

“Opinion is the medium between knowledge and ignorance” Plato

CITRUS LEGEND – KALLIE SCHOEMAN

Kallie started farming lettuce, tomatoes, cabbages and beetroot on 10 hectares of land back in 1974. Soon thereafter, at the age of 24, he was appointed Managing Director of the family farming business – a business that had been in existence since 1919. Kallie realized the importance of focus, and decided to concentrate on citrus as a replacement for table grapes – a bold step when his grandfather had been called the father of soft fruit of the Transvaal.

He has built the business to 10 times the size that he started with in 1978 – and in the process, diversified into downstream and upstream value-added businesses. He is now the Group CEO of one of South Africa’s biggest family farming concerns. This concern now farms with 1 500 hectares of citrus, 9 500 hectares of maize, soya beans and white beans in the Highveld region, and 1 700 hectares of wheat, maize, beans and pecan nuts in the Northern Cape. The farming group has 24 maize and soya silos with a capacity of 52 800 tons – providing storage, sifting and drying of these grains. In addition, to control input prices the group has invested in the fertilizer sector.

Kallie has been a leader in organised agriculture – in the grain and citrus industry. He served for ten years on the Grain SA Board, and received the Goue Graan Toekening in recognition of his leadership at that institution. In the citrus industry Kallie was a driver of Outspan’s success and was the last Chairman of Outspan International when it was wound up in 2009 – in his final speech he lauded Outspan for building an enormously strong foundation for the South African citrus industry.

He has received many accolades over his farming years – included the Agricultural Writers of South Africa Farmer of the Year award in 1991.

Kallie believes in family and community. He has addressed many audiences on how to manage family farming, succession and expectations. He has a novel approach to upliftment, an approach that requires the beneficiary to earn the benefits. Dry, white beans is a big part of his business – his business model of contract farmers is a blueprint that should be used by other industries. Kallie probably has to answer for some of the methane gas emissions in South Africa – as he provides 60% of the beans used by Koo in their canned baked beans. During difficult times he and his family have donated maize meal mixed with beans to the needy.

Kallie has diplomacy running through his veins – in December 1986 his father was, for a short while, Acting President of the republic of South Africa, his father also served as Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Transport of the Republic. His ability to tell it like it is without alienating the recipient is testimony to his diplomacy. Normally delivered with a sense of humor and a twinkle in his eye – he has often spoken truth to power. Kallie loves his quotes and clichés. When opening the CRI Citrus Symposium, he finished with the quote “Get bigger, get better or get out”, in an interview he stated that “if people lead, government will follow” and the farming group mission is to be “as good as the best, and better than most”. He believes he was destined to farm as his name means “bewerker van die grond”.