

TRANSFORMATION REPORT (2005/2006)

Introduction

The key success factors to develop small scale and emerging farmers in terms of production and marketing is to fast track their development through training and technology transfer to enable them to enter main stream of commercial potato production in South Africa. The tools used for this purpose are information days, the establishment of formal organizational structures for emerging farmers, practical potato cultivar trials, forming of alliances with other key role players, the involvement of emerging farmers and role players at commercial farmers meetings. It is also important to determine the needs of small scale and emerging farmers in terms of implements, good quality seed knowledge to plant potatoes and other needs in order to successfully empower them.

KwaZulu-Natal

Mr. J. Sosibo was appointed 1 July 2005 to service the emerging sector in KZN. The attendance of meetings in the emerging sector concerning all role players in Durban, Pietermaritzburg and the KZN midlands was an important step to establish Potatoes South Africa in the emerging sector in KZN. During the last week of January 2006 and first week of February 2006 a road show was held at seven different venues to establish potato committees for the emerging sector in each region.

Projects in KZN include the investigation of a fresh produce market at Newcastle. The first step was a pre viability study. Meetings were held with the Amajuba Farmers association, KWANALU, NAFU, MBB, Newcastle municipality, Department of Agriculture and Potatoes South Africa to appoint a steering committee to drive this project. This steering committee decided to form a joint venture between NAFU, Potatoes South Africa and MBB to manage this process.

Important alliances were also formed with Cedara for the planting of trials and training of small scale and emerging farmers to successfully produce potatoes. Communication with emerging farmers is also a major point to develop a potato "culture" amongst farmers and also the most important consumer sector for potatoes in KZN. Mr. Sosibo visits the local radio station in Durban on a weekly basis to host a talk show on agriculture in general and potatoes in particular in KZN.

North Eastern Cape

The monitoring and development of the Mthatha (KEI) Fresh Produce Market is a key priority here. For this purpose information days and market issues were discussed with farmers, market management and agents.

One of the most important factors to produce potatoes is to use good planting material. For this purpose Potatoes South Africa together with market management, seed growers from KwaZulu-Natal, NAFU, Department of Agriculture and other role players met at Mthatha market to plan a venture to supply good quality seed to farmers in the North Eastern Cape. Seed was sent from Underberg and made available to farmers during August to December 2005.

Forming of alliances with other role players to serve small scale and emerging farmers was also undertaken by forming a memorandum of agreement with Tsolo Agriculture & Rural Development Institute. A cultivar trial was planted at this institute to serve two purposes namely to introduce a program to teach farmers to plant potatoes and conduct research to find the best cultivars to plant at Tsolo and its surroundings.

During March 2006 an information day was held at the Tsolo institute to discuss the results of the cultivar trial. Representatives of the National Agricultural Marketing Council, Potato Industry Development Trust and Media were also present at this meeting. The establishment of formal organizational structures for the emerging sector has been done in May 2006.

Eastern Cape

Forming alliances with the Department of Agriculture was an important step to begin to serve the emerging sector needs at Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage. Planning meetings and information days at Port Elizabeth Department of Agriculture and Uitenhage were held.

It was decided to plant two cultivar trials, one at Uitenhage and one at St. Marks near Queenstown. These trials were to serve two purposes namely to introduce a program to teach farmers to plant potatoes and do research to find the best cultivars to plant at Uitenhage and St. Marks. Information days were held at harvesting of these trails and also to present the results to the farmers. The establishment of formal organizational structures for Potatoes South Africa to serve the needs of emerging sector has already been done in May 2006.

Free State

Glen Agricultural College Training and Research Partnership

The project forms part of the curriculum at Glen Agricultural College (30km from Bloemfontein) and therefore all students are introduced to the Potato Industry on first year level. In their second year they make a choice between animal and crop production. At this stage the potato curriculum will form part of crop production. At third year level the students who have chosen to do so will "specialize" in potato production under supervision of a student coordinator. The partnership between PSA and Glen is starting to get credibility within the Agricultural sector and will become more relevant in future. Further more Potatoes South Africa and Glen Agricultural College will introduce the internship programme from July 2006.

Zastron Emerging Farmers

A couple of emerging farmers, in the South-eastern Free State near Zastron, with available land indicated that they have a need to plant potatoes. Due to the complexity of potato production compared to cattle- and grain production PSA recommended that we first start by doing a test planting at one of the emerging farmers. A local farmer, with water source the Caledon River and infrastructure for irrigation, soil preparation etc. is willing to host a test planting on his land.

The process will include practical training through the whole production process. Local extension officers and input representatives will at all times be involved so that the emerging farmers can build up a reference network with all involved in potatoes in the area.

Maluti College

Maluti College, a service provider for AgriSETA, identified a need for training in potato production for their students. They do not have land available for practical production and therefore they work closely with the local Agriculture and Hotel school, who have available land, irrigation and most implements. The school students, from grade 10, as well as college students will therefore be part of this training project. The same "recipe" as for Glen will be implemented at first. The first meeting (pilot) between PSA and the Maluti College and local school was held on 27 March 2006. It was then decided that the project will commence with a potato planting towards the end of September 2006.

Sandvet Emerging Farmers

The group of emerging farmers worked at the Sandvet Research station and obtained the farm through LRAD. No further assistance was given to them and had led to the deterioration of the infrastructure. The farm is in the middle of a potato production area with commercial potato farmers who are willing to assist with knowledge and equipment.

A potato planting was planned for January 2006 but due to low levels of water in the Aldam (Sandvet Irrigation scheme) the water quota was not available and therefore no planting could take place. PSA will at first co-ordinate / oversee the total potato production process (from soil preparation, production to marketing), of a test planting, in cooperation with the local extension officer.

Oppermans (Vaal dam Irrigation Association)

The Oppermans is in the ideal situation to become the first emerging farmer potato seed growers in SA. The family farm consists of 34000 hectares next to the Orange/Riet Irrigation scheme canal. Water rights for 210 hectares are already allocated to them. Seeing that this is a cattle farm which will partly be used for irrigation farming it leaves a opportunity for potato seed growing due to the "virgin soil" which is a scarce resource.

The Department of Agriculture also allocated R15 million to the project for infrastructure development, equipment etc. as well as the funding of a percentage of the inputs of the first crop to be planted. The Department has withheld the money due to internal politics and this has led to the project coming to a standstill.

PSA decided to give the group (grown up in cattle farming environment) who are unemployed (one of the conditions to qualify as a beneficiary) back ground on potato production by organising tours at the different production and marketing stages. The first tour which covered the planting process and aspects regarding that has been held on 24 January 2006. A minimum of two more tours have been held which will cover the balance of the potato production process, grading and marketing.

Western Cape

The Potatoes SA office in Piketberg in conjunction with the Western Cape Department of Agriculture renders services to emerging farmers and market agents in the Western Cape.

N2 GRID of emerging markets

The George Market forms part of the “N2 Grid of emerging markets”. This also means that the market will relieve Philippi Market from its packaged products.

Phillipi Market

Above market is in process of being build. The first target is to open the main trading hall in July 2006 for business. Potatoes SA is in continuous consultation with MBB Consulting Services.

George Fresh Produce Market

The George Market exists now for more than a year. Potatoes South Africa was involved since the very first day to ensure that the market systems are in place and that the market is being developed to the benefit of all producers. The following aspects have been identified in collaboration with the market management as critical achievement areas:

- Quality assurance
- Information systems
- The positioning of the market as a national market
- Collection of the voluntary levies
- Integration of the market at the local Southern-Cape potato industry
- The market as a training centre for the emerging farmer concerning marketing and quality assurance

Market Agents

There are two emerging market agents in Cape Town namely Rhoda's Market Agents and Main Daniels Market Agents. These agents are assisted by the regional office in the form of production and marketing information, training of pests and diseases, farming practices and assistance in sourcing of potatoes to secure continuous supply. The connection with the informal sector is through the Western Cape Informal Traders Association, focusing on the handling of potatoes and its nutritional value.

The George market also registered one of its market agents, namely South-Cape Market agent as a PDI agent at Potatoes South Africa for assistance and support.

The following points of focus were identified in collaboration with the owner of the agency, Mr. Simons:

- Visits to farm and information days in the Sandveld – contact with producers.
- Visits to Ceres – KORKOM as well as farms – contact with producers
- Visits to Fresh Produce Markets, e.g. Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, etc.-contact with the larger market family. Still to be arranged

S.A.N.D. Project

The potato producers developed their own experimental site, named the S.A.N.D. (Sandveld Aartappel Depmonstratieperseel). The S.A.N.D. is suitable for training purposes because the infrastructure, knowledge and information regarding potato production in the Sandveld is already established and available on this site. Various potato trials are conducted on an annual basis. The first transformation trial has been planted in July 2005. Practical and theoretical training sessions were held between September 2005 and February 2006. Small scale farmers from Goedverwacht, the Sandveld West Coast and Wupertal did the full potato course successfully. A well structured potato course was compiled by Potatoes SA, Prokon and the Department of Agriculture. The successful candidates each received a certificate. A successful information day was held on 1st December 2005 at S.A.N.D. The day was attended by farmers from the Western and Southern Cape.

Pacaltzorp Agriculture and Tourism project

More or less 60 families from the town Pacaltzorp, each deposited about R16 000 in order to purchase about 70 ha agricultural land for the production of agricultural products. The farming venture is currently managed by a managing group elected by the beneficiaries. The Land bank is financing the project. Potato production and marketing currently taking place include planting of potatoes which takes place during January and September. Currently about 2 ha per season is being planted and seed potatoes are currently obtained from Garden Route Agri. Marketing is directly from the farm, but sufficient storage and packaging facilities do not exist.