

# Eric Nohamba

LOUISE BRODIE

Eric is a committed farmer who has made a considerable contribution to the citrus industry, as well as to local organised agriculture. He has been farming on Konzi Farm, north of Fort Beaufort, since 1993. Eric serves on the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) Board of Directors, representing previously disadvantaged growers in the South. He is also a member of the Citrus Growers Development Chamber, and represents his region's navel growers in the CGA Navel Focus Group. At a local level Eric is also Chairman of the Alice Kat Farmers' Trust.

After completing a Diploma in Farm Business Management at Fort Cox Agricultural College, Eric applied for a farm under the Ciskei government agricultural land privatisation programme in 1989, and was delighted when this was successful. However, some tough years followed when in 1997 the Ciskei Agricultural Corporation and other parastatal organisations were shut down without any structures in place to continue the financial arrangements.

Fortunately, Capespan purchased 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 been receiving 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 have four children. "My wife and children love to be involved with the farm and I must thank them for their help and understanding," says Eric. Their eldest son Sinovuyo Nohamba is 27 years old and has taken control of daily activities at Konzi Farm since 2014.

Sinovuyo explains: "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

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Eric Nohamba above and Sinovuyo Nohamba left

B.Ed. degree in Human Resource Management." For his studies at Fort Hare, he received a Citrus Academy bursary. He also completed the highly successful Citrus Academy Citrus Business Management course in 2014 offered at the Mpofu Training Centre, and more recently he also completed the Citrus Academy short course in enterprise management in Pretoria.

"I was keen to start farming and chose to assist my father with our family farming operation, so I joined the farm in 2014. As the family home is in Alice, 50 km away, I moved to the farm to keep an eye on activities and progress. Initially it was very challenging for me to live there but as time went by I became used to living the quiet, rural lifestyle. 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 production. The opportunities to learn about citrus production through the Citrus Academy have been really 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 20s and they are both studying at the University of Fort Hare. Our son has completed a Bachelor of Agriculture degree, majoring in Economics, as well as completing his honours degree in Economics and is currently studying to complete his Master's degree. Our daughter is in her third year of a B. Agric. degree."

The Nohambas' youngest son Sanele Nohamba is a serious



# Economic growth

YOLANDA NTLAKAZA

Manager: Business Support



Effective transformation requires partnerships with like-minded private sector stakeholders. The CGA Grower Development Company (GDC) has partnered with Coca Cola Beverages SA (CCBSA) Mintirho Foundation to fund training targeted at 100 black citrus growers who will attend an "Introduction to Citrus Business Management" course.

The Foundation was formed to promote the development of historically disadvantaged farmers and small suppliers of inputs in the CCBSA value chain, through the funding of sustainable businesses. The training programme is designed to empower growers with the requisite skills to run their enterprises efficiently. It covers a wide range of aspects, from production systems, handling and control of stock, human resources, basic finances and marketing.

The target group for the programme was new entrants into the industry, including young people from enterprises that are already operational to participate, as well as growers who had been identified as requiring skills in this area. Lack of business management skills has been identified as one of the leading limiting factors among most black citrus growers, hence the need to broaden access to this course. In an ideal world, growers are supposed to enrol in a programme of this nature as soon as they acquire their farms. However, in practice this is not possible, due to the lengthy processes of the land transfer system.

The plan was to train two people per farm across 50 farms. This would then encourage these enterprises to include young people for the purposes of succession which is at the heart of the industry and earlier this year the industry released a publication

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entitled *Stories of succession in the citrus industry*. Furthermore, empowering the youth is seen as a vehicle to ensure that new technologies are adopted at farm level. Scholastic articles indicate that older people are less likely to adopt new sustainable practices and often rely on their indigenous knowledge to manage their farms.

The training was rolled out across five provinces and 91 people from 57 farming enterprises from Limpopo (34), Eastern Cape (26), KwaZulu Natal (13), North West (10) and Mpumalanga (10). The group comprised 60 men, 31 women and 33 youth. The number of youth involved in the citrus industry is quite encouraging, which can also be attributed to the capacity development programmes that are run by the Citrus Academy. The increase in women's

participation indicates a shift in cultural ideologies whereby women cannot own land or be involved in decision making on farms. The heterogeneous nature of the group brought a lot of benefit during the training, as it allowed for mutual knowledge transfer. The attendance of a representative from the CCBSA at some of the venues was also encouraging, since the farmers were inquisitive about the work of the Foundation.

As the CGA GDC, we look forward to more partnerships of this nature unlocking the potential of the industry and the sector at large. ❀

sportsman. Although now in his second year at University studying for his B. Comm. degree, he currently plays rugby for the Sharks under 19's as well as the Curry Cup squad. "Our children make us proud," says Eric. "Our farm has created a platform from which they can become involved in agriculture on several levels, however one must be passionate and dedicated in order to be successful at farming, as it is not easy.

"Looking into the future I would encourage them to look at agriculture as a sector with opportunities for them to develop their careers. It is my dream to expand my farming operation, so there are more farming opportunities for them in the future. If they are not interested in the production part of agriculture, the export supply chain also offers many good career options that they could consider." ❀