

SUCCESSION

STORIES



Radley Estate

The Radley family has been farming on the outskirts of Malelane in Mpumalanga since 1943, when Radley Estate was founded by William Scott Radley. By Tanya Ungerer (adapted from Louise Brodie's Stories of succession in the citrus industry publication of 2019)

Above: The Radley family of Radley Estate, from left: Wilscott, Henning Nerine, Henno and Rénard Radley Opposite: The Radley Estate entrance

William Scott Radley and his wife were both teachers and 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 into a large farming business that produces citrus, mangoes and sugar cane.

While the farming business is being managed by their sons Henno, Rénald and Wilscott Radley – the third generation on the farm – Henning and Nerine still live on the farm and remain involved in the business to some extent. Two of their daughters and their families also live on the farm, while the third daughter lives in Pretoria with her family. They have 20 grandchildren.

There is currently 615 ha of sugar cane, 90 ha of citrus and 30 ha of mangoes planted, while the rest of the 1945 ha of infertile land is used for a Nguni stud farming business, and a small game farm. Each son is responsible for a division – Henno for the citrus, Rénald for

mangoes and Wilscott for sugar cane.

Until the mid-1980s the Radley family farmed mostly with cattle and some sugar cane. From when Henning started farming, he has continued to expand the farming business by buying adjoining land from neighbours. Over the last few years they have expanded their farming business property with 150 ha of adjoining arable land.

"My experience with my own siblings that were not interested in farming, 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 to ensure that all the children are compensated for in the family business.

"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."

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, each taking 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. Working together as a family unit has attributed to the success of the farm.

Between the three brothers they have 12 children and, as part of future planning, they established a family constitution to set guidelines for the potential involvement of 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

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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 realise that if they

all want to remain involved in the business, it needs to grow to sustain their families, both currently and into the future. In order to add value to the value chain, they are considering marketing their own product and diversifying beyond the agricultural sector by possibly expanding into the eco-tourism market.

Rénald says that the success of their business depends on a skilled workforce and it is important that their workers' spiritual well-being is looked after. The relationship with their workers is based on Christian principles and values and they also offer a life skills training course through ELI (Ethical Leadership Institute) about value systems, which they often refer back to. He further states: "We have followed this up with subsequent life skills courses that also connect with this."

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 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 a 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. They are also proactively conserving the wildlife on their property.

Henno concludes that their citrus is packed and marketed by Malelane Citrus Koöperasie (MSK), – the oldest citrus co-operative in the country – with them as shareholders and board members.