

Final Report

Thusano Communal Property Association

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Pilot Maize Production Project: Thusano Communal Property Association

This is the final report for the past production season of the Thusano Communal Property Trust and I as the representative for Suidwes Landbou and Terratek, a division of Suidwes on the Thusano Communal Property Trust can gladly report that the past season have been successful.

A great thanks to all the role players in the process of making this a successful year under the circumstances. The role players have been Suidwes Landbou and Terratek (a division of Suidwes Landbou), Mr. Hansie Viljoen (commercial farmer in the Maquassi Hills Local Municipality in the North West Province), Wolmaransstad Department of Agriculture, Monsanto, Omnia Group and the Thusano Communal Property Association (Klipfontein Farmers).

The Maize Trust made Funds (R77 920.00) available to do liming for initial soil correction on a broad cast basis (not precision), to insure the maize crop and pay for some of the costs of the extension officers who also acted as some of the mentors. All this has been done.

For this contribution Suidwes/Terratek (as co-facilitators of the project) and the Klipfontein Farmers (Thusano Communal Property Association) are truly thankful.

The project produced a yield/ha of 3.1 tons. The total amount of tons produced was 296 tons. The price they got after the differential has been subtracted was R1900 per ton. This price made it possible for them to pay back the alternative fertilizer and pesticides that was provided during the planting season by Mr Hansie Viljoen that is acting as their mentor. They also paid the harvesting costs and is currently left with a surplus with all costs cover of the previous season, with the funds available they will be able to fund a part of the input costs themselves.

The following was supplied by the other role players for the 95ha:

1. Department of Agriculture - Diesel and most of the herbicide needed to control weeds, as well as some extension collaboration.
2. Thusano Communal Property Association - supplied labour
3. Monsanto - supplied Roundup Ready seed for the 95ha.
4. Omnia Group - assisted in the provision of fertilizer for the cultivation of the maize.
5. Suidwes/Terratek - facilitation and co-ordination of the project as well as the extension and agricultural services needed to have the right actions taking place at the right time and mentoring needed to realise the project. Suidwes/Terratek also provided relevant training to the beneficiaries.

6. Mr Hansie Viljoen - Most of the labour to assist the Klipfontein Farmers, his tractors and implements as well as the maintenance and repairs thereof.

Mr Hansie Viljoen eventually also supplied herbicide and fertilizer to his own cost for the time being. Extra herbicide spraying was necessary (more than that supplied by Department of Agriculture) due to the intensity of the weeds and the fertilizer supplied by the Omnia Group was not enough to meet the requirements for what was needed to ensure a descend crop. (No other fertilizer company was willing to help at the time it was due).

The following are recommendations based on challenges encountered:

1. In order to minimize risk for the farmer(s) and the parties involved and improve yield and effective and efficient utilization of inputs, a more "precision" approach needs to be taken. Thus physical and chemical "grids" need to be done on at least a 2ha grid (preferably a 1ha grid). Only after this a more accurate determination can be made on what and how much of it is needed to correct the chemical balance in the soil. The importance of this action is scary because of the past years results. The commercial farmers right next to the project reached an average yield of 6.8 tons/ha and the project only 3.1 tons/ha, the type of soil from the eye looks the same but it is clear that there is a difference in the quality of the soil.

A more flexible budget is needed, but still of the utmost importance then is that precise record should be kept on what is done and spend.

2. Application deadline dates should preferably co-inside with time of preparation of fields - this was also discussed at the meeting held 17 March 2008.
3. The other major concern was the operating sytems of the project itself. The project consist of 38 beneficiaries which all have a right to their portion of the income. The 95 hectares will not be sufficient in transforming these beneficiaries into comercial farmers. Furthermore there were only two of the beneficiaries that participated and actually worked on the land during the year.

The complaints from these two workers were that the other beneficiaries stole the grain to feed their pigs. They also pointed out that the rest of the beneficiaries that don not part take in any of the farming actions stole the steel on the project property and sell it for scrap metal.

We recomended that the farmer that actually work the land and contribute to the producing of the maize should be giving the opportunity to rent the land from the project. By this action the beneficiary renting the land will be giving the opportunity to be transformed to acomercial farmer. The beneficiaries will be receiving rent for their land. This will imply that both parties, the person actually wants to farm and the beneficiaries of the project get the advantage. The person renting the land will not receive all inputs for free as the previous season but will use the surplus funds from the previuos season to buy inputs and the alternative needed inputs thereafter will be financed on a fair basis to learn the individual a sense of business.

It is easier to develop a comercial farmer of one person on 95 hectares who actually wants to farm than to develop 38 farmers out 95 hectares and of which 36 of them is not actually part taking in any of the farming actions. This definitely needs to be reconsidered when making the decision on whether to finace or not. The regulations determining these decisions should be restructered to accommodate farmers taking iniatives like mentioned above.

Yours sincerely

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