

A learner's paradise

by Fidelis Zvomuya

The Fort Hare Dairy Trust is flanked by a herd of 800 beautiful, well-kept dairy cows and a magnificent state-of-the-art cow shelter. This project has become a blue chip and the pride of the small university town of Alice in South Africa's Eastern Cape.

With its pristine green fields, this project has become South Africa's celebrated commercial farmer-driven mentorship programme. Several young people in overalls hosing down parlours, treating animals, taking care of the fields or feeding calves, is one of the characteristics of this Garden of Eden, where milk is flowing from the green fields.

Watching the grass grow

It is in this paradise that Nkuliseni Leonard Mavhungu prefers to stay and watch the grass grow. This might seem dull and boring for a youngster, but for Mavhungu this has a significant meaning: "In my view, cows turn grass into milk. The richer and more abundant the grass, the richer and more abundant the milk is going to be. And this is what I like most," he said.

He keeps close track of the content of the grass in his pastures, precisely measuring its protein and sugar content and producing computer charts that track how much is left to feed his cows through winter.

"A healthy cow always gives you the best milk. Feeding them and making sure they are healthy, is the only medicine for a successful dairy production business," he said.

It starts with the pastures

"We use a combination of high-quality pasture, supplemental, stored and purchased feedstuffs. Optimising dry matter intake and maintaining normal rumen function is a priority we also monitor closely," he said.

A pasture, Mavhungu explained, is "a complex inter-relationship of plant, temperature, light, soil, organisms, nutrients, water, and livestock that make the pasture a continually changing ecosystem.

"Pastures are the foundation of sustainable dairy production. We best maintain ours here by developing a grazing system or plan that conserves the soil and plant resources, while maximising productivity within the natural limits of the particular ecology of the farm."

On the right is Nkuliseni Leonard Mavhugu, manager of the Fort Hare Dairy Trust's farm just outside Alice in the Eastern Cape



"This," Mavhungu said, "is where the success of milk production at the farm begins – the pastures."

This knowledge, which he is now proud to share with anyone in South Africa, is as a result of an extensive mentorship programme he went through with some white commercial farmers who are part of Amadlelo Agri, an empowerment company that manages the Fort Hare Dairy Trust.

The partnership

The trust was initiated from a partnership between 70 white commercial dairy farmers from the Tsitsikamma and Underberg areas through Amadlelo Agri and the University of Fort Hare. It has become a shining symbol of how successful land reform could be through the provision of skills training and resources.

“We have had all the privileges.

We have to share what we know and what we have”

"We met in 2004 and came to the conclusion that land empowerment is not purely the responsibility of the government," said Amadlelo Agri chief executive, Jeff Every. "If land reform is to take place properly, white farmers have to play a role in providing training and resources. We have had all the privileges. We have to share what we know and what we have."

The farmers signed on an empowerment company, Vuwa Investments, which was given a 35% stake in Amadlelo. They retained 49% of the shares and the rest was shared among the 600 workers of the 70 dairy farmers.

Solid financial support

"I met with the agricultural department of the University of Fort Hare to discuss our plan. The university offered to contribute research and scientific knowledge to the farm and donated R2 million towards the project. It also offered a piece of land outside town, which it owned by the department of agriculture," Every said.

A further R5 million was received from Amadlelo and two amounts of R7,5 million in equity and R7,5 million credit from the Land Bank, were also obtained.

When Mavhungu arrived at the farm in February 2007, it was a bush thriving with trees. "I was not confident that I was going to make it. I started by cutting down trees," he explained. "I owe my success to Amadlelo Agri's two-year farming internship programme. I was deployed to some of South Africa's top pasture and dairy farms. There I learned a lot with regard to practical technical skills, which includes hay production, animal management and husbandry, milking, herd management and the product.

"I must say, it was the hardest I've ever worked for free, but somehow I really didn't mind. I knew that the knowledge I was gaining, was priceless," he said.

Getting the job done

"Back in the Eastern Cape, I got to work straight away. I chopped out the bushes, dug trenches, laid irrigation pipes, built cattle enclosures, erected fences and to service tractors.

"My wife and daughter were with me. They helped too. I was given a few implements to work with and hired some labourers. It was tough and I learned as I went along. You cannot do this job if you don't have a passion for farming," he said.

Mavhungu was in constant consultation with his mentors for advice. At the beginning of October that same year, Mavhungu was milking cows, turning it into a commercial dairy farm and mentorship institution.

The 800-cow rotary parlour produces around 10 000 l of milk per day. A large portion of this milk is supplied to Clover.

"The animals on this farm require 600 tonnes of maize per year. From the piece of land given to us on lease by the University of Fort Hare, I produce maize for silage and source some from farmers in the area," he said.

Today, cows at the farm cost less to feed and yield more milk solids, making them more profitable. The Fort Hare Dairy Trust is already economically viable. And if that isn't enough, its success has seen the birth of three other projects, Middeldrift Dairy Farm, the Keiskamma Irrigation Scheme and the Ncera Macadamia project.

Middeldrift magic

One of the first student graduates from the trust, 22-year-old Jeanet Nyeleti Rhokhotso, is now managing Middeldrift, which began operating in November 2008. This project was funded through a R9,9 million grant from the National Empowerment Fund and a further R8,2 million provided by Amadlelo Agri.

Middeldrift has already transformed itself into a full-fledged commercial dairy farm. The Gwebindla Trust, made up of 65 families from the Middeldrift community, provided the 280 ha.

"We have 600 cows on this farm and our current production is 1,2 million litres of milk per year. Our target is to produce more than 3,8 million litres," said Rhokhotso.

The project is meant to redress some of the imbalances created by the land redistribution programme. So far, 16 permanent workers from the community are employed at the farm and the milk they produce goes to Clover.

Middeldrift Dairy was officially opened on 5 March this year by rural development and land reform minister, Gugile Nkwinti, who described the empowerment partnership as having played an important role in deracialising the rural economy and nurturing cross-racial unity.



The herd at Middeldrift Dairy Farm

The work doesn't stop

"It has never been easy," said Rhokhotso. "We are up at 04:30 for the first milking and we only finish up at around eight in the evening. If it weren't for the training I received at the Fort Hare Dairy Trust, I probably would not have been able to cope."

The Keiskamma Irrigation Scheme is attempting to resuscitate 600 ha of farmland, and to eventually assist in milking 2 000 cows. The Ncera Macadamia project aims to be a 300 ha farm, which will have significant employment capacity.

Meanwhile Middeldrift has been chosen by CenDel, the Milk Producers' Organisation's Centre for Producer Development, to be the supplier of 3 000 portions of 250 ml milk per school day to schools that the provincial department of education will identify.

Dr Nico Schutte, managing director of CenDel, said the reason why they chose Middeldrift, was based on the professional management of the project. **TDM**

Windturbines is die
antwoord op hoë water-
pompkragekenings

Wen met windkrag

deur Liza Burger

**Alternatiewe energie kan net sowel outydse energie heet.
Die wind wat eeue lank al windmeulens in Nederland draai en
die windpompe van die Vrystaatse vlaktes tot in Amerika laat tjier-tjier,
waaï steeds en word nou in die moderne era 'herontdek'.**

Van die enorme windturbines in die Noordsee tot die kleiner reuse wat buite Darling draai – windkrag is terug met 'n gejuig.

'n Paar haakplekke is daar natuurlik – die prys van hierdie turbines is relatief hoog en saam met instandhouding en die onbetroubaarheid van hierdie energiebron, is nie almal ewe gemaklik met die idee van windkrag as die antwoord op die gulsige wêreld se dors na energie nie.

Maar wat van jou eie plaas? Kan jy effektief belê in windkrag en gouer – eerder as later – munt slaan uit hierdie gratis bron van energie?

Hannes Cilliers van Bloekomlaan Boerdery, 30 km wes van Humansdorp, is 'n melkboer wat die kans aangegryp het om die ewige wind op sy plaas tot sy voordeel aan te wend. Hy het onlangs 'n tweede windturbine op sy plaas opgerig en die projek blyk reeds vrugte af te werp.

Die twee Kestrel Eveready-windturbines, onderskeidelik 1 kW en 3 kW sterk, is weliswaar nie die reusagtige kragopwekkers wat op windplase gesien word nie. Dit lyk eerder na nuwerwetse windpompe. Een van die groot verskille is dat die windkrag nie direk meganies aangewend word nie.

“Die windturbines wek krag op wat die Grundfos-pompe, wat met wisselstroom werk, van krag voorsien om water te pomp. Hierdie stelsel het nie ’n batterybank nie, dus loop die pomp stadiger as die wind sagter waai en ook andersom. Die turbines kan in stormsterk wind funksioneer en pomp dan water teen die maksimum kapasiteit,” verduidelik Hannes.

Sy plaas is tipies van die Oos-Kaapse melkweg, waar groot kuddes vanaf weidings melk produseer:

Die plaas het 30 werknemers en is ongeveer 1 000 ha groot met aangeplante weidings, waarvan 160 ha met opvangreënwater onder besproeiing is. Die melkkudde is sowat 1 000 koeie sterk en in sy melkstal staan ’n 80-punt-draaitafel vanwaar om en by 5 miljoen liter melk per jaar geproduseer word.

Om hierdie hoeveelheid melk te produseer, is natuurlik ook ’n hele paar miljoen liter water nodig.

“Ons benodig daaglik 150 000 liter water vir mens en dier. In die verlede het ek Eskom-krag gebruik om water te pomp en dit het my sowat R4 000 per maand gekos,” sê Hannes.

“Met die ligging van die windturbines en boorgate bespaar ons verder as gevolg van gravitasiedruk om pomponkoste tot die minimum te beperk. Ons bespaar so te sê alle pomp-onkoste danksy windkrag om boorgatwater aan die plaas te voorsien. Wanneer nodig, kan ek nou ook bepaal wanneer elektriese pompe aangeskakel moet word, soos oor naweke wanneer krag goedkoper is. Eskom word hierdeur bevoordeel omdat ons minder krag gebruik in piektye.” Volgens Hannes is die plan om uiteindelik so onafhanklik moontlik van Eskom te wees deur die gebruik van son- en windkrag.

Die Kestrel Eveready-windturbines wat Hannes gekies het om hierdie plan te bewaarheid is in Port Elizabeth vervaardig. Onderdele, diens en advies is dus nooit ver nie en Hannes is veral beïndruk met die gehaltdiens van sy verskaffer:

“Die kapitale uitleg was R200 000 vir beide windturbines en word oor 60 maande afbetaal, terwyl die verskaffer die turbines onderhou.

“Die maandelikse paaiemente is tans gelykstaande aan dit wat ek aan Eskom sou betaal, maar wanneer dit afbetaal is, sal ons verniet water pomp. Die enigste onkoste sal onderhoud wees. Gelukkig is die geraamde leeftyd van turbines sowat 20 jaar. Die windturbines hou ook baie meer voordele in as windpompe, is makliker om in stand te hou en lewer ook meer water in dieselfde tyd,” sê Hannes.

“My plaas is reeds ’n bewys dat alternatiewe krag lonend en moontlik is”

Hy is egter positief oor toekomstige voordele. “Sodra Eskom en die regering besluit aan wie en hoe hulle lisensies gaan uitreik, sal ons hopelik alternatiewe krag aan Eskom se kragnetwerk kan verkoop. Wanneer dit gebeur, kan ons onmiddellik begin om ons alternatiewe kragbronne ten volle te benut.

“My plaas is reeds ’n bewys dat alternatiewe krag lonend en moontlik is. Ek wag in spanning om te hoor wat Eskom en die regering se besluit is.”

Windkrag is ongelukkig nie elke plaas se antwoord op goedkoper krag nie. Hannes raai aan dat ander boere wat windturbines oorweeg, eers ’n kundige moet konsulteer oor die ligging van die plaas, gemiddelde windspoed en of dit lonend sal wees om turbines op te rig.

Boere met vrae oor Hannes Cilliers se projek kan hom e-pos by hannesc@igen.co.za. **TDM**

Taurie in Europa

Taurie se genomiese en BLUP-ontleding in Europa is aansienlik hoër met die Euro Genomics-projek. Die vorige ontleding is vergelyk met 'n 2000-bul-Franse verwysingspopulasie.

Met die nuwe Euro Genomics-projek, is Taurie en Praudboy vergelyk met 4 000 Franse en nog 12 000 Europese bulle wat die verwysing baie wyer en meer akkuraat maak, asook addisionele eienskappe toets. Taurie se melk is op van +1 346 kg na +2 020 kg melk (75% betroubaar) en sy ISS (Franse indeks) van 142 na 159. Hierdie sprong maak Taurie een van die topgenomies beproefde bulle in die wêreld.

Nuwe eienskappe beskikbaar is:

- Langslewendheid + 0,5
- Kalwingsgemak 89 (gemiddelde grootte)
- Dogters se kalwingsgemak 89
- Kalflewensvatbaarheid 92
- Lewensvatbaarheid van dogters se kalwers 94

Telers moet Taurie gebruik om geneties vooruit te kom.

Holstein proofs

It was all good news in the biannual index release from the ARC. **Nokia** remains at the top of the rankings by increasing his milk proof with another 200 kg. He now has 94 daughters, plus another 31 with records in progress.

Rudolph 10 improved his daughter fertility to a breed-leading -18 and herds looking for udders, calving ease and management traits should grab the last 3 000 doses available.

The best new bull is **Justice**, the Wizard from the Puttergill's National Champion, Justine. He combines high production (+494 kg) with great management traits, especially udder health (+3,07). He is the trait leader for heel depth and breeds much better type than his sire.

Cook improved his analysis to +590 kg milk. This red-carrier also excels in udder health, calving ease and rear udders and improves rump angle. **Killer** is a new bull for pasture farmers wanting to improve percentage of milk and solids. He is a Pericles from the Holim Kim family that has produced most of the top pasture sires in the world. This test run has again proven that these top sires are in the same league as the best of Holstein world, but also the reliability, with second crop performance, of Rudolph 10 and Dusty. It also added top new sires, which will improve the breed in the future.



Braveheart longevity

Braveheart's great-granddam, Macneil 97011, is 13 years old, has borne 11 natural calves and was recently crowned Best Udder at the Royal Show. The judge specifically commented on her fantastic udder at 13 years of age. **TDM**

Downer Cow Support

Die "Cow-Jack" in die volgende opsigte:

- "Cow-Jack" help gerig om enige siek, verswakte of beseerde dier met die minste arbeid, tydsbesteding en vermindering van verdere besering, op die been te kry.
- Dit is maklik en veilig om te gebruik en baie duursaam.
- Geen elektrisiteit (kompresor) is nodig om dit op te stel nie. Dit kan met die uitlaatgasse van 'n voertuig opgestel word.



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Robyn with a mark 2 daughter at Ethada

Taurus personnel

Robyn Scheepers has been the semen consultant for Gauteng and surrounding areas, for the past two years. She has a masters degree in animal science from the University of Pretoria, specialising in gene markers in milk. She lectures on Taurus' use of genomic testing at this year's IDT information days. Robyn can be contacted on 071 680 3335. **TDM**



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Tel 021 905 0225, fax 021 905 0224 or visit our website www.semex.com **TDM**



Financial Manager

Meadow feeds Port Elizabeth

Kelly-Ann Schooling was born in Port Elizabeth and schooled at Alexander Road High School. She completed her Bachelor of Commerce (accounting) honours in December 2003 after which she passed Part I of the PAAB board in March 2006. Soon after that, she completed her articles at PKF International. She is married and has a son. **TDM**



Kelly-Ann Schooling

Ontmoet Dawid van Rovic & Leers

Dawid is in Johannesburg gesetel wat dit maklik maak om sy markte te bedien per pad of per lug. Hy is verantwoordelik vir die hele Suider-Afrika en is betrokke in Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mosambiek, Zambië, DRK, Kenia, Tanzanië en ander. Hy is verantwoordelik vir bemerking en tegnies. As hy tegnies nie kan help nie, het Rovic & Leers 'n tegniese span wat gereed staan in Johannesburg om die naverkopediens te doen.



Dawid Lombard

Dawid is beskikbaar by 011 396 6200, 078 119 4366 of dawidl@rovicleers.co.za. **TDM**

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Schoongezicht Jace Lass is the reigning South African National Champion, described by judge Larry Schirm as a dynamic cow with tremendous power; Lass is pictured late in her 4th lactation, she has excellent production records and sons in local AI.



- 1 Schoongezicht Jace Lass
- 2 Schoongezicht Action Snowlindy

Pictured above is Schoongezicht Action Snowlindy; just fresh in her third lactation she is the number 1 SAINET cow in South Africa. Congratulations to their owner Tienie Durr of Preekstool Jerseys, Western Cape. **TDM**



Nuut by AFGRI

Mario Marais is aangestel as tegniese adviseur van AFGRI Veevoere in die Cradock-gebied (Oos-Kaap). Vir enige veevoernavrae kan Mario geskakel word by 082 854 5110 of e-pos mario.marais@afgri.co.za **TDM**



Mario Marais

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