

Efficiency breeds success

by Fidelis Zvomuya

Eight years ago, the Coromandel Farmers' Trust outside Lydenberg in Mpumalanga, was just another farm allocated to beneficiaries of the South African land reform programme. In 2002, the 5 800 hectare farm was on the brink of collapse, but today boasts an annual turnover of R3,2 million.


According to current farm manager, Brian Phokane, Coromandel Farm was acquired through the Government Land Reform Programme in 2002. The farm was officially handed over to the community by the former Minister of Agriculture, Thoko Didiza, on 2 October 2004.

“The farm is managed and staffed by its former farm workers. There is a fully equipped dairy with 530 cows, of which 230 produce 20 litres of milk per day. Twelve drip-irrigated hectares produce blueberries for export at R1,2 million a year. The blueberries are the farm's top earner.

“There are also 24 hectares of peaches and nectarines under netting and micro-jet irrigation. There are still thousands of hectares available for pasture and dryland crop production,” says Phokane.

The farm also earns rent from 26 managers' houses on the farm. They lease 500 hectares to neighbouring farmers for maize planting and 1 000 hectares for grazing. Currently they employ about 100 permanent staff and up to 50 seasonal workers.

“Only the best brains were employed in the planning of the property and its infrastructure,” he says. The farm has paddocks of the post-and-rail type, with planted pastures and well-built brick water troughs.

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Brian Phokane, the farm manager at Coromandel Farm