to qualify as a veterinarian at the University of Pretoria.

Eddie is three years younger than Pieter. He completed a B.A. degree in Political Science at the University of Potchefstroom and joined the family business directly after completing his tertiary education. Eddie is married to Miemie and they have a son and a daughter: James (18) and Sumari (13).

Francois is three years younger than Eddie and completed a B. Agric. Agricultural Management degree at the University of the Free State and after completing his studies he spent some time working on a Kibbutz in Israel in order to gain practical knowledge of subtropical fruit production. Francois is married to Ilse and they have two sons, Weirich (6) and Righardt (5).

"My youngest child is my daughter Lané Vorster, an extremely successful jewellery designer based in Stellenbosch who has three university degrees," says Edward. "Lané has a BA Visual Studies degree from the University of Pretoria, a B Tech in Jewellery and Manufacturing from the Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa and a Master's of Fine Arts Degree from the Jewellery & Metals department at the Rhode Island School of Design (United States). She won an award from Ashanti Gold for her work which is included in the Anglo Gold Ashanti permanent collection."

"My wife Amanda and I have been married for 20 years. My ex-wife Susan is the mother of our five children and is a wonderful mother to our children as she lives close by in Tzaneen, with close family interaction."

Edward explained that as he has five children and the business has extensive and diverse farming and business operations, he realised that they need to do some intensive future and succession planning. Edward and the directors, together with advisors, undertook an in-depth process to set up the business structures carefully and clearly. The Edward Vorster Trust is now at the top of the business structure and is in control of the Mahela Group's businesses. "I

have an external director on our board of directors, Louis Von Zeuner, a former Deputy Chief Executive Officer at Absa Bank. He has agreed to help me with the management and succession within our business.

“Our family also worked together to establish a family constitution,” says Edward. “The constitution contains specific regulations which are applicable to everyone and all our family members have agreed to this successful initiative.” As part of our family constitution there is a stipulation that any of the grandchildren who wish to enter a family business must first get a tertiary qualification and work experience elsewhere before they can join the family business. “The conditions established within the family constitution that are required for family members to join the business also create security for our existing employees,” says Eddie. The Vorster family have a family rule that family issues and business issues are handled separately. In this way the dynamics within the workplace remain within the structures in place to operate the business.

“I am very proud of all my children,” says Edward. “As my sons and I work very closely together as colleagues, I also proactively work at maintaining the father-son relationship with them. The importance of family is the central ethic within our family business and we are handing these values down to the next generation.”

“My eleven grandchildren fill me with pride and I see strong leadership qualities in them. I am also extremely grateful to my sons but also particularly to my daughters-in-law for being the wonderful role models that they are to the grandchildren. Discipline is very important for young people and privileged young people also need to be aware that they need to work hard for a living.”

Community and industry involvement is very important to the Vorster family. The family farming business founder BJ Vorster set the example and throughout his career, Edward has spent a great deal of his time in service of the agricultural industry and local community and encourages his sons and daughters-in-law to do the same. During the past few years he has scaled down his involvement in most of these organizations and more recently Pieter has taken over several of these commitments. Barend is involved with Granor Passi, Houers and Zest Fruit, François is involved with Westfalia and Banana Growers Association while Eddie is involved with Destrimix and CRI. “I believe that serving the community is very important,” says Edward. We strive to improve the living standard to make a better life for our employees and our community.

The Mahela Group undertakes a wide range of projects to improve the lives of their employees. A recent example is that the Mahela Group recently initiated the Vegetables-for-farm-workers project on all their farms. Vegetable tunnels were erected on each farm and a range of vegetables have been planted in these tunnels. The company supplies all the irrigation, seedlings and fertilizer necessary for the farm workers to tend and use the vegetables for their own use. This provides an opportunity for the workers to grow a variety of seasonal vegetables for themselves and their families and to benefit directly from the health and cost-saving benefits of this initiative.

Mahela's symbol is an elephant and reflects the family's deep commitment to conservation. Edward was responsible for reintroducing rhino, elephant and lion to this area after decades of absence. “We farm with Sable Antelope, Roan Antelope and Buffalo and have been involved in conservation projects for rhino, wild dogs and lions. Environmental stewardship is central to our farming ethic – we do this for the love of nature and to create a balanced environment for the generations to enjoy,” says Edward.



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RADLEY ESTATE

Malelane, Mpumalanga

The Radley family has been farming at the Radley Estate on the outskirts of Malelane in Mpumalanga since 1943 when the founder William Scott Radley started farming in the area. The Radley family have deep roots in the Malelane area. William Scott Radley and his wife were both teachers and were actively involved in building community institutions in the early years of Malelane's establishment. Their son Henning Radley and his wife Nerine have developed and expanded the farm and while they are now in their 70's, they remain involved in the farming business to some extent and still live on the farm. Today this large farming business produces citrus, mangos and sugar cane and is managed by the third generation on the farm, brothers Henno, Rénaud and Wilscott Radley.

The total size of the farm is 1945ha but much of this is not arable land. Currently there is 615ha of sugar cane, 90ha of citrus and 30ha of mangos. Henno is responsible for the citrus division, Rénaud for the mango division and Wilscott for the sugar cane division. On the farm there is also a Nguni stud farming business and a small game farm.

Henning and Nerine Radley have six children, three sons and three daughters. All the sons are involved in the family farming business and live on the farm. Two of the three daughters and their families also live on the estate and one daughter and her family live in Pretoria. So, of their twenty grandchildren, only three do not live on the farm. My visit was during the school holidays and some of the teenage Radley grandchildren were earning pocket money and, with hammer and chisel, they were chipping old tiles off the floor in the farm office.

Henning explained that he has two siblings, a brother and sister and inherited the property from their parents but neither of his siblings were really interested in farming. "I was very keen to farm and as we could not work together, I bought out both of their shares in the farm even though this was very costly at the time. In this way I was able to consolidate most of the original family farm." Until the mid-1980's the Radley family farmed mostly with cattle with some sugar cane and the development of the citrus and mango divisions have developed since then. From when Henning started farming, he has continued to expand the farming business by buying adjoining land from neighbours. In the last five years they have bought 150ha of adjoining arable land and today the farming business property consists of 15 different title deeds.

"My experience with my own siblings taught me that it was important to impress upon my children that as a family with a family business, we need to make provision for family members that are not involved in the family business," says Henning. As part of the succession plan, the Radley family has recently restructured the farming business. In this process the brothers are making provision to compensate their sisters for their share of the assets.

"From when our children were young, we exposed them to the farming operation and gave them chores on the farm to teach them about the business," says Henning. "I am very grateful that all my sons took an interest in the farm and chose to join the family farming business."

The brothers have chosen to continue farming the unit together. Wilscott explained that when the brothers joined the family business their father was running the entire farm. "Splitting the business between us was an option but we decided to keep the business together as a unit but each take responsibility for a different division. Fortunately the size and diversity of our operation has allowed for this and this works well for us," he added. "I have seen several other farming businesses in our area which have failed because they were not able to work together as a family so it is good to see that here they are making this work."

Between the three brothers they have twelve children and, as part of future planning, they also established a family constitution to set guidelines for the potential involvement for the next generation in the family business. "Our constitution sets out the conditions under which our children can become involved in the family business. It is important for the success of our business that any of our children joining the family business must be able to add value and before joining the business, we would like them to work for someone else for a while in order to learn the disciplines required for employment," explained Henno. "We expect that some of our children will start joining the farming business in the next decade. We have designed our constitution to be ready for when the cousins start working together. Some will join the business and others might not. We have to ensure that our business and family constitution is in place to guide this process."

As a family business they also realise that if they all want to remain involved in the business, the business needs to grow to sustain their families, both currently and into the future and thus they are planning to expand their productions in the near future. One of the ways that they are considering growing the business is to add value to the value chain by possibly marketing their own product. They are also considering diversifying beyond the agricultural sector and might consider expanding into the eco-tourism market.

Radley Estate currently does ongoing skills training, both for management as well as for their employees. "Our farming type is very labour intensive and it is important for the success of our business to have a skilled workforce," says Rénaud. "The spiritual well-being of our staff is important to us and our farming business and relationship with our workers is based on Christian principles and practices. We have also offered a life skills training course offered by ELI (Ethical Leadership Institute) about value systems. The values communicated to our workforce through this training made a big impression and we often refer back to these value systems. We have followed this up with subsequent life skills courses that also connect with this."



The Radley family of Radley Estate, fltr: Wilscott Radley, Henning Radley, Nerine Radley, Henno Radley and Rénard Radley

The Estate has 100 permanent workers and 80 of these live on the farm. During the harvest season, they also make use of approximately 60 seasonal workers. “Most of our top management are black people and our workforce is made up of Swazi and Zulu people but also Shangaan people who are mostly from Mozambique,” says Henno.

The brothers explained that they are proactive about environment custodianship and are continuously eradicating alien vegetation, particularly Lantana Camara which is a poisonous invader of veld and plantations. They are proactive in conserving the wildlife on their property. They believe strongly in protecting indigenous trees and the biodiversity natural habitat hotspots next to water courses and between the orchards and sugar cane plantations. These strips of natural vegetation are a haven for birds and provide safe corridor for the movement of game through developed areas. “We manage our water sources very carefully and have a strict water conservation policy. When we consider new developments we follow the legally prescribed processes with Environmental Impact studies prior to any developments,” says Henning.

“Our citrus is packed and marketed by our local citrus co-operative Malelane Sitrus Koöperasie (MSK) and we are shareholders of the co-operative and also serve on the board of directors. Malelane Sitrus Koöperasie is the oldest citrus co-operative in the country and our grandfather also served on the board. We plan to continue the family tradition and develop our farming business into the future,” concluded Henno.



Radley Estate entrance sign

BOLTON ESTATES

Nkwalini, Kwa-Zulu Natal

Tim and Brenda Wafer farm on their farm Bolton Estates at Nkwalini with their sons Michael and Richard as well as their daughter Gayleen and son-in-law Andrew Forster. The total size of the farming unit is 460ha and consists of 220ha of citrus orchards and the balance is sugar cane. Tim and Brenda are in their early 70's and are still involved in the daily farming activities. Michael Wafer is the main citrus manager, Richard Wafer is the main sugar cane manager and is also responsible for the development of new citrus orchards. Andrew is the assistant citrus manager and Gayleen assists Brenda with the farm's increasing administrative function.

"I have been on the farms at Bolton Estates for 30 years and this is our family home," says Michael Wafer, the farming unit's main citrus manager and Tim and Brenda's eldest son. "We have been part of this community for three generations. As I am the current Chairman of the local Farmers' Association this keeps me abreast of farming affairs. In these times of uncertainty it is important for us to stand together as a family. To put it quite simply, citrus is my passion and Bolton Estates is our future and I look forward to the evolution of our farm going forward." Michael is 50 and he is married to Debbie who works at a local engineering firm.

"We enjoy the comfortable lifestyle on the farm and we are happy to be part of a large family," says Richard Wafer, the farm's main sugar cane manager and who is also responsible for establishing young citrus orchards. "Having a family of my own with three daughters has its pleasures and challenges. I am philosophical about the future and we hope that things will go well for us in future." Richard is Tim and Brenda's younger son. He is in his late 40's and is married to Kerry who has her own landscaping business. Both Michael and Richard studied horticulture at the Technicon in Durban and have made their careers as farmers in Wafer's farming business.

Tim and Brenda explained how the family farming business had developed. "Our farming unit consists of three farms, namely Bolton Estates, Longcrest and Mara," explains Tim. "The history of the family farm is that my father Don McLennan was a returning soldier after the Second World War and the government had a programme of providing agricultural land to young men during the depression between the 2 world wars. Nkwalini had been developed by a cotton production company around the Nkwalini canal. The company went bankrupt and government bought the land and offered returning soldiers plots at a very reduced price. My father took this opportunity, bought completely undeveloped land, cleared the bush and started farming from scratch. That was the first farm called Bolton Estates."

He explained that his father's sister had married a neighbour, Mr Latham and when Longcrest, the farm that the Wafers now live became available, his father and the Lathams bought it together. After time moved on, the Lathams wanted to sell their share in Longcrest. This was after Tim's father had passed away and Tim agreed to buy their share. "This was not easy, but fortunately we had a few good years and I was able to pay them out," says Tim. "A few years later I also bought a third adjoining farm called Mara."

Tim explained that he was one of five brothers who inherited Bolton Estates and a 50% share in Longcrest from their father. His father believed in hands-on farming and encouraged him to learn a practical skill rather than pursue a university degree and as a result Tim therefore did a five-year apprenticeship as a diesel fitter. When he had completed this, his father asked him to return to the farm to assist him.

"My father passed away very suddenly when I was only in my 20s," explained Tim. "Brenda and I were already married and as I was the eldest, we needed to take responsibility for the farming operation. My mom continued living on the farm and at the time my brothers were still at school. Together with my mom, we helped my younger brothers to get through school and university. Each of them tried their hand at farming here but ended up going elsewhere, either to their own farms or other jobs. I am the only brother left farming at Nkwalini and over time I bought my brothers' shares of the farm from them."

Gayleen, Tim and Brenda's daughter is married to Andrew Forster and Andrew is the assistant citrus manager and has been working for the family business for around 10 years. Gayleen helps Brenda with the farm administration and her IT skills are very useful to the business. "We have a second daughter, Sheena and she and her husband and children have recently moved to Colorado in the USA. Besides Sheena and her family, the rest of our children and grandchildren all live on the farm. We have ten grandchildren and at present none of them are particularly interested in possibly joining the management of the farm," says Brenda.

Tim and Brenda have succeeded in building up the farming business from small beginnings to this point through being cautious and saving costs by doing as much as possible on the farm themselves. "People often ask us how we manage to support four families within the family farming business," says Tim. "We are careful with our finances and the family members who are employed on the farm receive salaries, including ourselves, and are paid in line with their positions. We started small and grew the business slowly and carefully to this point. Where possible, we do most of the practical things ourselves. In line with this policy, our son-in-law Andrew is currently learning a trade to become a fitter, and this will also be a useful skill for the farming operation."

Overall management of the farm is devolving to the four younger members and Tim and Brenda plan to gradually be less involved but will continue to back up when needed. Capital expenditure is a joint decision by all management and very few decisions are made unilaterally!

Over the past few years they have been reducing the size of their sugar cane production and their citrus production has been increasing steadily. A good percentage of the farm's orchards are young trees and they plan to plant a further 40ha of citrus in 2019. Bolton Estates packs their own fruit and have recently invested in an optical sizer for the packhouse. "This was a considerable investment, but it has made a big difference to our packing efficiency. We export our fruit through Dole who we have been with since deregulation, and



The extended Wafer family of Bolton Estates: Tim Wafer, Brenda Wafer, Kerry Wafer, Laura Wafer, Richard Wafer, Kayla Wafer, Emma Forster, Michael Wafer, Abby Forster, Gayleen Forster, Andrew Forster.

are very happy with our relationship with them. From time to time we also produce vegetables on the farm, but we have just been too busy developing citrus recently to get to this,” explained Tim.

The farming business does ongoing skill development training with their employees. The farm has 95 permanent employees and 60 seasonal employees. The employees do not live on the property but live within walking distance of the farm. Siyavuna Primary School is a local school in the area where many of the farm’s employees live. The Wafer family initiated the school and now assists the school with maintenance such as mowing the lawn and painting the buildings.

Tim added that the farm provides practical working experience training for youngsters from the local FET college. “As part of their diploma in Agriculture course, they are required to do six months of practical experience working in the agricultural sector. We assist them with this and provide accommodation for them here on the farm while they are working here. Some of the students who have done their practical here with us have done really well with their careers since then.”

Environmental custodianship is very important to the Wafer family and this is a fundamental ethic within their farming practices. Michael is the chairman of the Nkwadini conservation committee and the farm and packhouse are GlobalGAP accredited. Poaching of the wildlife that remains in the area is a problem and they do what they can to combat this.

Tim, Brenda and their children and son-in-law who are involved in the farm have made a career of this and plan to continue with the farming operation. However, the family is concerned about what the future holds considering the current political expropriation without compensation issue. Tim explained that the uncertainty about the future is a serious concern for the family. “We are marking time to see what the future holds and we are also looking at further scenario planning. I am nearly 80 and regardless of how things turn out, we will continue to assist our children and grandchildren into the future,” he concluded.



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Young and established citrus orchards at Nkwalini

THULWANE INVESTMENTS

Nkwalini, Kwa-Zulu Natal

Mzo Makhanya has been farming on his farm Thulwane Investments at Nkwalini since 2006. Since he has been farming with citrus, Mzo has also established a career of involvement in organised agriculture. At an industry level he serves the industry as the Chairman of the Citrus Growers' Development Company. At a local level he is a member of the Nkwalini Farmers' Association which manages local water resources.

Mzo was well into his career as a mechanical engineering technician when an injury made it necessary for him to change careers. At that stage there were suddenly opportunities in farming which did not exist before and this was something that appealed to him. He had grown up near Mtubatuba where he helped his grandfather with cattle and so his affinity with farming made him start looking for a suitable farm. He found the property, leased the farm, started farming and, after the initial very steep learning curve, Mzo has not looked back since. The property is leased from the Department of Land Affairs through the Pro-Active Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) and Mzo holds a 30-year lease with the option to buy the farm.

Initially when he started farming at Thulwane Investments the farm was a sugar cane and citrus farm. During the past four years he has removed all the sugar cane and is undertaking a rapid citrus expansion project. "I have planted 65 ha of citrus since 2016 bringing the total number of hectares of citrus on the farm to 170 ha," says Mzo. "The expansion project is continuing in 2019 when I plan to plant a further 50 ha of citrus made up of 10 ha of oranges, 10 ha of grapefruit and 30 ha of lemons." The farm is 280ha in size and has water rights for 220ha. Mzo explained that although he was expanding his productions, these will not reach 220ha.

"Citrus farming has not been easy but although I have had some tough years, I can say that I have been lucky to have experienced more ups than downs over the seasons. New markets have opened up for the citrus industry and these have generally delivered good returns. I see good opportunities continuing for

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Mzo Makhanya in his lemon orchards at Thulwane Investments

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the citrus industry in future and this has motivated me to expand my productions. In 2015 I bought a share in the Nkwaleni Co-operative and I am currently having my fruit packed there. I export my fruit through Lona. Thulwane Investments employs five permanent workers and an additional 80 seasonal workers during the harvest.

In 2015 Mzo bought and established a 250ha farm for sheep and goats near Empangeni. This is an intensive animal farming business. “I see this as a diversification from my citrus business as this serves the local market and thus spreads the risk from the citrus which is marketed internationally,” explained Mzo.

“Our eldest son Sasasa is 22 and he is studying Public Finance at the Berea College in Durban,” says Mzo. “The second son Sonqoba is 16 and wants to be a doctor. He is a boarder at Durban High School. The youngest son, Phaniso is 13 and he has just started as a boarder at Northwood College so we now have an empty house. Phaniso is keen on the farm and when he is home, he calls himself my right hand man and loves to spend time in the orchards with me. Right now he is very keen on golf and has a 9 handicap. This is occupying him a great deal these days but I would imagine that as time goes on, of the three sons, he would be the most likely one to take an interest in the farming business. If he wants to farm in the future, it is important that he needs to get an appropriate qualification.”

“My wife Cindy is a teacher at a local school. Initially she did not want to move here but now she loves living on the farm. Our three sons have been exposed to farming and while they love the lifestyle, they have seen how tough farming is. I have not proactively encouraged them to become farmers however our Phaniso has become interested in farming and we will see where this leads.”

Mzo has been something of a role model to other aspiring black farmers. He has had enquiries about the possibility of starting citrus farming businesses from some quite prominent business people in KZN. “I do encourage people to enter the farming sector and say that what should motivate you to be a farmer is if you love to see things grow.”



The Makhanya family of Thulwane Investments, fltr: Sasasa Makhanya, Phaniso Makhanya, Cindy Makhanya, Mzo Makhanya and Sonqoba Makhanya.



Mzo is achieving excellent productions from his young lemon orchards



Young orchards growing at Thulwane Investments



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ISLAND VIEW FARM

Umzimkhulu, Kwa-Zulu Natal

The rolling hills of southern Kwa-Zulu-Natal are indeed beautiful as famously described by Alan Paton in the opening lines of his novel Cry the Beloved Country: “There is a lovely road which runs from Ixopo into the hills. These hills are grass covered and rolling, and they are lovely beyond any singing of it.” It has been 70 years since this famous novel was published but this remains a fitting description for the magnificent landscape where Peter and Jenny Button and their family live south of Ixopo in their beautiful homestead at Island View Farm near Umzimkhulu. The Button family has deep roots in the region as Peter’s family has been living and farming in the area since 1860. Peter was one of five siblings and grew up on his parents’ farm near Umzimkhulu.

Island View Farm is 400ha in total with approximately 120h of citrus and a beef division comprising 200 breeding cows. Peter and his son Paul Button manage the farm together. They form part of a group of citrus producers in the Ixopo region who pack their citrus at their Carisbrooke Valley Citrus Pack house.

Island View farm is situated on the northern bank of the Umzimkhulu River, which previously formed the border between South Africa to the north (the then Natal Province) and the former Transkei homeland to the south. This had a significant impact on the Button family’s farming career as Ebuta, the original family farm, a mixed dairy, beef, citrus and timber farm, was situated south of the river inside the former Transkei.

Ebuta belonged to Peter’s parents Denis and Shirley Button and at the time when the former Transkei homeland was being formed, the surrounding farms

in the area were bought by the South African government in order to transfer the land to the Transkei, all except for the Button’s farm. The reason given by the government for skipping their farm was that it was located within the Umzimkhulu municipal area and that they planned to do this process with farms in municipal areas last. “In the period leading up to the establishment and independence of the Transkei homeland in 1976, my father bought Island View farm in 1975, still hoping to sell Ebuta so that we could move here. However, as Ebuta was not bought as we were led to believe would happen, we were not able to leave and focus properly on developing Island View,” explains Peter Button. “The government eventually bought Ebuta in 1991 and this train of events made things very difficult for us. I later bought Island View from my father and we have made this farm our home.”

The Button family were the first farmers to plant and export citrus from southern Natal. As they had produced citrus at Ebuta, which is located only around four kilometres away, across the river from Island View Farm, they knew that citrus grew well in the area and started producing citrus at Island View Farm.

Paul is responsible for citrus and Peter is responsible for the beef division on the farm. They work closely together and they discuss the citrus management on an ongoing basis. The farm produces navels, lemons and more recently mandarins.

“Our three children are Paul, (33), Robyn (32) and Jane (25), says Peter. “Paul is married to Holly, who is from Creighton. They have two daughters and they live on the farm. Robyn is married to Cliff Gilson who is from Kokstad and works for the timber industry in our area. They live in a home adjoining ours here on the farm and have two young sons. Jane lives and works in Cape Town.”

“Our children were always very involved with the farm and the farming lifestyle but we never pushed them to join the family business,” says Jen Button. Robyn agrees and added: “For people with our farming background and history it is the norm to want to be involved in farming, especially if you’ve grown up the way we did.”

“Growing up, I knew from an early age that I wanted to farm,” says Paul Button. I enjoy farming, with all its challenges and my father and I manage the farm very well as a team. Paul was at school at Michaelhouse and then attended Saasveld Agricultural College at George. He completed his BTECH degree in Agricultural Management in 2011. This included a year’s practical work experience at Crookes Brothers at Grabouw Western Cape. He joined the farming business in 2012.

“We suggested that he should go into the agricultural field and learn the theory. This turned out to be a good decision as today he knows a lot more than I do,” says Peter with a laugh. As the wife and mother of the two farmers, Jen pointed out that for the family business to work and preserve the relationship with the family members, good communication is vital for success.

Island View Farm is situated on the eastern bank of the Umzimkhulu River





The Team at Island View Farm, fltr: Nhlakanipo Mkize (Head of irrigation) Zama Ngcobo (Junior Manager) Paul Button (Senior Manager) Peter Button (Director) Siziphiwe Chia (Chemicals and Store).

“In order to secure the succession a farmer needs both resilience and good luck,” stressed Peter. “It helps to have the right crops at the right time. We spread our risks by farming with citrus as well as beef cattle and cash crops.” Peter added that when Paul joined the business, he arrived with new good ideas and positive energy. The citrus development has grown considerably since Paul joined the business. “Paul and I work well together and I would like to remain involved in the farm for a few more years,” says Peter.

“When I joined the family business we were producing some citrus as well as a variety of cash crops such as cabbages, potatoes and tomatoes for the local market,” explains Paul. “As a mixed farming business we were not really focussing on anything in particular. It made sense for us to consolidate and focus on producing citrus and as a result we have significantly expanded our citrus productions since then. Initially we also had a dairy herd but as part of this citrus expansion we have also replaced the dairy pastures with citrus.”

Peter explained that other farmers in the area had also started planting citrus some years ago and this led them to forming a company, Carisbrooke Valley Citrus, a communal pack house consisting of eight grower members. The area has subsequently been subject to a number of land claims and some of the farmers have sold their farms to the government. This has seen a change in the area as some of the citrus orchards are no longer productive and the resulting reduction in volumes has had a negative impact on the Carisbrooke pack house.

Island View has 40 permanent staff members and provides regular skills development training for their staff members. This is done mostly through training courses offered at the Carisbrooke Valley Citrus (CVC) pack house, which is the hub for training in the area.

“I am actively involved in the Harry Gwala Agri (Pty) a non-profit company which is supported collectively by four local farmer’s associations in the Southern KwaZulu-Natal region (Ingwe, Highflats-Ixopo, Mount Currie and Zwartberg),” explains Peter. “As commercial farmers we assist emerging farmers to start and grow their businesses through mentorship and other support structures.” The local FET College in Umzimkhulu has an intake of 60 agricultural students every six months. Once these students have completed their theory, they have to do 18 months of practical as part of their qualification and finding an agricultural business that will provide them with this opportunity is difficult. Harry Gwala Agri has received sponsorship to assist these students and helps to place them on commercial farms for this important part of their studies. (See www.harrygwalaagri.co.za) Hopefully through H.G.A and CGA Development Company we can get the land claimed orchards productive again.

As part of environmental stewardship Peter and Paul take care of the environment and implement sustainable farming practices. The farm also participates in the Ground Hornbill awareness project which is managed by the University of KZN. Island View includes a considerable amount of natural veld which supports local wildlife but unfortunately they do have a problem with poaching and stock theft.

“Paul is the fifth generation of our family to be farming in this area,” says Peter. “History is important to us and we hope to continue farming here. Although we are concerned about the future, we do not allow the uncertainty around land ownership to stop us from developing our farming business.”

ANDRIESKRAAL BOERDERY

Patensie, Eastern Cape



The Ferreira farmers of Andrieskraal with two of their key personnel, fltr: Fanie Ferreira, Andrieskraal supervisors Fanie Hendriks and John Blau and SG Ferreira

Andrieskraal Boerdery is located in the beautiful Gamtoos River Valley, west of Patensie and towards the upper end of the valley. The citrus orchards are located near the languid, meandering Gamtoos River and are surrounded by magnificent cliffs and pristine veld. The farm has belonged to several generations of the Ferreira family and it is currently owned and managed by Fanie Ferreira and his son SG Ferreira.

Fanie and his wife René, both in their early 70's and their son SG Ferreira received me in their family home and explained the history of the Ferreira family. Fanie says that his great-grandfather was one of the first Ferreira's in the valley. He explained that the first Ferreira's who came to South Africa from Portugal lived in Mossel Bay and later settled here in the Gamtoos valley. The first Ferreira in the valley owned land that he acquired in exchange for cattle from Andries Stuurman, the historic Khoi leader in the region, at the end of the 18th century.

Fanie explained that over the past few decades, he had worked hard to grow and consolidate the farm and that he and SG had been farming together for more than 20 years. Today the total size of the farm is around 250ha with 110ha of citrus which includes hard citrus, soft citrus and some lemons.

“My great grandfather was a farmer in the valley and my grandfather and his brothers also farmed with their father here,” says Fanie. “Over time the farms were passed to the next generation and my father and uncles farmed with my grandfather. After my grandfather passed away, my father and his two brothers farmed together but this did not work well and they ran into financial difficulties. It was at that time that I joined the family farming business so this was a difficult time for us. I made the commitment to buy my father's share of the farm and over time I also bought out the share that belonged to my two uncles. Later still, I also bought some of the property belonging to my great uncles, my grandfather's brothers.”

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The land had been subdivided several times and some of the title deeds represented very small sections of land. “The combined property that I ended up with had a total of 36 title deeds and in one instance, 1.5ha of land was divided into six different title deeds! I have now consolidated this total into nine title deeds,” says Fanie. He also explained that most of their neighbours are also descendants of the original Ferreira who settled in the valley. Some of the property belonging to the Ferreira family near Andrieskraal was sold back in the 1930’s as it was located close to the river and was very prone to regular flooding, however since the construction of the Kouga dam this is no longer as much of a problem.

Fanie believes that for a family farming business to be successful, the size of the property has to be an economically sustainable unit. “The experience that I had of seeing my father and his brothers struggling to make a financial success of a small farm taught me this at an early age. Also, while the brothers might be able to work together, adding each brother’s wife and family into the situation complicates the work and family dynamics, particularly when times are tough.”

He explained his succession planning as follows: “Besides our son SG, René and I also have two daughters and neither of them are involved in the family business. When SG joined the farm I divided the value of my assets including the farm into thirds so that at that particular point each of my children was allocated a third. Ensuring fair and successful succession is tricky when the family income is derived from the farming business and this requires careful planning. It is quite an eye-opener to see how many different approaches there are to this challenge amongst farmers and if this is not handled correctly, it can create financial problems between siblings which often result in bad relations between family members.”

“I have had an interest in the farm since I was in primary school,” says SG Ferreira. “This developed naturally over time and was never forced on me.” SG attended Nico Malan High School in Humansdorp and then completed a B.Comm. in Agricultural Economics at the University of Stellenbosch. He then did a six-month mechanical apprenticeship before returning to the farm in 1995 to start farming with Fanie. Soon after that Fanie bought a cattle farm near

Steytlerville and following that he travelled to Steytleville quite regularly and often stayed there for a week at a time. As a result SG ended up taking full responsibility for the farm sooner than they originally anticipated.

“Even though I grew up on the farm and saw all the processes, it is certainly different once you are actually responsible for all the farming operations and finances,” SG pointed out. “When I started farming I was young and inexperienced. As a result I bumped my head sooner rather than later and I made mistakes and I then learned from the process,” he adds with a wry smile.

SG and his wife Anel have two children, a daughter, Chrislie, who is eleven and a son, Stephan, who is nine. They are still young and have obviously not chosen career paths but really do enjoy the farm life. Stephan is a true farm boy. “He loves the farm life, does not like wearing shoes and is happy to skip outings to the city,” says his proud father.

A number of the Andrieskraal Boerdery farm workers have taken the opportunity that the business provided to empower themselves. One of them retired but decided that retirement was not for him and asked if he could return to work. Many of our staff members have been working for our family for generations.

SG explained that Andrieskraal Boerdery is part of the Baviaanskloof Conservancy and through this they are committed to sustainable farming methods to preserve the water sources, pristine natural vegetation and habitat for indigenous wildlife. “Whenever we plan to undertake new development we follow the legally required process of completing an environmental impact assessment. As a result of the water scarcity in our area this is particularly important with regards to the water requirements of any new development. Also, the new technology that we have installed in our orchards considerably assists with water conservation as it allows us to have far better control over our water usage,” says SG. Market access to international markets for the farm’s citrus production also requires us to implement environmental stewardship as part of the farm’s GlobalGAP Certification.

Fanie concluded as follows: “Being sentimental about land if you are not able to make a living is pointless. In my opinion land represents an asset for the future of our children and grandchildren. They can choose to farm the land or to sell it.”

The Gamtoos River at Andrieskraal Boerdery



KOUGA DAM INVEST

Patensie, Eastern Cape



The Du Preez family at Kouga Poort, fltr: Ilse Du Preez, Werner du Preez, Frikkie du Preez with Mila du Preez, Selina du Preez and Werner du Preez.

Kougadam Invest is situated west of Patensie at Kougapoort, in the upper reaches of the Gamtoos Valley and close to the large Kouga Dam. The farm is beautifully located and has striking views of towering cliffs beyond the river. The farm name is Kouga Poort and the business name is Kougadam Invest. This family business belongs to Frikkie du Preez and is run by Frikkie and his two sons Werner and Riaan. The total size of the property is 3 000ha and was originally bought by Frikkie's grandfather Pieter du Preez in 1932. Pieter had two sons and both sons, Merwe (Frikkie's father) and Helgard later joined the family farming business. "As time went by, I joined the family business and so did my cousin Petrus, Helgard's son," explains Frikkie du Preez. "At that stage the farm was a mixed vegetable and citrus farm. Once our fathers were no longer involved in the business we bought a separate farm for Petrus and separated the business."

Frikkie joined the family business in 1985 and over time he and his wife Selina have worked at expanding the citrus productions considerably and now have a total of 110ha of citrus. Frikkie also constructed the citrus packhouse on Kouga Poort where the farm packs their own citrus. Selina takes responsibility for

general administration in the packhouse. Frikkie is also a shareholder of the Grown4U citrus exporting company who export their fruit. In the last five years they have been joined in the farming business by their sons Riaan in 2013 and Werner and his wife Ilse in 2015 and the sons thus represent the fourth generation to be involved in the family business. Frikkie is the general manager while Riaan is the production manager and Werner the packhouse and marketing manager. Werner's wife Ilse is an accountant and is responsible for the business's financial administration.

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“It is truly a privilege for us to have both our sons and Ilse working in our family business,” says Frikkie. We never placed pressure on our sons to join the business, they made this choice themselves. Initially it was difficult delegating responsibility. To prevent potential conflict, very soon after each of our sons joined the business they were given a division with its own separate responsibility to manage. After the initial adjustment to working together, we have settled in well and rely on each other as a team. If I am away from the farm it is good for me to know that they are taking care of the business. Also, it gives Selina and me peace of mind for the future to know that there is opportunity here on the farm for both our sons.”

Growing up the sons both spent time and school holidays working on the farm. They attended school at Nico Malan High School and both completed tertiary education after school. Both Werner (32) and Riaan (29) studied at Stellenbosch University; Werner is a qualified electrical engineer and Riaan completed a B. Comm. Agricultural Economics degree. They both agreed that they were given the choice to join the family business and they have both taken that choice.

“I have always known that I wanted to join the family farming business,” says Riaan. After completing my studies, I did not work elsewhere before joining the farm and initially I started working with the general workers and got to know the general operations on the farm on the ground level. The more detailed citrus production information I have learned in a practical way over time directly from my father. When I joined the business, I expected that there would be some friction between my father and me but this turned out to be minimal. His experience and mentorship have been invaluable and have been a great help to me. Within the Patensie community there a great group of other young growers, around 20 of us, and we also form a good technical and social support group for each other. This has also made it easier to adapt to farming and living on the farm. I enjoy farming and see my future right here on our family farm. For a young person starting a career, it is indeed a privilege to have the opportunity to become part of a family business.

“Growing up my brother Riaan has always wanted to farm and I was less keen to become involved in the family business,” says Werner. “I am an electrical engineer and worked in Johannesburg for seven years where I met Ilse who is

an accountant. As our farm has been in the family for three generations there is a certain expectation and hope that you will join the family business and take it forward. My father had always wanted me to join the family business but did not force me to return. We are also fortunate that our farming unit is big enough to provide opportunities for both Riaan and I. My father and I are very similar and although we often bump heads, we also tend to sort out our differences and get along. Soon after we were married Ilse and I decided we wanted a change from the hectic city lifestyle so we came to the farm to see how this would go.” Werner and Ilse are both 32 and have been living on the farm for three years and have a year-old daughter, Mila.

Werner says that the farming lifestyle with his parents close at hand is wonderful and it is a great environment to raise children. “Although the lifestyle in the city is very rushed at times, working for a company the responsibility towards work mostly stops after hours. Here, as this is our own business, we are responsible at all times and often this requires one to work at night and over weekends.” He explained that people see the beautiful farming environment but often overlook the fact that farming work hours are definitely not defined by office hours. Ilse is from Pretoria and while she also enjoys and appreciates this, she misses her family. Werner and Ilse admit that they would love the opportunity to travel in the future.

In the last two years Frikkie du Preez has also started a blueberry production unit in partnership with their neighbour Edward Colling and Snyman Kritzinger. “This is one of the first blueberry farms in the Eastern Cape and following the recent completion of our first harvest, we are pleased that this has been very successful and has shown that the blueberry varieties that we planted do very well in our climate,” says Frikkie. “While this type of farming is quite high risk, it has the potential for excellent returns. We have initiated this blueberry project recently as we have already planted 15ha for harvest this year. The development of the blueberry project certainly requires a considerable investment and we made the decision to invest in blueberries as timing of this second crop complements citrus production, the blueberries start producing once the citrus harvest has ended. This is a convenient way to create employment for our employees throughout the year. We have 65 permanent staff and 75 seasonal staff during citrus season from March to September and 220 seasonal staff during blueberry harvest season from September to January.”

An untamed landscape with natural vegetation surround the orchards at Kouga Poort in the upper reaches of the Gamtoos River Valley



PETER FAMILY TRUST FARM

Hankey, Eastern Cape



The team at Peter Family Trust Farm, fltr: Nokuzola Peter, Jack Peter, Nomakhaya Peter and Nomaxabiso Peter

The Peter Family Trust Farm is situated on the broad, fertile flood plain of the Gamtoos River at Rooidraai, a few kilometres south of Hankey. This beautiful farm is 36ha in size and currently has 12.6ha of citrus and is the pride and joy of the Peter family, who have owned the property since 2004. Despite several setbacks, hard work and perseverance by the family, who have been joined on the farm by determined members of the next generation of the Peter Family, is showing results and they will soon be planting an additional five hectares of citrus on their farm.

At Peter Family Farm I met Jack Peter, a beneficiary chairman and beneficiary of the Peter Trust and his daughters Nokuzola Pitana and Nomaxabiso Peter. Also present was Nomakhaya Peter, who is the daughter of Godukile Peter, one of the other beneficiaries of the trust. All the women were proudly wearing overalls boldly printed with the name of their business, Peter Family Trust. Jack Peter

made apologies for his wife Hazel and for his relative Godukile, both of whom are actively involved in the management of the farm. Peter Jack is extremely grateful for the help from the younger family members. “These strong, young committed women do all the work and really making things happen here for us,” says Jack. “They prune the trees themselves and they have also dug furrows on the farm when necessary. I do not know what we would have done without them.”

The history of the Peter Family trust farm is that previously the members of the Peter Family Trust were all employed by Tertius Meyer at Mandarin Farm at the time when they heard about the possibility that they could buy this farm. Jack Peter, one of the beneficiaries of the Peter Trust and the chairman of the Trust explained as follows: “The trust was formed as this was part of the required process to buy the farm. We each received R20 000 from the Department of Land Affairs LRAD grant scheme and together we bought the property. As there was a shortfall

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Jack Peter shows the progress with the installation of the water supply and irrigation system for the farm's new orchards.



Peter Family Trust Farm Government investment board

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of R600 000, we borrowed this from the Land Bank to make up the difference. We received the farm in 2004 and then seven of the men from the family trust started working on the farm. When we took over the farm the trees were five years old.” Initially there were twelve members of the family trust and three have since passed away since so there are currently nine members of the trust.

Unfortunately they only received the land but had no implements which made it virtually impossible for successful production. As things went backwards Land Bank wanted to take the farm back. The women from the family trust joined the men in working the farm and the family begged Land Bank not to repossess the farm. In addition to the citrus, at the time they were also farming with vegetables and had 10ha under pivot irrigation and 4ha under drag line irrigation which provided them with a modest income.

The Peter family trust won the Female Farm Worker of the Year Competition hosted by the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture twice, in 2004 and 2007. The prize money that they received for this was R50 000 and this assisted them to prepare their fruit for the following harvest. Their fruit was exported that year, but they were notified that the fruit had arrived in the market in a bad condition and they were not paid for the fruit. As a result they incurred debts at the packhouse and co-operative for the packing of the fruit and were unable to cover that debt. Without capital they could also not maintain the farm and saw their orchards going to ruin. For some years they let the farm to a local commercial farmer and this assisted them for a while.

Circumstances have since improved for the Peter Family. Today they are again farming their own farm and after many years of waiting for assistance from the government, The Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture provided them with the funding to construct a new shed on the farm in 2017. They will soon be planting 5ha of lemon trees that they have received from the CGA Grower Development Company. Government has also provided them with the fertilizer and crop protection chemicals that they will require to plant these new trees. They have also received funding to cover the cost of improving the farming infrastructure by installing an irrigation system and a new pump.

“We are currently still paying off the loan we took from the Land Bank and will make a final payment this year. This is the first debt we pay when we receive our income. Once this repayment has been completed it will be a lot easier for us to get ahead with our business. I look forward to being able to eat meat,” says Jack with a laugh. “We have been harvesting good crops and this year our yield was 1440 bins. Patensie Citrus packs our fruit and markets the fruit on our behalf and we have a good relationship with them. Things have certainly improved. We are very pleased that we have been able to purchase a second-hand bakkie. Our family lives in Hankey and before we had this vehicle, we walked the 7km from Hankey to here and back every day.”

The Peter family urgently needs tractors in order to farm independently and currently hires tractors from one of their neighbours to implement the necessary practices on the farm. There are a total of eight people working on the farm, the three beneficiaries of the Jack Family Trust namely Jack Peter, his wife Hazel Peter and Godukile Peter and five of their children. “We work the farm with our adult children and they help us as we are getting older,” explains Jack Peter. “We will soon plant our new 5ha of trees. The area where we are planting these trees is on the part of the farm where we previously farmed with 10 ha of vegetables under pivot irrigation. Once the new citrus has been planted and established we will disassemble the pivot. We hope to plant a second orchard of 5ha as well to fill this 10 ha entirely with citrus.”

Nokuzola Pitana is Jack and Hazel Peter’s daughter. She is 38 years old and has four children. “I matriculated at Hankey Secondary and then studied Business Management at the Bethalsdorp Technical College in 1998 and 1999. I have been involved with the farming business from when the Peter Family Trust was



The women at the Peter Family Trust Farm wear the work uniforms of their farm with pride.



Beautiful scenery with citrus orchards at Patensie

KLEINRIVIER BOERDERY

Hankey, Eastern Cape

The Kleinrivier Boerdery citrus farming business in the Gamtoos Valley is owned by the Kleyn family and has been in the Kleyn and Blume family for five generations. For the past 25 years Marius Kleyn and his wife Wanda (née Blume) have been managing and expanding this business. From small beginnings they worked hard and bought six additional farms over time. Today Kleinrivier has 350ha of citrus and Marius and Wanda's children and their spouses have taken over the running of the farm and Hankey Citrus Packers pack house.

Wanda Kleyn explained that her Blume great grandfather was originally from Germany. After arriving in South Africa, he initially ran the ferry at the mouth of the Gamtoos River and bought farms with the profits that he made. He bought several farms including Kleinrivier and Heuningkloof. When he passed away Wanda's father inherited Kleinrivier and in 1995 Wanda inherited the farm when her father passed away. Our family therefor has a long history in this region and our grandchildren are the sixth generation on our family farm," says Wanda.

"From the time that Wanda and I were engaged, I had already been doing the farm's finances," explained Marius. "Before we joined the farm, both of us worked for First National Bank. We had planned to resign from our positions with the bank to move to the farm and join the family business at the end of 1995. When my father-in-law passed away earlier the same year, this hastened the process and we took over the management of the farm during 1995."

Marius explained that when they started farming at Kleinrivier, the farm had 40ha of the "Cape Naartjie" or the loose-skinned mandarin as it is also called. These are produced specifically for the local market and they still produce and pack these. At that stage there were only three private pack houses in the Gamtoos Valley and all three belonged to the "Cape Naartjie" producers. The rest of the producers were all members of the co-operative pack house Patensie Sitrus Beperk which has subsequently become Patensie Citrus (Pty) Ltd.

"After two years of farming at Kleinrivier, we realised that we needed to diversify and we started planting citrus varieties that were suitable for the export market," explains Marius. "We planted navels, novas and midnights. We bought our first additional farm in 2000 and following that, every three years or so we bought a new, undeveloped farm and we planted the farms with varieties suitable for exports. Today we farm on seven different farms that are all in the Gamtoos River Valley."

The original pack house was on the farm at Kleinrivier. In 2008 the Kleyn family entered into a partnership with Colors Fruit and together they built the Hankey Pack house with five shareholders. In 2013 Colors stopped doing business and four shareholders remained in the business. "In 2016 I bought out the other shareholders and we moved our packing operations from Kleinrivier to here," say Marius. "This facility is four times bigger than our original facility. Since 2016 we have also extensively renovated and upgraded our infrastructure at the pack house and this includes three steri chambers. We pack our own fruit

and also pack for other growers. Packing soft citrus is more complicated and challenging than packing hard skin citrus and around 70% of the fruit we pack is soft citrus," says Marius.

Marius and Wanda have two children, Waldo and Julie, and he explained that it has always been the plan for both of their children to join the family business. "Fortunately our business is able to accommodate both of them with their spouses and families," stressed Marius. "Waldo is married to Simoné who is responsible for the business administration. Julie and her husband Zarius van der Merwe run this pack house for the business. Zarius was the business bookkeeper before they got married three years ago and they make a good team running the pack house. Julie is responsible for all the audits. After matriculating from Woodridge School, she studied at Stellenbosch University for eight years. First she completed a degree in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology and after four years she decided to continue and followed this up with a B.Sc. in Food Science."

"Farming with citrus is part of our family culture. I have never wanted to do anything else and have not ever had any regrets about joining the family business," says Waldo Kleyn. He explained that he worked on the family farm during school holidays from when he was in primary school, learning about the production, picking fruit and how to drive the tractor. Waldo was at school at Oakdale Agriculture School at Riversdale and after he studied Agriculture at NMMU. When he joined the family business in 2007, he started right at the bottom with the irrigation team and worked his way up from there. He worked on the farm for six years before joining Marius in the packhouse.

Julie explained that her husband Zarius has been running the packhouse since 2017 and when the packhouse needed to implement the BRC food safety accreditation system. This was in her line of qualifications and, once she had implemented the first accreditation system, she was asked to take responsibility for implementation and auditing of the accreditation systems. "We are part of a close family and I had always wanted to return to the Eastern Cape. Becoming involved with our family business recently has been a blessing. I have gained huge respect for my brother Waldo in his professional capacity. As his younger sister, when we were young he was my tormentor but today he is my mentor," says Julie with a laugh.

Kleinrivier has recently taken over the management of Dankbaar Farm, an empowerment farm which has 42 shareholders. The shareholders were not able to work together to farm this property and decided that the farm should be sold or let and the beneficiaries wanted to sell the farm. Kleinrivier is currently investigating the possibility of buying the farm with the idea of using the property as an empowerment initiative for the Kleinrivier Boerdery employees.

The family has a game farm and the conservation that this entails is part of our environmental stewardship. They are not currently developing new orchards and in the event of doing this in the future, they would certainly proceed by adhering to the necessary legal requirements.



The extended Kleyn family. BACK ROW ftr : Zarius vd Merwe, Julie vd Merwe, Simoné Kleyn and Waldo Kleyn. MIDDLE ROW: Shenae Kleyn and Klara Kleyn FRONT ROW: Marius Kleyn holding Walter vd Merwe and Wanda Kleyn

“Although I have scaled down my executive functions, I am still involved mostly at an observer and our children and their spouses run the business,” says Marius. “The handing over process has been reasonably painless for both Wanda and myself. My son and son-in-law work well together at running the business and are achieving good successes. They get on with this and I only visit the farm and pack house occasionally to see how things are going. They ask my advice from time to time. Sometimes when I see them doing things that I do not approve of, we do bump heads but in general I do not get involved. I joke that I am an employee now and the rest of the family have given me the responsibility to do the green fields expansion of new properties and to do maintenance in order to keep things looking good.”

The Kleyn family has plans to expand their farming business in the future and have recently bought some more land in order to secure the 20ha of water rights attached to this property. This farm is currently planted with Cape Naartjies. Marius explained that the Gamtoos River Valley produces around 90% of this variety and with the boom in other, more popular soft citrus varieties, most producers in SA are removing this type of citrus. As this soft citrus is harvested right at the end of the citrus season, as late as November, it fills a marketing window when there are no other soft citrus varieties available.

THREEPENCE FARM

Hankey, Eastern Cape



Khaya Katoo with his daughter Kristen, son Bryan and wife Crewelyn at Threepence Farm

Threepence Farm is on the road between Hankey and Patensie and is a 363ha farm with 48ha citrus orchards and approximately 100ha under vegetables. Threepence farm was awarded to the Katoo family as settlement for a land claim by the Katoo Family in 2003. Khaya Katoo's mother is a beneficiary of the Katoo Family Trust and Khaya is the Manager of Threepence Farm.

"Our ancestor (My great grandfather) was known as Threepence Katoo," explains Khaya. "He had acquired land near Hankey between 1912 and 1930 and he was dispossessed of his property and removed from his land. Although he was told to move to Elliot he did not leave the Hankey area. The land he originally owned is close by and is 360ha of fallow land. We did not receive the original property but were granted this farm from the government instead. There were originally 42 households who are the beneficiaries of the trust and these are the descendants of the six sons of Threepence Katoo. Today there are still 40 households."

Khaya is a director of PPECB (Perishable Products Export Control Board), a director on the Gamtoos Irrigation board as well as a member of the Citrus Growers' Development Chamber. He has been running the farm for 16 years although he did not grow up on a farm or have any contact with farming before he took over at Threepence. "I was born in Port Elizabeth and after matric I was awarded a bursary from Telkom to study Electrical Engineering at the Port Elizabeth Technicon. I completed this and started working for Telkom from 1999. While I was working there I was assisting my family with a land claim application. One of my aunts was the claimant of the land and when we received the property in 2003 I came to the farm to manage the farm on behalf of the family."



Khaya and Luzuko Katoo

The farm produces satsumas, novas and navelinas. They do not produce any vegetables themselves and still rent out the section of the farm on the valley floor to the previous owner of the farm, Pieter Ferreira. He farms with potatoes, maize, broccoli, cauliflower and lettuce. "We had a very good relationship with him," says Khaya. "In fact the relationship with this family has been ongoing for generations and we are now dealing with the grandson of the original owner of Threepence."

Threepence had a Joint Venture arrangement with BONO holdings but this came to the end as the distance to their location in the Sundays River was too far for this arrangement to be economical due to the transport and travel costs. For several years now most of the Threepence fruit has been packed at the Wagondrift local pack house and Capespan exports the fruit. Some of the excess citrus is packed by Patensie Citrus. "Patensie Citrus now has a great MD Fredry Kok who is extremely helpful," says Khaya.



Views of the Gamtoos River Valley from Threepence Farm

“God has been good to us at Threepence Farm,” says Khaya with a broad grin. When they received the farm in 2003 they were promised funding from government. They received government funding more than 12 years later but today they are extremely grateful for this. Threepence received R5 million and they planted 30 ha. Their total number of hectares is now 48ha. They also received three DJ tractors, a spray machine, a bakkie and they have been able to clear 60ha of old orchards.

“My wife Crewelyn and I and our family have now moved back to the farm and we are enjoying the lifestyle here. We have two children; our daughter Kristen is in Grade 10 and our son Bryan is in Grade 7 and they are at school in Humansdorp. Our children are living and growing up on the farm and are seeing the farming lifestyle and activities firsthand. Bryan likes to drive the tractor when he has the opportunity. Kristen wants to do chartered accountancy and marketing and Brian wants to do chartered accountancy and farming as they are both very interested in the farm.”

Khaya explained that there are six trustees of their family trust and he knows that the family members trust and believe in him. They tell the other beneficiaries that they are doing the farming together but Khaya is actually doing the work alone. “Trust is earned,” says Khaya emphatically. “I am not the only one from our extended family that is involved with our farm. One of my relatives Mabuti Katoo is the foreman at Threepence and my cousin Luzuko Katoo works for the vegetable farmer who rents our property for vegetable production and he also produces his own vegetables. Currently there are still 40 households that are beneficiaries of our trust. From the dividends each household receives R6 000. We are currently in the process of restructuring our Katoo Trust with the help of our lawyers and auditors.”

Khaya is also the chairman and shareholder of Entabeni known as Gamtoosvalley Farming (Pty.) Ltd. at Patensie. He is one of eight beneficiaries that acquired the farm from the government in 2012. The total size of this farm is 180ha and initially there was 87ha of vegetables and 48ha of citrus. “We have been converting from vegetable to citrus production and today we have 91ha of citrus orchards on Entabeni,” says Khaya. “My wife is one of the eight beneficiaries and is the only shareholder of Entabeni who is currently working on the farm. We have six other partners in this business with us.”

During October 2018 Khaya had the opportunity to visit the Fruit Attraction show in Madrid with the Fresh Produce Exporters’ Forum. “My visit to Fruit Attraction in Madrid was a huge eye-opener. I was invited by the fruit industry to visit the show and traveled there as a guest of the Fresh Produce Exporters’ Forum. To see the level of competitiveness of the international fruit industry was remarkable. One of the UK receivers put things starkly into perspective for us by explaining that the consumer only wants top quality fruit and that on the open market, there were no concessions on quality, no matter who produced the fruit or where it originated. This illustrated to me very clearly the level of competition that we face in the export markets.



Khaya and Khayaletu Katoo

QUACHA FARMS

Patensie, Eastern Cape

The majestic Gamtoos Valley has been carved through the ages by the meanderings of the Gamtoos River and, as it was drawing ever wider curves in the landscape, it created generous alluvial planes with deep, fertile soils which are ideal for citrus production. The valley slopes are still largely untamed, with indigenous bush supporting a good range of local wildlife. At places along the valley there are also magnificent, towering cliffs where giant euphorbias guard the skyline. This is the home of Quacha Farms, the citrus farming business belonging to the Odendaal family. From relatively recent and small beginnings in 2002, when the first 30ha of Nadorcotts were planted, Quacha Farms has grown steadily and today the business has 210ha of citrus.

The business was established by Dr Kobus Odendaal and his wife Martina Odendaal and more recently they have been joined in the business by their son Nico and daughter Marelise. “We are not a traditional farming business as we are the first generation in the business and the business is still relatively new,” explains Kobus. Kobus is a General Practitioner and is originally from the Transkei and Martina is a professional nurse who grew up in Malawi. Following his qualification Kobus accepted an opportunity for a locum job in Patensie in a local medical practice in 1983. The Odendaals arrived in the town as a young couple, grew to love the place and the people and stayed on. “We thought that this would be a short-term job, but we have been here ever since,” says Kobus with a smile.

A while after they had settled in Patensie, the Odendaals bought a smallholding of 4.8ha. Kobus explained that through his medical practice, he got to know the citrus farmers in the valley and he and Martina decided to plant citrus on their property. This went well and from this start, over time they have bought additional farms and planted them with citrus. “In 2002 we planted our first 30ha of Nadorcotts and later we planted a further 30ha of Nadorcotts. This has expanded further and today we have 210ha of citrus on three production units: one here in Patensie, one at Loerie and one near Kirkwood in the Sundays River,” explained Kobus.

As Kobus continued with his medical practice, Martina took much of the initiative with the farming business and Quacha Farms has been a pioneer in the production and marketing of soft citrus from the Gamtoos Valley. “We were one of the first growers in the area to plant late mandarins and some of South Africa’s first Nadorcott producers. At the time this represented a calculated risk, but this turned out to be a very good decision,” says Martina. “In order to optimise the quality, condition and marketing opportunities of our product, I became involved in the citrus industry and have been part of the Soft Citrus Focus Group for many years. Looking ahead, the current rapid increase in the production of late mandarins in South Africa is worrying. We are concerned about how the current good returns for late mandarins will be affected when the expected massive increase in production volumes of late mandarins reaches our markets over the next few harvests.”

Quacha Farms is poised for a rapid increase in production during the forthcoming seasons as they have been renewing their orchards over the past few years and currently 30% to 40% of the orchards are young and are just starting to produce now. Most of their fruit is exported through Grown4U.

The Odendaals have two children, Dirk and Marelise, who are both in their 30’s. Dirk and Marelise had been pursuing independent careers and have only recently joined the farming business. “There was a time when we wondered about the succession of our business and whether our children would want to become involved,” says Martina. “We see our farming operation purely as a business and it is a high-risk business. Both of our children have developed careers that they could return to if this became

necessary. Nonetheless we are delighted that they have joined the business as they bring very valuable skills to the business.”

Dirk Odendaal is an engineer and lives in Humansdorp. He studied at the University of Stellenbosch and since qualifying, he has worked for a technology group on a new welding technology programme for Eskom and Sasol as well as for a state programme with uYilo electric vehicles. Although he is involved with the family business, he is still working in the engineering field.

“As our family business grew, it became clear that my parents could do with and would appreciate my involvement and so I became involved with the family business in 2014,” says Dirk. “Although I have now been part of the Quacha Farms team for four years, I still do engineering consulting one day per week. My focus is on ensuring that our business has meticulous financial management and to assist with the financial side of growing the business.”

“My mother has been very involved in the development of the European market for Nadorcotts. Through her inputs and travels to the markets, she has established many contacts and business relationships and these are bearing fruit now for the marketing of our product. During a recent business trip to Europe I had the opportunity to see South African fruit in the market and I was encouraged to see that the fruit was looking very good. We have been fortunate that we have not had big problems but there are no guarantees and the risks remain high,” says Nico.

Marelise Poggi studied Psychology at Stellenbosch University and completed her post graduate in Psychology at the University of the Free State. She also spent time in Korea teaching English as this presented a good opportunity for her. Marelise has been involved in the family business since 2013 and is responsible for the Human Resources aspect of the business. She is married and lives in Port Elizabeth. “Living in Port Elizabeth is convenient for me to get to the production units in both the Sundays River Valley and the Gamtoos River Valley as it is 80km to both places from Port Elizabeth,” explained Marelise. “We have 130 permanent workers



The people at Quacha: fltr: Dirk Odendaal, Quacha supervisor Stephen Solaan, Marelise Poggi, Quacha supervisor Boy Kondlo, Martina Odendaal, Dr Kobus Odendaal, Quacha supervisor Henry Damons and Quacha farm manager Christo Mostert.

and all the administrative structures that we have in place for our human resources division need to be replicated on the three different production units. I am particularly involved in the social projects on our farms. Our values are very important to us. We have respect for our workers and I truly feel that I am treated with respect in return,” she added.

Ongoing skills development and life skills training has made it possible for staff to empower themselves through personal development. Stephen Solaan is one of the supervisors at Quacha Farms. Through hard work and commitment he has progressed from general worker to supervisor and is a member of the Quacha farm committee. Boy Kondlo started as a tractor driver and has been promoted to chemical spray supervisor. Henry Damons has also progressed from general farm worker to team leader and supervisor and is the chairman of the farm committee.

Quacha Farms has its own pre-school that they run for the children of their staff. It is situated next to the township in Patensie. Quacha Farms recently assisted them with a needs assessment to find out what their most urgent

needs were. This turned out to be assistance with successfully enrolling the pre-schoolers into primary schools once they are school ready. Consequently Quacha Farms has assisted the school with this. Marelise explained that they have good wellness programmes in place as well as on site nurses on the different production units. She added that their employees all receive ongoing skills training and through this they have the opportunity for personal skills development.

“On sustainability we work with our employees as well as with the broader community,” says Martina. “We work hard to keep the chemical residues on our fruit as low as possible. We have also introduced water saving water monitoring and irrigation technology.”

Thus Quacha Farms was established in the last two decades by the Odendaals, who do not have a history of farming, on newly acquired land. It certainly speaks of commitment that this venture has been successful enough to grow the business steadily to the current sizable unit of 201ha citrus, big enough operation to require the assistance from their two children.

SONOP BOERDERY

Patensie, Eastern Cape



The team at Sonop Boerdery, fltr: Lomon Ferreira, Sonop supervisors Rico de Bruin, Dora Hatches, Henry Slamdill and Kenneth Maarman with Julian Ferreira and Josef Ferreira.

Sonop Boerdery is situated west of Patensie, where the Gamtoos Valley wends its way westwards towards the upper reaches of the river. Here the landscape has clearly been formed by the incredible power of the Gamtoos River as it has gouged its course into the landscape over eons, creating a fertile floodplain ideal for agricultural production. The farm buildings are located close to the tall cliffs that define the northern edge of the valley. Sonop Boerdery has a total of 250ha citrus and an additional 100ha that can be planted with cash crops.

Sonop Boerdery belongs to the Ferreira family and the Ferreira family has been farming at Sonop Boerdery since the mid 1950's. The current owner Lourens Ferreira's father Du Preez Ferreira was a sharecropper in the area and bought a small piece of land and Lourens and his brother OJ Ferreira farmed on the property with their father. Lourens Ferreira explained that he joined the family

farming business in 1973 after having completed a B.Sc. Degree in Agricultural Economics at the University of Stellenbosch and spent two years working for the Department of Agricultural Economics in Pretoria. He and his wife Judy farmed in partnership with Lourens's father and brother OJ Ferreira for around 20 years. In 1990 Lourens and OJ divided the farming business between them when their father bought a farm at Vensterhoek. OJ Ferreira went to Vensterhoek and farmed there while Lourens remained at Sonop.

During the past decade, they have been joined in the family farming business by their sons Josef (35), Lomon (32) and Julian (30). Learning that the older generation was away on holiday for a few weeks at the time of our interview was a good indication that they had begun to scale down their involvement in day-to-day farming and that the handover process to the younger generation has been largely successfully completed.

The Ferreira family has been farming at Sonop Boerdery since the mid 1950's. "In 1990 my dad and my uncle divided the farming business between them. Our grandfather bought a farm at Vensterhoek and my uncle OJ Ferreira went to Vensterhoek and farmed there while our father stayed on here at Sonop," explains Josef.

Sonop Boerdery has a total of 250ha citrus and an additional 100ha that can be planted with cash crops, but with the current water shortages this is not possible at present. Citrus can't be planted on this land as this part of the river floodplain is prone to flooding.

Lourens says that he has always advised his sons to work hard at keeping the farming business together as a unit rather than splitting it between the three of them. The three brothers agree with this and say that they work very well together. "We realise that we are stronger together with more opportunities to grow and expand if we farm together within one entity and enjoy working together as a family," says Josef. He added that although their business is currently big enough to accommodate all of them, in the future they would need to look at opportunities for expansion and diversification. Lomon currently farms on a separate farm, Spitzbak, but this is also managed within the Sonop Boerdery farming operation. At Spitzbak they farm mostly with vegetables such as potatoes and sweetcorn.

As part of a diversification strategy, Lourens has recently bought Chatten, a 450ha sheep farm near Jeffreys Bay. He is also managing a lime quarry at Paradise Beach, Jeffreys Bay and his main clients are the Tsitsikamma farmers and dairy farmers in the area.

This is also part of diversification and providing an additional income stream for the family. They previously owned a cattle farm near Alexandria but have since sold this. "Our father initially kept some cattle at Chatten but when we were hit by the drought he sold his cattle and slowly replaced them with sheep," says Julian. "The sheep farming business has developed well as the price for both lamb and wool has increased sharply recently. This farming business is a joint venture with our uncle, who is a lot more knowledgeable about sheep farming than we are."

"Judy and I have moved from Sonop to Chatten in order to scale down our involvement on the farm and to be closer to the lime quarry," explained Lourens. "It is a blessing to know that our sons have the farming operation at Sonop well in hand and we are enjoying this change. We visit them often and we are on a Whatsapp group together in order to keep me up to date with what is happening on the farm," he added.

Josef pointed out that although the citrus industry in South Africa is currently experiencing a boom and rapid expansions never seen before in the 40 years that his father has been farming, it is not clear how long this will last and at some point this must turn around. "We still produce our cash crops and believe that diversification will always remain important. The vegetable and sheep farming businesses supply markets locally and this spreads our risk from the export citrus market. People will always buy mutton, wool and vegetables."

The brothers agree that their father is a wise mentor to them. "Our dad is always there for advice. Mostly he will let us try something except when he has learned from experience that this does not work and then he will stop us

and warn us. He also tells us if there is something bothering him when we have done something incorrectly," says Josef. Lomon says that their father gives them room to do their thing and is happy to let them try things their own way. "His attitude is that if we make mistakes then we need to learn from our own mistakes." Julian agrees and says that their father is open to new ideas and guides them in their farm management practices. Of the three brothers, Lomon is the only one who is married at present. His wife Jolene is likely to soon start taking responsibility for the business's administration.

Like most of the farmers in our area, Sonop Boerdery has been having problems with water. The last time that the Kouga dam overflowed was in December 2013. Water security has been a problem in the region since then and the water shortage has become chronic during the past 12 to 24 months. Currently they are only receiving 20% of their water allocation from the Kouga Dam. This is a huge problem for them as in effect it means that they have to survive for eight months on the water that they would usually use in one month.

"We have to manage our water very, very carefully," says Julian. "Fortunately we have good boreholes and are only just managing to maintain our water supply. There are many people in our area sinking more boreholes but many of the boreholes deliver poor quality water which is not suitable for irrigation. We are really very concerned about this challenge to our farming business."

All three brothers agree that they were never forced to join the family business and each of them joined the family farming business out of choice. They have a great relationship with each other and their parents. They also explained that the trauma to the family of losing their eldest, Daniel in 2013 as a result of a brain tumour has brought them closer together as a family. All the brothers attended school at Nico Malan High School in Humansdorp. After school Josef completed a B. Agricultural Economics Degree at the University of Stellenbosch, Lomon did a B. Comm. Majoring in Logistics at Stellenbosch University and Julian studied marketing at Boland College in Stellenbosch. "Most of the operational functions of the farming business are actually learned here once we started working but the knowledge we gained before that brings different and complementary skills to the business," says Lomon.

Josef admitted that the current uncertainty about Expropriation without Compensation is very worrying for them as they are so heavily committed to agriculture. He added that their empowerment processes and employment equity processes are ongoing and explained that they had taken the decision to empower their own people rather than appoint people from outside. In this process some of their general workers who have shown potential have been given the opportunity to become team leaders and junior managers. There are also some of the staff families that live and work on the farm have lived and worked on the farm for two and three generations.

"Looking after our environment is important to us," says Lomon. "When we plan new developments, we follow the prescribed Environmental Impact Assessment procedures as legally required. At the lime quarry, one of the prerequisites for permission to operate this mine is that we are legally required to complete environmental rehabilitation of the relevant area after the mining process is complete."

GONZANA FARM

Fort Beaufort, Eastern Cape



Chief Siseko Maqoma in his orchards at Gonzana Farm

Siseko Maqoma is the chief of the Jingqi Traditional Community and farms with citrus on Gonzana Farm, a farm that he inherited from his parents near Blinkwater north of Fort Beaufort. Before he passed away, Siseko's father, Lent Bbali Maqoma was the former chief of the Jingqi Traditional Community as well as Siseko's farming mentor.

"I grew up on a farm near Alice as my father Lent Mbali Maqoma had a cattle farm in the Thume Valley in the old Ciskei Homeland," explains Siseko. "I attended Woodridge College and matriculated in 1993. A short while before this my father had bought our citrus farm."

Siseko explained that when he completed his matric, his father asked him to join the family farm. "This was a difficult choice for me as I had been offered a rugby scholarship to study in KZN. I agreed to join the farm and work with him and assist with the production and this happened in 1995 when I was 20 years old." Siseko says that he has never regretted this decision, adding that at the time he was young and restless and sometimes his father had to reign him in. "He always remained calm, level-headed and had an answer for every question I had," remembers Siseko.

"My father passed away is 2001 when I was 26 years old so I had six years of working with him. These were vitally important years for me as I learned from him daily within the farming and business perspective." He explained that before returning to the farm, he had been at boarding school and had spent limited time with his father so the time he spent with him was invaluable on a personal level. He father was born in 1921 so by the time Siseko joined the farming business, he was already quite advanced in age. "He had a great deal of wisdom to impart to me and during this time I learned a great deal of what I know about life, farming and business today," says Siseko.

After his father passed away, Siseko continued to run the farm with the help of his mother Abigail Maqoma. "My mom and I worked together - I took care of the production and she took care of the admin. She passed away six years later when

I was 31.” Siseko says that he is eternally grateful that his parents established the foundation of the farming business for him and they did a remarkable job in setting up the farm and handing him the responsibility of the business.

“I would love my children to join the family’s farming business one day. While they are young and growing up, I would like to expand the business to make space for them.” He plans to do this both by expanding the farm’s productions and by investing in the value chain and hopes to more than double the 40ha of citrus currently on Gonzana Farm with a good spread of new varieties. Siseko also explained that the Kat River region has a great advantage for the development and sustainability of their citrus industry due to the remarkable internal quality that they are able to achieve in their region.

Eden Agri Services pack house was established in 2009 by Shaun Brown. “I started using Eden Agri Services as my packing service provider from the first year that Shaun started the pack house and we work very well together. The option was always available for me to take up shareholding in the business and this was part of the future plan from when the pack house was established.” Siseko is now one of five black farmers that have their fruit packed by the Eden Agri Services pack house and who are shareholders in this business. The black growers have their own company called Eden Agri Citrus. They each have a 20% share in Eden Agri Citrus and bought a 70% share in Eden Agri Services so therefore Eden Agri Services is 70% black owned. The fruit packed at Eden Agri is marketed by SAFPRO. “The responsibility that comes with shareholding in the business is good for me as I enjoy the challenge that this requires from me,” says Siseko.

On how to encourage interest in farming in the next generation, Siseko has taken a page from his father’s book. “If you want your children to be interested in something, you need to involve them in this regularly from an early age. In the case of farming, you need to make them comfortable in a farming environment and in rural life. When they are older and the time comes for them to make this commitment, they need to be comfortable and committed to that lifestyle.”



Chief Siseko Maqoma (left) in his orchards with Melton Mulaudzi from CGA Grower Development Company at Gonzana Farm

Siseko believes that from an African perspective, farming has always been seen in terms of subsistence farming and this old image of farming is what discourages many people from entering the agricultural sector. He stresses that commercial farming is a completely different concept. “We are currently partners in commercial projects and I am convinced that developing these further holds the potential to address the poverty in our area,” he added emphatically.

One of the challenges to long-term farming security is that a number of farmers do not have title deeds. This is a huge problem which has been unresolved since the time that this area was part of the former Ciskei. People were physically given farms but it has been more than twenty years since then and a number of farmers in the area have still not received the title deeds to their farms. Despite many years of trying, Siseko is one of the farmers who does not have title deeds to his property.

Siseko concluded by saying that his success has been due to the incredibly supportive way in which his parents established the foundation of the farming business and set up the succession plan for him.

WHITE'S CITRUS

Fort Beaufort, Eastern Cape

White's Citrus is situated in a beautiful valley near Blinkwater in the upper reaches of the Kat River. It is clear from the tall, mature trees lining the roads and the old Victorian homesteads visible here and there that this area has a long history of citrus farming. In fact it was part of the former Ciskei homeland and the owner of White's Citrus, Fly Mpukane Mphangeli has owned this farm since 1990.

Fly is astute, highly qualified and well-travelled. "I do not see myself as an emerging farmer, I believe that I am a small scale commercial farmer," he stressed. Other than his Fort Cox training as a young man, Fly has subsequently completed several tertiary educational qualifications including an agricultural management course at the University of Stellenbosch's Business School. Most recently he spent eight months at the University of Florida where he completed a course in Integrated Pest Management and organic farming.

He spoke at length about the history and challenges that he has faced in establishing and growing his farm. After completing school he studied at Fort Cox Agricultural College near King Williamstown where his training was specific to citrus, Fly was employed as a citrus farm manager by the Ciskei Agricultural Corporation Ulimocor. He started working for them in 1986 and was later transferred to the farm he owns today. He explained that in 1990 when the Ciskei assisted aspiring black farmers to receive farms, there were 21 people who received land in this area and he was one of the group. This happened around the time when the Ciskei government was taken over by the South African government.

"I had been working here for several years by then and was overjoyed to hear that my application to receive this farm was successful," says Fly. "I named it White's Citrus after the White family that had previously owned the farm before the Ciskei government. At the time we received the farms, we did not receive title deeds and I was fortunate enough to finally receive my title deed in 2008," says Fly, who then proudly showed me a copy of his title deed.



Fly Mpukane Mphangeli of White's Citrus

The farm is roughly 45ha in size and when he received the farm, there was only around 15ha of citrus on the property. Over time Fly has since managed to expand this to 33ha of citrus. “Once I received the title deed I was able to secure a production loan from the Humansdorp Co-operative with the incredibly helpful assistance of Shaun Brown from Eden Agri Services.”

At that time the farm’s fruit was being packed by Katco in Fort Beaufort and exported through South African Fruit Exports (SAFE). “This did not go well and after a grievance with SAFE I changed my packing service provider and moved to Eden Agri Services in 2010. I am very happy with my relationship with Eden Agri Services and I am now receiving considerably better returns and my farming operation has grown from strength to strength. There is a relationship of trust with Eden Agri Services and today I am making a good profit as the years of hard work are paying off. Shaun has been a huge help to me and his assistance has helped my farming business to flourish.”

In 2016 Fly developed heart problems and underwent cardiac arterial bypass surgery. He has recovered well but the experience has made him take stock of his life and succession planning. “As I plan to retire in 2020, I have formed the White’s Citrus Farm Trust and placed the property in the trust. The trustees are myself, my wife Nomzuzu and Shaun Brown from Eden Agri Services.

Fly’s wife Nomzuzu is a professional nurse and is not directly involved with the farming business. They have four children, three sons and a daughter. Mkosibolile Julias (35), is their eldest son and he is a policeman. Lwasi (28) is the second son and is also employed, and their daughter Noxolisi is 22. The youngest son is Mhleli. He is 20 and is currently working on the farm. Fly is hoping to train Mhleli to take over the farming operations in time. Mhleli was on the farm at the time of the interview but was out tending the cattle.

“Mhleli has recently started working on the farm and he has had the opportunity to attend a Citrus Grower Development workshop,” says Fly. “He is still very young but he is getting to know the farming business. Even though I plan to retire in 2020, I will continue to assist him on the farm into the future” In 2017 Eric Mtyhobile, one of the farm’s long service employees was promoted from senior supervisor to farm manager and Fly hopes that he will play the role of mentor to Mhleli. “However, Mhleli still has the choice to remain on the farm and to get involved in management or to go and do his own thing. It is up to him to make this work,” concluded Fly.



Fry Mphangeli in his orchards at White’s Citrus



Mhleli Mphangeli at White’s Citrus

OAKDENE FARM

Fort Beaufort, Eastern Cape



Headman Manyonta of Oakdene Farm

Headman Manyonta and his wife Fundiswa Dlabantu farm with 40ha of citrus on their farm Oakdene at Balfour north of Fort Beaufort. Headman became the owner of the farm through the privatization scheme which was undertaken in the late 1990's by Ulimocor, the Ciskei Agricultural Co-operation by Ciskei Government.

Headman is a crop production section manager at Fort Cox Agricultural College, the same college he attended as a young man and is due for retirement in May 2019. He farms part-time along with Fundiswa, who takes care of the day-to-day running of the farm while he is away during the day and returns to the farm in the afternoons. He has recently turned 60 and has been working at Fort Cox for nearly ten years. "I am looking forward to retirement. Once I have completed my commitments at the college I will then be able to concentrate on the farm full-time," says Headman with a smile.

It has been a long road for the Manyonta family to reach this point as they have been through some tough times. Headman explained that after he matriculated in 1981, he went to work on the mines in order to earn the funds he needed to pay for his tertiary education. He enrolled at Fort Cox in 1984 to complete a three-year diploma in agricultural extension and once he had graduated, he joined Ciskei Department of Agriculture stationed at Fort Cox. "During my fourth year in this position I saw an advertisement about the privatization scheme with government farms. One of the conditions for receiving these farms was that I should resign as a government employee and that there was a five-year probation period before ownership would be transferred and farmers would receive the title deeds." Headman applied for the scheme and was successful and received his farm in 1990.

The total size of arable land under production then was 16.8ha but the trees were very old, and the infrastructure was very run down. "At the time I was very excited as I was hoping that I would be able to develop the farm, however, during the five-year probation period, the South African government took over from the Ciskei government and an embargo was placed on the sale of state land," he explained. This was followed by a government probe into Ciskei government land deals by Judge Willem Heath which took 10 years.

"While this was ongoing and I did not have a title deed for my property, no banks would finance me. When Ulimocor was liquidated in 1997 the funding that this Ciskei parastatal was providing to our group of farmers came to an end and we had absolutely no access to capital. I only finally received my title deed in 2007.

The lack of capital made it impossible to farm so in 2001 Headman landed a contract as a coordinator for a poverty alleviation programme in Port Elizabeth, with the Department of Social Development. This was a two-year project that ran from 2001 to 2003. During this time, he stayed in Port Elizabeth and visited home while Fundiswa and their daughters remained on the farm with Fundiswa taking care of the farm. Once this contract had terminated, he managed to land a 1-year renewable contract project as a community

development officer with the ARDRI division at the University of Fort Hare and stayed in this position until the end of 2005. While he was working at Fort Hare Headman also secured a contract with Nkonkobe Economic Development Agency which serves the municipality and he worked for them for three years.

“During that period people living in the area of our farm tried to intimidate us into leaving the farm and start fires on the property. This happened twice but we were determined to stay as we hoped that we would be able to develop our farm for our family in the future,” explained Headman.

“In 2007 I received good news after many years of struggling to get things going with Riverside Enterprises. I heard about the scheme with the emerging growers that was being implemented by Riverside citrus. Colin Painter from Riverside citrus at the time worked tirelessly and managed to negotiate a loan from the Industrial Development Corporation on behalf of our group of emerging farmers and Riverside set up a strategic partnership with us and administrated our loans and finances for us. My loan was R1.3 million. This made it possible for me to develop 28.6 ha from scratch of different varieties of citrus and in 2008 we were able to plant trees. In 2011 I sold some shareholdings to the value of R1 million to the IDC and I was able to develop a further 16ha of citrus. Today I have 40ha of citrus.”

Government assisted them to buy their farms through the LRAD funding system and Headman paid R260 000 for Oakdene. “During the past few years we normally receive some inputs from government annually such as fertilizer which is a great help to us. In 2009 I had a contract for community agricultural training and in April 2010 I joined Fort Cox for the second time as a crop production section manager for the College.”

We have two daughters, the eldest daughter, Sicine, is 19 and the second one, Siziphiwe is 16,” says Headman. “The eldest one is starting a diploma in logistics at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and our long-term plan is that the girls will come and join us and assist us in running the farm. Our youngest is still quite young and she will decide what direction she will plan to study but it needs to be related to something that can assist us with the farming operation. My wife and I are really looking forward to having our daughters join us in running the farm,” he concluded.



Fundiswa Dlabantu Manyonta in the orchards at Oakdene Farm

KONZI FARM

Fort Beaufort, Eastern Cape



Konzi Farm north of Fort Beaufort belongs to citrus farmer Eric Nohamba and he has been farming here since 1993. Eric is a committed farmer and makes a considerable contribution to the Citrus Industry as well as to local organized agriculture. He serves on the CGA board and is a member of the Citrus Growers' Development Chamber and also serves on the CGA Navel Focus Group. At a local level he is also the Chairman of the Alice Kat Farmers' Trust.

Eric received his farm in a similar way to several of his neighbours. After completing a Diploma in Farm Business Management at Fort Cox Agricultural College in Middledrift, he was employed by the Ciskei Agricultural Corporation in the Kat River area and was employed there in 1989 when the Ciskei government initiated an agricultural land privatisation programme. Eric took this opportunity, applied for the farm and was delighted when this was successful. In 1997 the Ciskei Agricultural Corporation and other parastatal organisations were shut down without any structures to replace the financial arrangements that had been put in place by them. This was four years after Eric had started farming and this left him without funding or title deeds for his farm.

Fortunately, Capespan bought the fruit from Konzi Farm and provided Eric with production loans. "Without this assistance at that time, we would not have been able to continue farming. After many years of struggling, Eric has received some government assistance in recent years. "I have managed to keep going through all these challenges," says Eric. "My fruit is packed by Eden Agri Services pack house which is close to us and I am very happy with my relationship with them. SAFPRO is the company that exports my fruit."

Eric and his wife Josephine Nondwe Nohamba are based in Alice which is approximately 50km away from Konzi Farm so managing the farm at a distance has always been challenging. Josephine is a teacher in Alice and they have four children. "My wife and children love to be involved with the farm and I must thank them for their help and understanding over the years," says Eric. Their eldest son Sinovuyo Nohamba is 27 years old and has been taking control of daily activities at Konzi farm since 2014.

Sinovuyo Nohamba in the orchards at Konzi Farm

“I grew up in Alice in Amavuso Township with my parents and attended high school in Alice. Subsequently I attended the University of Fort Hare from 2009 to 2012 I did a B.Ed. degree in Human Resource Management,” explains Sinovuyo. For his studies at Fort Hare, he received a Citrus Academy bursary. He also completed the highly successful Citrus Academy Citrus Business Management course offered at the Mpofu Training Centre in 2014 and more recently he also completed the Citrus Academy short course in Enterprise Management in Pretoria.

“I was keen to come farming and chose to assist my father with our family farming operation and I joined the farm in 2014. For many years my father had been striving to organize infrastructure on the farm. He explained that as their family home is in Alice, he moved to the farm to keep an eye on activities and progress on the farm. “Initially it was very challenging for me to live here but as time went by I became used to living the quiet, rural life. I enjoy what I do and consider myself very lucky to be part of the family business,” says Sinovuyo.

“I am really grateful that Sinovuyo has chosen to get involved in our family farm. He is really doing well and having someone living permanently on the farm to keep an eye on things has made a big difference to our productions. The opportunities to learn about citrus production through the Citrus Academy have really been beneficial for him and I have peace of mind knowing that he is taking care of things on the farm,” says Eric.

“Our twins (a boy and a girl) are in their early 20’s and they are both studying at the University of Fort Hare. Our son Siphokuhle Nohamba has completed a Bachelor of Agriculture degree majoring in economics as well as completing his honours in Economics and is currently studying his to complete his Master’s degree. Our daughter Siyolise is in her second year of a B. Agric. Degree.”

The Nohamba’s youngest son Sanele is a serious sportsman. He has just finished matric and is currently playing for the rugby for the Sharks under 19 South African squad.



Eric Nohamba of Konzi Farm

“Our children make is proud,” says Eric. “It is my dream to expand my farming operation so there could be more opportunities for them in the future. Our farm has created a platform from which they can become involved in agriculture at various levels. I would encourage them to look at agriculture as a sector with opportunities for them to develop their careers. Any prospective farmer needs to be committed to farming for the long run as farming is not easy so if they are not interested in the production part of agriculture, the export supply chain for agricultural products also offers many good career options that they could consider.”

LETAS FARM

Fort Beaufort, Eastern Cape



Clifford Dyonase of Letasfarm

Letasfarm at Upsher, a former trading station near Balfour in the Upper Kat River region belongs to Clifford Dyonase and is currently in the process of succession as his son Lomwabo has been involved in the farming business since 2016. Clifford Dyonase is also a minister and on the day of the interview he was in Fort Beaufort on his way to a religious meeting. “I am a man of faith and this has helped me through the difficult times over the past decades,” says Clifford with a disarming smile.

Clifford studied at Fort Cox Agricultural College when he left school and was trained specifically for citrus production. After graduating he worked as an agricultural extension officer for Ulimocor, the Ciskei government’s Agricultural Corporation in the 1980’s. “Ulimocor employed Israelis to teach us and I clearly remember my Israeli mentor Ben Hazel, who was a huge inspiration to me,” remembers Clifford.

He explained that in 1989 the Ciskei government had a privatization programme for farms in this region and that he was able to acquire his 82ha farm, although without the title deed, through this initiative in 1991. He added that at the time he received the farm, unfortunately it had been neglected for some time and that the trees were old with declining productions, the irrigation system was old and largely ineffective and the general infrastructure was very run down.

“I farmed the farm for five years from 1991 but it was an uphill battle without the necessary funds to fix the infrastructure and replace the trees. As result I stopped farming for 10 years from 1996 and derived my income from other sources.” In 2007 Clifford had a breakthrough with the farm as he and several of his neighbours who were in a similar position were assisted by intervention from the Eastern Government. The Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform Agriculture Nkwinti intervened and the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture granted each of these emerging farmers in the area R450 000.00. “This made it possible for me to buy my farm through LRAD funding and through a loan from the IDC (Industrial Development Corporation). I then started to prepare my land as well as installed irrigation and started planting new trees. Unfortunately I had insufficient funds to do all the repairs to the farm that it needed and could not develop as fast as we had envisaged.”

At the time the government provided the farmers with the grants they advised them to find strategic partners to assist them with their farming operations. Riverside Citrus was Clifford’s packing and marketing service provider and strategic partner and they packed his fruit and provided him with advisory services for ten years. “Unfortunately the packing costs were high and as the funding from the IDC for our group of emerging farmers was given to Riverside to administer as a pool of funds, we were not managing our own funds,” explains Clifford. “We lacked funds for inputs and we did not have the infrastructure we needed. We had to rely on help from Riverside backups and at times we could not afford to spray our crops. As a result crops were often damaged and we had no proper insurance against hail and frost.”

After the 2017 harvest Clifford moved from supplying Riverside to supplying Eden Agri Services. “This has worked out to be much better for me and



Lomwabo Dyonase checking the orchards at Letasfarm

ASSOCIATION
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

I am receiving better returns for my fruit. The relationship with Eden Agri is a more equal working relationship, the financial statements and finances at Eden Agri are transparent and now it feels more like I own my own farm.” The total size of Clifford’s farm is 82ha and currently has 22ha planted and he is able to plant a further 30ha. His orchards were planted in 2009 and 2011 and the varieties are novas, navels and lemons.

Clifford does not have shares in Eden Agri and explained that he did not want shares in the pack house at present. “Unfortunately packing costs are very expensive. It is a dream of mine to be able to pack my own fruit as I think that if we ran a packing facility ourselves our packing costs would be cheaper.” In 2016 government assisted him through recapitalization funding and he received R 2.6 million. These funds have helped a great deal as he was able to purchase a tractor and build a shed and able to do land preparation for 12ha. He has ordered the trees and will soon be planting around 10ha of new clementine and lemon trees.

Clifford is originally from Middleburg in the Cape but attended school in the local town of Whittlesea, some 40km to the north of Upsher. “Growing up I had the opportunity to be exposed to agriculture by my family and that is probably why I love agriculture and chose this as my career path. My wife Gladys is a teacher and she grew up in the rural area and is comfortable with farm life. We have a son and three daughters and our family enjoys rural life.”

“Our son Lomwabo is our eldest child and is 25. Although he started his tertiary education at Lovedale College, he is not very academic and left college without completing his studies.” He explained that as besides being a farmer he is also a minister and that some years ago he was considering stopping his farming operations due to various challenges. He then realized that as a family they had the opportunity for succession and that their son could join them on the farm. Lomwabo has been involved with the farming operation since 2016. “He is very interested and I am giving him the opportunity to grow and mature,” says Clifford.

In the late afternoon as the sun was setting when we arrived at Clifford’s farm at Upsher and Lomwabo Dyonase was seeing to the end of day activities in the orchard. He is the assistant manager on the farm and seemed very at home in the orchards. However, he explained that when he first started working on the farms two years ago, adapting to living and working on the farm was not easy for him. He is the only member of the Dyonase family living on the farm as his parents still live in Whittlesea. “Getting used to living alone in this very rural environment has taken some getting used to but I am managing. I am very keen to learn more about citrus production and the assistance I receive from the Citrus Grower Development Company and Citrus Academy are very helpful for me,” says Lomwabo.

“In conclusion I would like to encourage young people to become involved in agriculture,” says Clifford. “There is opportunity in the agricultural sector and this is important as jobs are scarce throughout our country. Land is available and can create jobs. It is not easy and requires hard work but has good potential to deliver rewards.”

RIPPLEMEAD FARM

Ripplemead, Keiskamma River, Eastern Cape

At the entrance to Lawrence Mgadle's Ripplemead Farm is a big Ripplemead farm nameboard which also has a detailed inventory of the number of citrus trees of each variety planted on this farm as well as when they were planted. This unique and remarkable accounting for every tree at the entrance to the farm speaks of pride, attention to detail and commitment to the wellbeing of each tree in the orchards at Ripplemead.

Lawrence has been farming at Ripplemead since 1985 and has owned this 86ha farm since 1993. Despite the considerable challenges he has faced over the years, he has made it work and the farm is flourishing. When he started farming at Ripplemead it consisted of 34ha of citrus orchards, but this has expanded over time and today the farm has 60ha under citrus.

It is clear that Lawrence is passionate about citrus farming and he also serves the citrus industry as a Chamber member on the Citrus Growers' Development Chamber and a member of the Soft Citrus Variety Focus Group. He and his son Mihlali are upbeat about the future of Ripplemead farm and Mihlali is looking forward to joining the family business in the next few years. The massive new, state-of-the-art citrus packhouse that has been constructed next to Ripplemead Farm has been erected largely as a result of Lawrence's government lobbying, so to him and his neighbours this represents a dream come true.

Lawrence attended Fort Cox Agricultural College in Middelburg and completed an Introduction to Citrus Course and worked for Ulimocor, the Ciskei Department of Agriculture Parastatal Company. In 1989 he was sent to Israel by Ciskei Government for 8 weeks for intensive training on citrus production guidelines. As part of the Ciskei's agricultural privatisation initiative, Ripplemead Farm was awarded to Lawrence on a five-year probation period and he rented the property. Before the five years had passed Ulimocor was liquidated and he and the other farmers that were part of this initiative were left without any support or funding structures. The commercial banks were not prepared to help them without title deeds.

After many years of struggling, Lawrence now has the title deed for Ripplemead. "I would put my success down to the dedication of my motivated workforce. Most of the people on the farm have been here since I started here. As I was the manager on Ripplemead before I was the owner, I was able to select the workforce personally. During the season when the seasonal workers are picking the harvest, I watch them closely for potential and have been able to recruit some youngsters from amongst them. As part of our social input into the local community, a few years ago we adopted Ntobeko Dyalavani, a youth from the local village. He lived in our home with us and after completing matric he went to Lovedale College to study farm management. Unfortunately, he was not able to complete his education and is currently employed at Colchester.

Lona markets our fruit and has done so for many years now. We have a good relationship with them based on mutual trust and I believe that trust is very important in a business relationship.



The sign at the entrance to Ripplemead Farm

"Our family lives in King Williamstown but during the week I stay on the farm and see them once a week and over weekends," explains Lawrence. "It is about an hour's drive from here. During school holidays our children always joined us on the farm. In the July holidays they are often here when we are harvesting and they enjoy being involved in the harvesting process and they also come in December and see the planting, growing and scouting process. They have always spent time on the farm and this has shown them the farming process."

Lawrence explained that Ripplemead is truly a family business as his wife Nokuzola is responsible for the financial and administration part of the business. "Nokuzola is an accounting teacher in King Williamstown and has always helped with the business and administration side of the farm. She does the bookkeeping for the farm and analyses our financial statements. She has been a huge help to me and to the farming business over the years and a very important part of the farming management team."

Lawrence talks about his children with pride. "We have two daughters and one son. Our son Mihlali is the eldest and is 24 years old and has recently graduated from Nelson Mandela University. Our second child is a daughter Somila, who is in her second year of studying accounting at NMMU. Our youngest daughter Yonela is 18 and is currently in matric."

Mihlali attended Dale College in King Williamstown and matriculated in 2012. Directly after matric he attended Varsity College and completed a certificate in Business Principles and Practices. He has just completed his studies at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, a diploma in Inventory and Stores Management. He is currently doing the in-service training part of his studies in the supply chain division of the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture and Recreation in King Williamstown.



Mhlali and Lawrence Mgadle in the orchards at Ripplemead Farm

“I am thrilled that Mhlali is planning to join me on the farm but before that, I have a plan to provide him with broader experiences within the citrus industry,” explains Lawrence. “I have asked Deon Joubert, a big commercial farmer from the Sundays River Valley, to employ Mhlali on his farm for a while and Deon is keen to employ him. This will be an excellent opportunity for him to learn about the citrus industry and experience the production process there, as well as get to know the citrus industry role players in the Eastern Cape. This will be a good mentorship opportunity for him and Mhlali is very excited about it. Farming is a business, not a charity and this experience will give him the opportunity to learn to think like a businessman. The secret of transferring the farming business from one generation to the next is something that I hope he will also learn in the process. When he returns from the Sundays River Valley, I would like to work with him for a few years before he takes over the responsibility completely. When it comes to our daughters, I want them to explore the world but in time to come, we will need their inputs and skills to make our family business grow.”

Mhlali is motivated and enthusiastic about the opportunities ahead for him. “Every day I wake up grateful for the opportunity. The prospect of farming is exciting but it also comes with a responsibility which I take very seriously. I will work hard towards making the most of the opportunity presented to me and taking on the responsibility that still lies ahead. The new pack house that we have here at Ripplemead will need skills and expertise in various fields so there will be opportunities for me there as well.”

He explained that he had received a study bursary from the Citrus Academy and that he also had the opportunity for industry exposure through the Citrus Academy. “In 2017 the Citrus Academy arranged for us to go on a study tour to the Western Cape. There we visited farmers and heard about how they had successful and sustainable farming operations. It was during this tour that I saw that farming is not just about production but that there is an entire value chain and various companies who deal with citrus from

origin to consumption and adds value to the product. It inspired me to see how many opportunities this offered within our industry.”

Mhlali attended the Citrus Summit that was held March 2017 in Port Elizabeth with the Citrus Academy and more recently he also attended the Citrus Production and Value Chain Short Course that was offered in their region during October. “I am trying to get as many industry exposure opportunities as I can in order to learn about the various aspects of the industry to broaden my knowledge for the future. This includes learning as much about new technology that is applicable to citrus production. We are in the fourth industrial revolution. My father has just introduced new irrigation technology called Chameleon which reads the irrigation requirements of our various orchards. This kind of cutting edge technology has the potential to make great advances within the citrus industry,” he added.

REILLYVALE FARM

Ripplemead, Keiskamma River, Eastern Cape



Siyolo and Lawrence Nyamezele in the orchards at Reillyvale Farm

Reillyvale Farm is on the banks of the Keiskamma River. This mud brown, strong flowing river is flanked by towering cliffs covered in tall Euphobias, aloes and dense bush which provides a sheltered habitat for the local wildlife such as small antelope, baboons and noisy troops of Vervet monkeys. Hambile Nyamezele and his son Siyolo welcomed us to the family's Reillyvale Farm which is 203ha in total and has 49 ha of citrus. They were also very excited about the new, state-of-the-art packhouse that has recently been completed at Ripplemead and the opportunities that this new infrastructure holds for them and their neighbouring citrus producers.

Hambile Nyamezele is in his fifties and has been involved with citrus production since childhood. His parents were farm workers on a citrus farm in the Fort Beaufort/ Alice District. When he was in high school, he used to help his parents on the farm. Although he enjoyed working on the farm, it was

beyond his wildest dreams to imagine that he would ever own his own property. However through good luck and extremely hard work, today he has a farming legacy that he can pass on to the next generation.

Hambile has owned Reillyvale Farm since the 1990's. He acquired the farm through the Ciskei government's privatisation programme when the farms owned by Ulimocor, the Agricultural Parastatal Entity within the Ciskei Government, were advertised and prospective owners were encouraged to apply for ownership. After completing his studies on Introduction to Citrus at Fort Cox College at Middledrift, he was employed by Ulimocor as the assistant manager as well as the pack house manager at Reillyvale Farm in 1983. "This initiative was launched while I was working at Reillyvale," explains Hambile. "As I knew the farm well, I was the most likely candidate to receive the farm and my application was successful. At the outset, Reillyvale was granted to me

for five years during which time I rented the property. The agreement stated that after the five years had elapsed, my management and ownership would be re-evaluated and if I was approved, I would be able to buy the farm and receive the title deed.”

However, soon after Hambile started farming for himself at Reillyvale, Ulimocor was liquidated in 1997 and the South African government took control of the Ciskei region. He continued farming regardless of this and managed the farm until 2004 without any assistance. At that stage the farm had 7.2ha of citrus orchards but no electricity and it was incredibly difficult to farm without running capital.

“In 2004 I went to see the management at Riverside in Fort Beaufort for assistance and they assisted me with a production loan. I was then able to pay wages and afford to apply the relevant production inputs for the harvest, and I was also able to save 3ha of orchards that I had been forced to abandon without the ability to irrigate them. Riverside packed my fruit and then deducted the production loan costs. This assisted me to establish my farm better and I was able to hire four staff members. In 2007 through the efforts of Riverside I was able to secure a loan from the IDC (Industrial Development Corporation) as well as to acquire the farm’s title deed after all these years,” he explained. This made it possible for Hambile to install electricity and electric pumps on the farm as well as to plant a further 14ha of citrus. Initially he had only Clementines and Satsumas and these new plantings were all hard citrus types - Navels, Lane Lates, Midnights and Deltas. More recently the new orchards that he planted between 2015 and 2018 include varieties such as Nadorcotts, Witkrans, Clementines, Midnights and Washingtons. Reillyvale now has 49ha of citrus in total.

During recent years he was able to secure a loan from the Land Bank with the help of Lona and Reillyvale Farm also received irrigation equipment from the government. “We are overjoyed with our new pack house and started packing towards the end of last season. There were some teething problems but this has now been sorted out and we are ready for the new season. We will be packing fruit from our young orchards in 2019 so things are really looking good for next year,” says Hambile with a smile.

He explained that he has a clear succession plan for the future of Reillyvale Farm. “Looking into the future I hope to hand over my business to my son Siyolo who joined the family farm in 2012. We are currently working closely together, and he is learning from me on an ongoing basis in a practical way on the farm and we also attend citrus technical workshops together presented by the citrus industry.”

“I have always enjoyed farming and I hope to carry across this love and enjoyment to my family,” says Hambile. “When my children were young, I used to encourage them to come to the farm and see the orchards over weekends. I believe that you should give children the freedom to work on the farm when they are young to get an idea of what this is like. I still have a further 50 ha of land that could be developed for citrus production and it is my vision that my son will do this in the future. I will be there to help him for as long as I can be.”

“My wife Neziswa is an adult educational teacher and we have four children. Siyolo is our eldest and he is 36. The next one is Lukhanyo, born in 1989 and he works at the Middledrift Game Reserve. Our third child is a daughter, Sesetho born in 1995. She is studying Chartered Accountancy at the University of Fort Hare. Our youngest is a son, Amila, and he is currently in Grade 7. He loves the farm and his sister is encouraging him to study further.

Siyolo Nyamezele clearly enjoys farming with his father and explained his family connection with citrus farming started with his grandfather. “Our grandfather took us to the orchards on his farm at Battelsden when we were young. I was exposed to this from an early age and this is what formed my interest in citrus,” says Siyolo.

“I went to school at Alice and matriculated in 2003. After school I worked on a farm at Battlesden, where our family home is, for two years as a casual worker. I went to Technical College in 2005 and studied Small Business Management. After that I came to Reillyvale Farm and worked in the farm shop for a

while before returning to Alice where I worked as a community sports developer. In 2012 I returned to Reillyvale Farm permanently and I was initially employed as a general worker and this was a good way to start working on the farm.”

Siyolo then progressed to administration and became a record keeper for the business. He believes that this was a good way to learn about the business side of the production on the farm. “After that I became a supervisor and this was challenging for me to enforce my authority with the people who have worked here for a long time. I also spent a while being the second supervisor with one of the oldest workers. I learned a great deal from him and this relationship helped to keep the peace on the farm. It took some getting used to but after a while the people began listening to me and this is no longer a problem today.”

In 2017 Siyolo was appointed as the assistant manager and is still in this position today. “Looking into the future, I look forward to taking on the full responsibility for the farm but I still need more time to learn. It is a great privilege to work with my father as I am learning daily. I am extremely grateful for his assistance and I am following his example with my two children encouraging their interest in the farm.”

Siyolo has attended Citrus Business management programmes and more recently he also attended the Citrus Value Chain Short Course. “I have gained invaluable knowledge from this course which includes the knowledge of pests and pest control, the life cycle of the trees, how and when to look for pests, when to spray and which different actions are required during which periods. The marketing information that is provided in these courses has been extremely good. This taught us the knowledge of market demand and making the right choices accordingly. It also taught us how to treat a fruit before and after harvesting. The study groups and short courses offered by the citrus industry have been incredibly helpful. I also need to thank Melton Mulaudzi for his tireless encouragement and support. He is passionate about assisting us young guys to learn more about citrus farming.”

Hambile says that he is happy with Siyolo’s progress and that he still needs to learn more. “In order to assist him I will continue to advise him going forward. I want to transfer the business to him, but he must remain keen to learn and grow into the future,” concluded Hambile.

NAUDESHOEK FARM

Ripplemead, Keiskamma River, Eastern Cape



Nomfundo and Sydney Mphahla in the orchards at Naudeshoek Farm

Naudeshoek Farm is between Alice and Peddie in the Eastern Cape. It is quite remote and extremely beautiful, set on the eastern bank of the Keiskamma River. The deep, rich soils on the riverbanks and warm climate in the region are ideal for citrus production and the orchards on Naudeshoek are thriving. Sydney Mphahla is the owner of the farm and has been farming on the property since 1992. The total size of the farm is 85ha and over the years Sydney has increased the production from 40ha of citrus to 80ha and the expansion is still continuing.

Sydney and his wife have four daughters and they expect that their daughters will take over the farm from them in the future. Nomfundo, their eldest daughter is in her 20's and has been working at Naudeshoek for several years, assisting with the administration and human resources side of the business.

"I enjoy working on the farm with my father and like any other job, we are faced with challenges," says Nomfundo. "There are times when my father and I have differences of opinion, but we work this out. It is good to be part of something that we do together as a family. I am grateful for the opportunities that the family business has provided for me and I am inspired to help my father implement his plans to develop the farm."

Nomfundo is the eldest in the family. She has three younger sisters and it is likely that they will also work on the farm. "Just younger than me is Vuyolwethu who has completed a diploma in logistics and is currently doing a postgraduate diploma in financial management at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. These qualifications will be of assistance when she joins the farming operation. Ntombizathu is currently in matric and Zikhona is in Grade Nine."

During 2017 the Eastern Cape government constructed a large new, state-of-the-art pack house at Ripplemead which has replaced the old pack house. As Nomfundo ran the old packhouse, she has continued in this very responsible position in the new pack house.

"Our new pack house has the potential to change our economic future," says Sydney. He explained that he is currently organizing and encouraging the surrounding communities to plant citrus and encouraging the youth to take the lead in producing more fruit for the pack house. He provides his mentorship at no cost to those young people that are interested in possibly doing this and has volunteered to teach them about citrus production.

"There is interest from the local community and others in the area in starting citrus farming close by and I am encouraging the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform to assist new farmers from the outset so they do not run up debt with a strategic partnership," explained Sydney. He added that previously the local communities grew vegetables on community land but that it is currently lying fallow. There is a good deal of land available and it presents the local communities with an opportunity.

"I started to do this after the new pack house opened - this is part of my mentor community development and corporate social responsibility. We want to reduce the local unemployment rate. When I travel to these communities the local ward extension officer travels with me. Government has shown an initial interest following this and has provided a verbal commitment to this initiative. I believe the economic future of this area has been secured by our new pack house."

Sydney received the farm from the Ciskei homeland's Department of Agriculture through their agricultural land privatisation process. While he was working for Ulimocor, the Ciskei Government's Agricultural organisation this process was initiated. "I presented my application and after the interview the farm was awarded to me. I was truly thrilled to receive this property that I knew so well. Unfortunately, the subsequent change of Government from the Ciskei to the South African Government meant the bank that had been funding us no longer existed so we received no more funding. This created a great deal of uncertainty and difficult times for us," explained Sydney.

Government advised Sydney and the other growers who were part of this initiative to find strategic partners and around 2005 they developed a relationship with Riverside Citrus at Fort Beaufort who then packed their fruit and became their strategic partner. "Riverside helped us and our circumstances improved when they became involved. They assisted us to secure financing through the IDC and in 2008 also facilitated government assistance for us from the Department of Agriculture.

Today Naudeshoek fruit is packed in the new Ripplemead pack house and exported by Lona Exports through the Port Elizabeth harbour. "I am successful because of fate and grace and the commitment of my farm workers and my passion for farming keeps me going," concluded Sydney.



The recently completed Ripplemead Packhouse, constructed at Ripplemenad by the Eastern Cape Government. This modern facility has replaced the old Ripplemead packhouse. This new infrastructure has the capacity to pack more fruit than is currently planted in the area, thus making provision for future expansion of citrus production in this remote region.



Nomfundo Mphaphla (left) is the Ripplemead Packhouse Manager. Here she is with her father Sydney Mphabla proudly displaying the interior of the new packhouse. The citrus from Ripplemead Farm, Reillyvale Farm and Naudéshoek Farm is all packed in this new packhouse.

SAXFOLD FARM

Adelaide, Eastern Cape

Saxfold Farm is close to the Eastern Cape town of Adelaide and this beautiful old farmstead with its long-established gardens and surrounding lush green orchards provides a delightful change from the drier surrounding cattle country. Meeting Jock Danckwerts and his wife Sandy as well as their son Richard and his wife Joy and seeing the ongoing family banter was a pleasure and also provided some insight into both family and farming dynamics.

The Danckwerts and Cross family has been in the Adelaide district of the Eastern Cape Midlands for six generations since the 1850's. Jock and Sandy Danckwerts have been farming at Saxfold for many years and their eldest son Richard, who represents the seventh generation, joined the family farming business in 2016.

Jock Danckwerts explained that Saxfold is a small family business and currently has 80 ha under production. "So in the broader scheme of things we are not big farmers and are like many other farmers throughout South Africa. This farm is a piece of paradise but it has taken generations of farming to create this and generally we like to keep a low profile. I am also involved in a bigger corporate business which is separate to our family farm. This is J&B Citrus at Cookhouse, 400ha of citrus where I am a one third shareholder. Along with my partners we started this business off from scratch."

"My grandfather first planted citrus in 1904, so technically my association with the citrus industry goes way back," explains Jock. However, up to 1990, when I returned to the family farm, which was at the time almost an insolvent business, our farming enterprise consisted mostly of stock farming with a little citrus. From that time onwards, I concentrated on the citrus enterprise and have been a citrus farmer ever since, both on my home farm at Adelaide and in the Fish River Valley."

Jock is extremely pragmatic about the risks of farming and involving other members of the family in the farming enterprise. Both he and Richard established and worked within careers outside of the farming business, which they could return to if necessary, in order to mitigate this risk.

"Realistically farming is a risky business as some years are disastrous and one needs to make provision for the bad years. One of the biggest challenges for a small family farming business is bringing in a second family who is funded from the income of the farm into the business while maintaining the family lifestyle. If you want to absorb the next generation into the farming business, you have to have an outside income or build up your farming business to the point that the income can support two families."

"Most farms fail in the turnover of the generations and the main causes of this are that farms are divided to the point that the remaining units are no longer economically viable or, one of the sons inherits the land but has to pay his siblings out the equivalent of their share of the farm value, and this debt load often cripple the farmer financially. The sad story is that in the handover process the family business is not big enough to maintain the family and that causes its failure. The family invariably sells their land and the result of this has been the growth of corporate farming businesses," explained Jock.

"So, if your farm is not big enough to split between your children for each to receive an economically sustainable unit, my advice is that you should sell your farm and give the children the money. Otherwise, if you are going to leave the farm to one of your children, make sure that you do not put a millstone of indebtedness around that child's neck. Make sure that your children have a good education so that they can make a living for themselves which does not rely on the farm."

Besides his farming career, Jock has established a considerable career as an academic and university lecturer. He has also been involved in the organised agriculture side of the South African citrus industry since the deregulation in the 1990's and was part of the team who facilitated the establishment of Citrus Research International (CRI). Jock received his doctorate in Grassland Science from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and following this he established himself as an academic in this field. He has published over 100

papers and is an internationally recognised expert on range and pasture. He was with the Department of Agriculture for 15 years and held the positions of Team Leader for Pasture Research in the Eastern Cape as well as the Deputy Director for research in the Free State Region. Subsequently, he held the positions of Professor of Plant Sciences and Dean of Research at the University of Fort Hare, as well as Scientific and Research Advisor to the Range and Forage Institute of the ARC (Agricultural Research Council). He has also served on the board of Katco Citrus co-operative in Fort Beaufort and, in recognition of his contribution to the South African citrus industry, in 2015 CGA (Citrus Growers' Association) chose Jock as a Citrus Legend.

"When I joined the family business, finances were tight and I needed to maintain a second job to provide a second income. I was the day-to-day hands-on manager on the farm and also established my consultancy business which I still run today. As the farm developed, we reached the point that farm had become too big for me to be a part-time farmer and also do my consulting business and the Cookhouse business. This created space for Richard to join the business and the sums worked," explained Jock.

Richard is a professional land surveyor and qualified at the University of Cape Town. He is 31 years old and, prior to joining the farm, he worked as a land surveyor in Grahamstown for five years. "I became a land surveyor so that I could farm and potentially run a second business if I need to," explains Richard. "Initially when I joined the farm I continued doing this part-time but farming was taking up too much of my time so I have stopped my land surveying for now. However I maintain the points required for this profession and if I needed to commence with it again to supplement our income, I could do so in the future."

Richard and his wife Joy have been married for two years and live on Saxfold Farm. Richard is in charge of farming operations and Joy assists with administration. Sandy Danckwerts commented that it has been good for Richard and Joy to join the family business as it has brought renewed energy to the farm. Jock agrees and added, "During the last three years Richard has done more development on this property than we did during the previous ten



The team at Saxfold Farm, fltr: Jock Danckwerts with his dog Toto, farm manager Leon Pagel, farm manager Mervin Judge, administration officer Lisa Judge, Joy Danckwerts, Sandy Danckwerts and Richard Danckwerts.

years and this has doubled the value of the farm. This is what the energy of youth brings to a family business.” For young people who have made careers in urban areas to return to family farms, the social adjustment to rural life is also a consideration. “I am fortunate that in my age group, there is a great generation of young people in the local farming community but this is more the exception than the rule. For my brother who is eight years younger than I am, this is not the case,” says Richard.

Richard is the eldest of Jock and Sandy’s three children. Lindsay is the second eldest and is 28. She has completed Business Science at the University of Cape Town and has worked in the fruit business for Zest Fruit export industry. Lindsay is currently doing her Master’s degree on the Water Economic Footprint of Citrus in the Eastern Cape. The youngest is Matthew, who is 23 and studying at the University of Stellenbosch. He plans to do his Master’s degree next year on Fire Behaviour focusing on veld fires, which ties in with Jock’s field of expertise.

“We have embraced the necessity to transform and this is represented throughout our management and staff,” explains Richard. “We have two farm managers, Mervin and Leon. Mervin Judge and his wife Lisa are a coloured couple and are central to our management as he is one of our managers and his wife does our administration. Our other manager, Leon Pagel, is strictly speaking disabled as he lost a leg in an accident, but despite this he is very mobile and is an excellent manager.” Richard added that the rest of the Saxfold

staff are black or coloured people. They have ongoing skills development training including AgriSETA Learnerships. This is done during work hours and the time spent on this amounts to around one month of the year. “The training opportunities that we have given our people has assisted them to empower themselves. An example of this is that we have assisted two of our staff members to get their heavy duty drivers licences and this has made it possible for them to apply for higher positions elsewhere. While we are sorry to lose these promising staff members, we are happy for them as we do not have the opportunity for them to grow any further in our own business.”

Saxfold does not form part of a state scheme water allocation system and with their own proactive water management systems, they have sufficient water for their current orchards and to expand into the future. Considering Jock’s extensive career in this field and his consultancy business which incorporates wildfire investigation, the commitment to environmental sustainability and environmental stewardship is a fundamental ethic and central to farming practices at Saxfold. When Jock comments, “I wrote the book on environmental sustainability,” this is in fact no exaggeration!

Richard is doing lots of long-term investment and both he and Jock are concerned about the future. “Besides the economic uncertainty of farming, the current political uncertainty is also worrying as this makes it difficult to plan for the future. While it does not stop us from developing, having a second career to fall back remains extremely important,” concluded Jock.

VENTER BOERDERY

Kirkwood, Eastern Cape



The Venter Family of Venter Boerdery. BACK, fltr: Nico Venter, Boeram Venter and Leroux Venter. FRONT, fltr: Cindy Venter (with her shy young daughter), Elsa Venter and Lauren Venter.

Venter Boerdery, near Kirkwood in the Sundays River Valley, is a large-scale, diversified farming operation. The business has 800ha of citrus in production as well as large animal farming divisions. Disco Chicks is the poultry division which has 12 broiler raising houses and Disco Bonsmara is the stud cattle division. The farming operation also includes a game farm and a tourism division, Africanos Country Estate. Venter Boerdery also has a developing manure manufacturing division which will utilize the chicken manure from Disco Chicks.

Boeram Venter, 62, with the support of his wife, Elsa, has built this successful business during his lifetime. Their two sons Nico (35) and Leroux (32) joined the family business over the past decade. Nico, together with the mechanical aspects, including the panel beating workshop and large scale earthmoving, is responsible for Disco Chicks as well as Africanos Country Estate. Leroux is in charge of the citrus production.

Boeram spoke about his family's history, explaining that his father Nick Venter had grown up on a farm in the Karoo which was not big enough to support

him and his brothers as adults. In 1946 he moved to the Sundays River Valley and bought a small farm. Here he met his wife Rosa, who was a school teacher at a farm school in the valley. Boeram is one of three siblings and has two sisters.

"I studied Pharmacy at the University of Potchefstroom", says Boeram. "I worked in partnership at the pharmacy practice in Kirkwood for five years while farming part time. In 1986 I started farming fulltime on our original 20ha farm in Kirkwood. My father suddenly passed away from a heart attack when I was in matric. During the time I was studying and completing my military service my mother farmed for seven years." He added that his father's early death meant that he did not have the fatherly guidance as a young adult and as a result he burnt his fingers many times. "However, my mother was a remarkable woman and provided me with guidance and mentorship through this time."

Venter Boerdery bought their original Coerney Valley farm in 2000 as it was one of a few undeveloped areas in the Sundays River Valley. It was developed from scratch and the business has established all the infrastructure on the property since then. "We noticed that the productions achieved on virgin soil

were much higher than on ground that had been previously farmed”, says Boeram. “I sold the Kirkwood farm in 2006 and continued to expand the Coerney division where we currently have 800ha of producing citrus.”

“My challenge as a youngster was to expand my operation and I have been blessed that this has been remarkably successful. I have managed to achieve my long-term goals and now I need to step back and allow my sons to pursue their long-term goals for the next generation. This is challenging as one of the most difficult things about handing over a farming business is delegating and then refraining from re-involving yourself in the delegated areas. The handing over/taking over process is long and challenging and, as the father/child and business process are both involved, a certain amount of bumping heads is to be expected. It requires commitment and mutual respect for this to be successful.” Boeram believes that if any of a parent’s children plan to join a family business, it is important for the parents to stimulate the younger generation to be interested in the business from an early age. In his opinion they should understand the focus of the business and should have ongoing exposure. This includes both the negative and positive side of the business and seeing the results of the business’s performance.

“In our case, we involved our sons in the farming business on a daily basis. Our business is extremely focussed on measuring performance and our decision making is determined by this crucial data. Communicating this performance to the youngsters as well, whether it is successful or not, allows them to see and understand the business. This establishes a benchmark for them to evaluate the opportunity presented to them and hopefully this will inspire them to join the business with the intention of taking it further through investing their time, effort and passion in the business,” says Boeram. He pointed out that with young people, motivation often depends on the circumstances in which they were raised. If they grew up in a family that was not very privileged, youngsters tend to be motivated to work hard and improve their circumstances. On the other hand, for youngsters who have grown up in very comfortable circumstances it is more important for the older generation to stimulate the motivation and ambition for them to continue to improve their circumstances through the business.

“We are privileged that both our sons, Nico and Leroux, have tertiary qualifications. Nico has a Honours degree in B.Comm. Business Management and Leroux one in B.Comm. International Trade. They both studied at North-West University, Potchefstroom, and our family are proud supporters of this University. They are both involved in the farming business by choice.” Boeram explained that both sons joined the division of the business they most enjoyed. The structures were formalised around these choices. As with any business they strive for constant improvement. “If you’re not doing well you should strive to improve and even if you are doing well you should strive towards further improvements. Systems are very important for this to be successful. My challenge for them has been to bring new systems in place to further improve our current operations.

“For me, wanting to become a farmer is ingrained in our culture and reflects on how we were raised,” says Nico. “From a very young age I experienced the farming business on a daily basis. When I was a teenager I drove the tractor and every Friday I washed all of the farm’s tractors at the shed. This was the start of my introduction to the farming business and I never considered any other career. My father wanted us to obtain tertiary education degrees to ensure that we were qualified in case the farm did not provide us with a future. After I completed my honorary degree, I worked for a financial institution in Johannesburg for five years before joining the family business”. Nico is married to Cindy. They have a daughter and Cindy has two children, a son and a daughter, from a previous marriage, that are part of his nuclear family.

“Being part of a family business is not always easy, but it is most certainly worth it,” says Leroux Venter. “In the beginning we bumped heads, but it became easier as we have both taken ownership of our divisions and responsibilities. Our dad has seen our commitment and has stood back to give us the necessary room to grow. We are fortunate that the handing over process is proceeding successfully. I know of other farmers in our area that are reluctant to delegate responsibility to their children, which in return creates unnecessary friction.”

After completing his studies, Leroux worked for a fruit export company in Cape Town for a number of years. This gave him the opportunity to see many export fruit farms throughout the country and gain invaluable technical and marketing knowledge within the fruit industry. He is married to Lauren and they are expecting their first child, a daughter.

Boeram, Nico and Leroux work well together. “For us it is a huge privilege to have our father around as we know that he lost his father when he was very young. His presence and ongoing mentorship has been crucial in assisting us to take over the responsibility for the farming operation,” says Nico. “We have the same vision and manage to work together to complement each other within the business. This is not too complicated because brothers know each other well enough to be able to work together. When family businesses progress to the third generation when they are run by cousins, things can become very complicated and for a business to survive this, there has to be very clear management and communication systems in place.”

Leroux explains that the brothers’ wives are not involved in the business and that they had made the decision to keep this as a family rule. This is to prevent any potential difficulties developing between in-laws. “We have seen this happen when problems develop between the in-laws and the course of action is then to divide up the business. This keeps things simple and makes it possible for us to work together without developing the need to split the business between the brothers.”

Venter Boerdery has completed the implementation of a very successful Black Economic Empowerment project. The project was initiated as far back as 2003 and was only the second empowerment project in the Sundays River Valley. The project was implemented on the 63ha Peperlaan Farm. Venter Boerdery sold 75% of the farm to the beneficiaries of the Mbuyiselo Trust, which consisted of 23 permanent workers. The process was finalised in 2005 and six years later, in 2011, Venter Boerdery sold the remaining 25% of the shares to them. Today this farm is affiliated to SRCC’s Prime Production initiative which provides them with technical, marketing and financial administration assistance. Several current employees of Venter Boerdery’s management team have shares in this farm. “Our current Managerial structure reflects both that of social diversity and age,” says Boeram.

Boeram explains that their goal has always been long-term sustainability and to have pride in what they have established. “The profits will follow if this long-term approach is successfully implemented and we have succeeded in establishing it. One cannot chase profit without long-term sustainability. We get out of bed in the mornings to come farming. Often, over weekends, I drive to the farm to relax and observe the past week’s hard work. I suppose one can say that for me, farming is my business, but more importantly, it is my hobby and passion – it runs through my veins,” concludes Boeram.

HABATA

Kirkwood, Eastern Cape

Habata Boerdery (Pty) Ltd has its origins and head office near Kirkwood in the Sundays River Valley. The company started when Hannes Joubert bought the Habata Farm in 1978. Habata was 40ha in size and with the help of Marié, his wife, Gary Webb, Habata's Production director and Jurgens Steenkamp, Habata's Financial director, the company has grown from small beginnings to the considerable farming entity it is today.

The Habata operations consist of 1 000ha of citrus and 700ha of vegetables and cucurbits in the Eastern and Western Cape provinces of South Africa. In 2015 Habata Boerdery (Pty) Ltd launched an ambitious new development at Robertson in the Western Cape, when they added Le Grand Chasseur Wine Estate to the business. This property has been developed rapidly since then and today Le Grand Chasseur has 220ha of wine grapes, nearly 100ha of table grapes and 60ha of citrus. Habata Boerdery (Pty) Ltd produces citrus and table grapes for the export market and vegetables and wine grapes for the local market. Hannes's brother, Deon Joubert, the manager at Unifrutti in the Sundays River, is also a shareholder in the business.

In his down-to-earth manner Hannes Joubert stressed that he believes that as Gary and Jurgens have been part of the Habata team for many years and that as their contributions to the business have been integral to its success, Habata is not strictly a family business. He added that they assist Habata by keeping the checks and balances in place and that their presence within the management structure adds objectivity to the family farming business. "We started from humble beginnings and it is important to me that we remain humble," says Hannes. "I also strongly believe that farming is a business like any other and I believe that family members need to earn their place in the business in order to keep it sustainable and financially successful."

Hannes grew up in the Steytlerville district where his parents were stock farmers and that farming is part of the family tradition. After school and two years of compulsory military, he started studying agriculture at the University of the Orange Free State in Bloemfontein and completed his degree in 1977, "I arrived in the Sundays River 40 years ago in 1978 and I did several other jobs before I tackled the challenge of farming full time," explains Hannes. Hannes Joubert and his wife Marié Joubert are in their early 60's and are clearly a very close couple who have always operated as a team. "Initially I was very involved in the business," says Marié Joubert. "We started small and times were tough. When Hannes was working elsewhere I worked on the farm for the farming business, while I was teaching at one of the local schools. Today I still help Hannes and as his hobby is also the farm, he is always focussing on the farm and I am his 24 hour-a-day personal assistant," she says with a laugh.

"My mother-in-law had a small piece of ground in the valley and I bailed hay for her and for other people and after this I also worked for a chemical company for a while," says Hannes. "In 1981 I was employed by the Sundays River Citrus Co-operative, first as the Assistant Technical Manager and later as the Technical Manager. I held this job for 15 years. In the early years, Hannes and Marié also tried different kinds of farming, with mixed results. "I bought angora ewes to start farming with angora goats. However, when we sheared them in January that year, they all died. That was when I realized I need to put all my energy

into the farming business as I was not getting ahead trying to do this part-time. It also became clear that the farm needed to be a sizable unit to be sustainable. This was in 1996 when I resigned from SRCC to farm full-time," he explained.

Gary Webb is Habata's Production Director and joined Habata from the outset. "I graduated from Grootfontein Agricultural College, with a diploma in Agricultural Management and was employed by SRCC in 1995 where I spent a year working with Hannes. We got to know each other and soon after he left SRCC, he asked me to join him. I took the opportunity and joined the company. I have been with Habata since the start of the business and we have grown with the business until today." Gary explained that initially they started with melons and with the income from the melons they were able to finance the citrus orchards. Melon production was profitable and Habata still produces melons today. "We stuck it out together from the beginning and did much of the work that needed to be done like digging trenches and installing irrigation systems ourselves," says Gary.

Hannes explained that by 2010 the business was growing rapidly he realised that he needed a full-time financial manager to assist him. "This was when Jurgens Steenkamp joined Habata and he was instrumental in setting up structures for the financial side of the business which have been extremely beneficial as the business has grown rapidly during the past few years," says Hannes.

"I am originally from the Northern Cape and studied at Potchefstroom University cost accounting. I was working within the agricultural sector," says Jurgens. "At the time it was important to establish a good structure and efficient administration for the financial part of the business to be successful and we worked together to implement this for the company's needs. Hannes, Gary and I work closely together and I really enjoy our open communication and the informal working environment." Jurgens added that succession within a business is very important and that when the time comes they will need to find the right people to take over from them as he believes that this is one of the biggest challenges to the continuity of any business.

"Our systems are all in place and I have peace of mind about the future as I know that if something should happen to me, the show can and will go on," says Hannes. "We have capable people who will be able to take the business forward without me."

Hannes elaborated about the couple's children. "We have three children and they all completed tertiary education at the University of Stellenbosch. The eldest is our son Gideon, who is 35 and is the CFO of First Rand Africa. He works full-time within the banking industry and is also a director of Habata."

"The next is our daughter Christie who is 33 and is a qualified accountant. She and her husband Jan Rabie live in Robertson and manage the Western Cape Habata development at Le Grand Chasseur farm near Robertson. Jan is the manager of the development and Christie does the finances and both report to Gary, Jurgens and myself on developments there. In order to expand a farm like we are doing in Robertson you need to be passionate about the business and have the commitment to stay the course for the long-term. To do this we needed reliable, enthusiastic people to tackle a project of this size and we could not have done this without Jan and Christie."



The Habata Team:
STANDING, fltr: John Gatyeni,
Hannes Joubert, Marié Joubert,
Jurgens Steenkamp,
Gideon Joubert,
Jéanine Hattingh,
Pieter-Willem Moolman,
Christie Rabie,
Vikele Madolwana and
Deon Joubert.
FRONT ROW, fltr:
Jan Hendrik Hattingh,
Mlungisi Daniel,
Katlego Phsawana,
Gary Webb and Jan Rabie

“To be part of a family business is truly a blessing and particularly one that is expanding as rapidly as ours is,” says Christie Rabie. “Being involved in something of this scale does not happen to many people and I believe that a large part of the success of this project is my father’s passion for growing the business. I must also commend Jan for his incredible energy and ongoing commitment to the project as well as Gary and Jurgens for their support, so making this happen is indeed a team effort.”

Hannes explained that their youngest daughter Jéanine Hattingh is 31 and has a M.Sc. in Hortology and is married to Jan Hendrik Hattingh. She has been working at SRCC as a technical specialist for three years. “SRCC has a strong technical division and as our business is also a shareholder in SRCC and so through this position she is already making a contribution to our family business. If our business proceeds as we would hope, there should be opportunity for her to join the family business directly in the future. So in different ways, our children are all involved with the farm. We have a lot to be thankful for how our children have all found their niche in life. Many of the problems in family businesses seem to happen when the children do not find their place within the family business.”

Jéanine says that she plans to become involved in the family business in the future. “After graduating, I came to do my practical experience working at SRCC, one of South Africa’s biggest citrus exporters, and have been working

there for three years now. It was important for me to work for an organisation that provided me with the opportunity to get first hand practical experience as well as exposure to innovation and technology that will be helpful my career and the family business. This has been very rewarding as they have a strong technical division and I am learning a great deal of skills within the workplace. Habata is one of the farms to which I consult so there is a symbiotic relationship between SRCC and Habata. So, besides being a shareholder in our family business, through this process I am actually already involved in the farming business,” she explained.

Habata has a permanent staff of more than 230 across its Eastern and Western Cape businesses. “Empowerment is not something we practice to showcase, it is simply part of our operation practices and I believe strongly in mentorship and delegation,” says Hannes. “John Gatyeni started as a picker on the farm and today he is a Production Manager at Habata. We also have black managers working for Habata as well.”

Hannes Joubert is truly humble and ascribes the success of the business to the Grace of God. The name Habata came from the farm’s previous owner who was a soldier with the Allies in North Africa and whose life was saved by finding an oasis in the desert which was called Habata. Hannes explained he kept the name because he liked the story and that Habata had indeed proved to be a giver of life and success to the Joubert family, their management, staff and broader community.

NOMZAMO FARM

Kirkwood, Eastern Cape



The Team at Nomzamo, fltr: Nomsamo Stock Farmer's Association Beneficiary and Trust Chairman Butisi William January with fellow beneficiaries and trustees Phikisile and Monoyi Nontshinga and Nomzamo farm manager Simphiwe Yawa.

Nomzamo Farm is near Kirkwood in the Sundays River Valley and is officially known as the Nomzamo Stock Farmers' Association. Despite this 800ha farm's troubled history, with some much needed financial assistance and mentorship from local commercial farmer Dr Hennie Ehlers and recent government assistance, things are looking up for Nomzamo with some excellent future prospects.

At Nomzamo Farm I met Simphiwe Yawa, who is very dedicated manager of the farming operation, and his father Butisi William January, who is one of the beneficiaries as well as the chairman of the Nomzamo Stock Farmers' Association Trust. With them were brothers and fellow beneficiaries Phikisile and trustees Monoyi Nontshinga. Between them they outlined the farm's history.

Nomzamo Stock Farmers' Association was one of the first farms in South Africa to be empowered. This was in 1996 and at the time this was a cattle farm. This initiative was funded by the government's LRAD funding scheme. The individual R15 000 LRAD grants of 94 beneficiaries were combined to purchase the farm in the name of the Nomzamo Stock Farmers' Association Trust.

The wisdom of the method used for this land reform project is questionable as the individuals who were chosen as the beneficiaries were not affiliated to each other in any way and many of them did not even know each other. Nonetheless the farm was purchased and became the ownership of the Nomzamo Stock Farmers' Association Trust, a group of people who did not know each other or

have anything in common. It was therefore not surprising that as a result of poor management, the farm's business collapsed within two years and for ten years the farm did not operate. Even though there was no farming activity, the property was running up electricity, water and property tax debts.

In 2005 the beneficiaries of the trust elected new trustees. Soon after that they were contacted by the Department of Agriculture (DAFF) and were told that they had 14 days to get involved in making plans to develop the farm or the farm would be taken back by DAFF in order to pay the debts to Eskom and the Sundays River Water Users' Association.

"In 2005 when we received this notification, we spoke to Dr Hennie Ehlers, one of the farmers in our area and asked him if he could help us," explained Butisi William January. "He agreed to help us and has been mentoring us since then. The mentorship has now been ongoing for 14 years and with his help and guidance we managed to keep the farm." Although the trust started with 94 beneficiaries, the number of beneficiaries has dwindled over time and today there are only 41 beneficiaries.

Dr Hennie Ehlers is the owner of 2Rivers Farm and 2Rivers pack house near Kirkwood. 2Rivers Farm has 300ha of citrus and Dr Ehlers and his two sons run the farming operation and pack house together. "When the group from Nomzamo came to see me to ask me if I could help them, they were truly in a bad situation," says Dr Ehlers. "I advised them to sell a section of their property to pay off their debts. They took this advice and sold off 9ha of the farm to cover outstanding debts."

Butisi also explained that on 27 May 2005 the Nomzamo Stock Farmers' Association Trust beneficiaries agreed to plant citrus trees but it took a while before they could do this as they had several challenges. "The total size of the farm is 800ha and we had the ability to plant 120 hectares in total. After Dr Ehlers started mentoring us, in his private capacity he provided us with the capital (R420 000) to plant our first 7.4 ha of Eureka lemons in 2008. He has made it possible for us to pay back this loan to him over time."

Dr Ehlers says that he invested in Nomzamo and helped them to plant their first citrus as they needed the funds to get ahead. He added that this injection of capital has really made a big difference to them and two years ago they were able to buy a bakkie for the farm with their funds. The financial contribution and mentorship from Dr Ehlers is clearly making a difference to Nomzamo and assisting them has had benefits for 2Rivers as well as this assists with the BEE scorecard of the business.

"After we planted the first 7.4 ha of citrus with the help of Dr Ehlers, we have since planted a further 5ha and in total we now have 12.4ha of citrus," explains Nomzamo manager Simphiwe Yawa. "When we planted the first citrus the Department of Agriculture provided us with the irrigation system for our orchards, fencing, chemical sprays and have also helped us subsequently with inputs."

The roomy newly constructed shed on Nomzamo Farm was part of a R1.4 million grant from the Department of Agriculture. The department of Land Affairs donated two large tractors for communal use to a group of emerging farmers in the area including Nomzamo. The tractors are stored in the shed at Nomzamo.

Nomzamo planted a further 5ha of citrus trees, Genoa Lemons during 2018. The Department of Agriculture funded the agreement and made R9 million available to citrus growers in the Eastern Cape's western Region. This fund is being managed by the CGA's Grower Development Company. This fund covered the cost of purchasing the trees as well as the cost of the soil preparation and irrigation system.

Dr Ehlers explained that as Nomzamo Stock Farmers has 800ha of land, a new development of a further 80ha of citrus has been identified on this property. He added that the local Sundays River Water Users' Association has allocated 3000ha of water for empowerment farming operations in the Sundays River Valley and these water allocations have not been claimed. The 80ha of water that has been applied for on behalf of Nomzamo forms part of this allotment.

"In 2017 the Department of Agriculture did soil testing on our farm to determine whether the soil on this part of the farm is suitable for planting citrus. This is expected to be followed by formal Environmental Impact Assessments," explained Simphiwe. "We want our new development to have a different ownership structure. Together with Dr Ehlers as our mentor, we are currently in negotiations with lawyers to change

the current structure. The trust will be a shareholder in the new portion and we will have A and B shareholders."

Dr Ehlers and a group of partners are currently working on establishing an ambitious and exciting Black Empowerment partnership of 290ha citrus farming business. This project is applying for empowerment water rights from the Sundays River Water Users Association and, along with other beneficiaries in the community, will also involve the Nomzamo Stock Farmers' Association Trust. This project, called Kariega Citrus Pty Ltd., has just been approved and the first land clearing started at the end of January 2019.

Butisi William January is a beneficiary of the Nomzamo Stock Farmers Association. He is a municipal manager in Kirkwood and has worked hard at keeping the dream of developing Nomzamo alive from when he and his fellow beneficiaries received the property in 1996.

Simphiwe is the son of Butisi William January. "Growing up I loved the farm life and lifestyle and when I was 13 years old, I was already helping my father and worked hard, assisting him to plant, grow and irrigate vegetables," says Simphiwe. He matriculated from Moses Madhiba High School in 2008 and following that he attended Midlands College in Uitenhage and completed a 3 year diploma course in Electrical Engineering.

"After I had finished studying, I wanted to open a business and so I owned and managed a bottle store in Cookhouse for 3 years. During this time my father begged me to come back and join the farm and I have been employed by the farm since 2016 and was appointed formally as the manager of Nomzamo Farm in July 2018. I am extremely grateful to CRI for the study groups that have taught me about citrus production. This is invaluable practical training as this plays a huge role in advising us. I will soon be attending the Citrus Academy Short Course that will be offered in the Sundays River area."

"I grew up on the farm and realise that this is a long-term business that requires full-time and long term commitment," says Butisi William January. "Simphiwe was hired here on the farm based on merit. Young people are vital for the future of our business. There are other youngsters who are the children of beneficiaries and there is opportunity for them on our farm. We are very grateful to Dr Ehlers for his faith in us and his committed and ongoing support. We are also very grateful to the Department of Agriculture for their assistance."

SIMUNYE WORKERS' TRUST, SITRUSRAND

Kirkwood, Eastern Cape

Pieter Nortje is the owner of Sitrusrand Boerdery near Kirkwood. When asked about Succession in the farming business, he stressed that the succession within the business for the employees of Sitrusrand was of considerable importance to him and discussed the success and future of succession of Simunye Citrus, which is partly owned by the Simunye Workers' Trust, the trust which belongs to the employees of Sitrusrand Boerdery.

Pieter explained that although he had long realised the importance of starting an initiative for the empowerment of the Sitrusrand employees, deciding how to tackle this successfully presented a challenge. "In 2005 I started looking for the ideal effective empowerment project. I spent years investigating many different types of projects including government funded empowerment projects and in the end decided to design an empowerment project suitable for our circumstances. I worked with Price Waterhouse Coopers and in 2012 Sitrusrand Boerdery established the Simunye Workers' Trust, which was specifically for workers who had been working for Sitrusrand Boerdery for 10 years or more. This included seasonal pack house workers as well as the permanent workforce."

The final composition was 94 people, 52 black women and 42 were black men. Simunye means We Are One. Sitrusrand identified a suitable farming unit at Addo to purchase and the Simunye Workers' Trust acquired 30% and Sitrusrand Boerdery owned the balance of 70% of the farm Simunye Citrus. In order to purchase their share, Sitrusrand Boerdery lent the Simunye Workers' Trust the capital to buy their 30% share in the property. Sitrusrand Boerdery operates and manages the Simunye Citrus farm and the trust's loan is being repaid by the trust over 10 years from their income from the farm.

The beneficiaries of the Simunye Workers' Trust are still employed by Sitrusrand Boerdery and able to continue with their jobs. The beneficiaries of the Trust also receive annual dividends based on the annual profits of the farm. It has been fortunate that the value of the dividends has been able to grow each year and the value of each share has already doubled since the trust was established. The size of this farming unit is 115ha and at the time the farm was bought it had 60ha planted with citrus. Since then the number of orchards has been expanded and the farm currently has 92ha of citrus. Pieter pointed out that while in theory the value of the farm has also more than doubled since then, the value of their shares is clearly determined by the price of land. He added that the current insecurity with regards to the expropriation without compensation debate and its possible consequences hold the potential to impact directly on the value of land and could thus also have a negative effect on the value of the Simunye Workers' Trust shares.

"We took time to set up the Conditions details of the Trust," explained Pieter. Each of the beneficiaries were able to nominate a personal specified next-of-kin beneficiary. Thus when the trust's beneficiary resigns or retires from Sitrusrand Boerdery or passes away, they or their nominated next-of-kin beneficiary will be paid out the value of their share. This was designed specifically to provide the benefit to the individual employees who had worked for Sitrusrand Boerdery for many years. To date four people have passed away and their shares have been successfully paid out to their designated next-of-kin beneficiaries. As these processes were completed successfully, this has created further trust amongst the beneficiaries.

Pieter explained that when beneficiaries leave, they are also introducing new people who qualify in terms of the criteria into the trust and this prevents the number of beneficiaries from dwindling. Time has moved on and there are now a number of other employees who have reached 10 years of service. In response Sitrusrand has now established Simunye 2. "These people will be incorporated into Simunye 2 and I plan to sell 20% of the current 70% Sitrusrand Boerdery shareholding in this farm to Simunye 2. Then the combined Simunye and Simunye 2 will then own 50% of the Simunye Trust Farming Unit. This is how we plan to grow the Simunye Workers' Trust from here onwards. Simunye 2 has already been established

and will be incorporated in the next financial year. In the future we might extend this to a Simunye 3," says Pieter.

A larger part of the success of the project lies in the fact that Simunye Citrus (Pty) Ltd is an integrated part of Sitrusrand Boerdery and is farmed in as part of the Sitrusrand Boerdery farming operation. Simunye Citrus thus has the full benefit of the Sitrusrand infrastructure, management services and expertise, and their fruit is packed in the state-of-the-art Sitrusrand Boerdery packhouse and through the packing and marketing process, they have access to the same choice export markets as Sitrusrand Boerdery. These benefits are advantageous for the returns for Simunye Citrus.

Cynthia Yawa and Linda Swartlaand are beneficiaries and trustees of the Simunye Workers' Trust and are junior packhouse managers in the Sitrusrand pack house. "We really appreciate the opportunity that Simunye Workers' Trust provides for us as the additional income has made a huge difference to our lives," says Linda Swartland (44). "We are able to pay our children's school fees and we can also send them for tertiary education. I was able to send my daughter Nwabisa Zenani to college and she has just completed her business management at the College in Uitenhage. I have also been able to extend my house," says Linda with a smile. "We earn well through Simunye Trust and I have been able to extend my house," says Cynthia Yawa (52). The income from Simunye has made it possible for my daughter Thandiswa Yawa to study education in order to become qualified as a teacher through UNISA (University of South Africa) at Green Acres in Port Elizabeth. This really means a great deal to us."

They explained that as trustees they are the link between Simunye Workers' Trust and Sitrusrand Boerdery and that it is their job to ensure good communication and understanding between these two entities. "We are extremely proud of Simunye Citrus and enjoy visiting the farm from time to time when we have the opportunity to do so," says Linda. "Since we took over the farm, it has been extended with soft citrus and lemons. The trees have

matured already and are now all in production and bearing well. Our farm produces oranges, lemons and soft citrus and we are proud and excited when the fruit from our farm comes into the pack house for packing. We are extremely grateful and thankful for this opportunity. Every year we receive our dividends. We are proud of our employer Pieter Nortje and we really hope that God will spare his life for many years to come.”

Nathan Koeberg (34), is the manager on the Simunye Boerdery and is also a beneficiary and trustee of the Simunye Workers’ Trust. “I am originally from Graaff Reinet and I studied at the Central University of Technology in Bloemfontein where I completed a Diploma in Agriculture,” says Nathan. “For my in service training I was placed at Simunye Citrus in 2011 and following this I was employed permanently by Simunye Citrus. It is a big responsibility to be a production manager and this job was a huge step for me as I was concerned about whether I would manage alone. Initially it was a big adjustment but as I have been very well supported, I have had the opportunity to prove myself and am coping well with the responsibilities. I am very happy in my job and I am planning to get married soon. I want to thank Pieter Nortje for his faith in me and for giving me the chance.”

Simunye Citrus has three permanent employees, 23 casual employees and 70 seasonal employees. “We do not have any problems with our people or with the structure of the trust or the farm’s ownership,” says Nathan. “As a beneficiary of the trust my share is also growing and this will provide a nest egg for my family in the future,” he concluded.

Photo Caption: Simunye Citrus manager Nathan Koeberg, Citrusrand owner Pieter Nortje and Cynthia Yawa and Linda Swartland, who are both beneficiaries as well as trustees of the Simunye Workers’ Trust in front of one of Citrusrand Boerdery’s branded trucks.

Right: Simunye Workers’ Trust, Citrusrand - fltr: Simunye Citrus manager Nathan Koeberg, Pieter Nortje of Citrusrand, Cynthia Yawa and Linda Swartlaand, beneficiaries and trustees of the Simunye Workers’ Trust.



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The preparation for this publication required me to approach citrus growers throughout South Africa and ask them some very probing questions about business and family and at times I approached interviews with some level of apprehension regarding the possible responses. Fortunately my concerns were unfounded as everywhere I went, I was well received, entertained and regularly regaled with some of the most interesting and unlikely stories!

Compiling this publications about family businesses in the South African Citrus industry has been a fascinating and adventurous journey through South Africa's citrus production regions. I would like to thank each of the growers that welcomed me on their farms and took the time to share their varied and remarkable stories with me. It has truly been a privilege.

The overwhelming impression that this experience has again highlighted is the incredible resilience of South African farmers in the face of considerable current challenges. This resilience is not new and is part of the farming tradition. It is also what has made it possible for farmers to pass farming businesses from one generation to the next. This well established trait is embodied in the much favoured Afrikaans expression "*n Boer Maak 'n plan*", which means farmers are resourceful, and yes, they certainly are!

During the travels for some the interviews contained in this publication I was accompanied by Grower Development Company Extension Officers Melton Mulaudzi in the Eastern Cape and Andrew Mbedzi in Limpopo and I am very grateful to them for their assistance, patience, driving and good company on the road.

It remains a pleasure and privilege to compile these collections of interviews on behalf of the citrus industry and I would like to thank CGA for entrusting me with this memorable assignment.



Louise Brodie is a freelance photojournalist who reports on the South African Fresh Produce Sector for South African and international publications. This is her seventh publication commissioned by CGA