



PROGRESS REPORT : MARCH 2004 - JUNE 2004

1. MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Recognition of the Academy's contribution to emerging farmer development continues to grow with the Land Bank having listed Buhle as one of their projects that give real return for their investment. The Chief Land Claims Commissioner of S.A. has also endorsed the activities of the Academy and has requested that we address the next quarterly meeting of all the Land Claim Commissioners. Potential applicants are contacting the Academy from all over the country and we are now in a position to make better selection of trainees.

The Vegetable Course was the largest ever with 32 students. The Livestock Course and the Nutrition Course were completed in March while the Poultry Course had a full house of 20 students. The crop students were given a recess until the end of April, while the maize and bean crops were maturing and drying out in the field.

The Graduation of 86 students took place on 13th May 2004 and was once again a great celebration. Special speakers were Mr Walter Ntuli, the President of KWANULU the Agricultural Union of Kwa-Zulu Natal and Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, the MEC for Agriculture in Limpopo Province. Other guests included amongst many others Mr Shadrack Mabuza, chairman FHHF, Mr Bonile Jack, vice-chairman FHHF, Mr Kobus Lindeque of Monsanto, Mr Willie Maree – previous FHHF chairman, Mr Mike Mailula of the Tshwane University of Technology, successful graduate Mr Phuti Ledwaba and officials from Land Bank, ABSA and the Department of Agriculture.

A new 5 day short course: the Project Management Course was introduced to the training programme and was stretched to capacity with students eager to master the skills of managing projects. The Graduation of 25 Crop Course students and 32 Project Management students was held on 10th June 2004 when the crop students completed their 9 month course having had some experience in the harvesting of dry beans and maize from their 2 ha of cropland. The main speakers were Mr Tozi Gwanya, the Land Claims Commissioner, and Mr Jabulani Zita a successful new farmer, with representatives from Land Bank, the Eskom Development Foundation and Shadrack Mabuza, the FHHF chairman attending.

Agricultural conditions although not initially favourable in the early season nevertheless resulted in good crops that are now being harvested. The rain-fed maize yield is at 6 tons per ha at present while dry beans are yielding a more moderate 850 kgs/ha as soil moisture was low at planting resulting in less than optimal germination. Our dry beans which are of high quality are currently fetching a price of R3 500/ton. Most of the vegetables did not mature in time for graduation despite the use of short season cabbage cultivars. Fewer chickens were purchased this time reducing the pressure of selling live chickens. The balance of the chickens are now in deep freeze storage for catering for the next group of students who start in July.

Overall, the courses were conducted well and ran smoothly, however the need to select only the best potential candidates was again apparent. With applications coming in from far and wide, a Selection Panel made up of representatives from the sponsor organisations has been constituted to make the final selection of trainees. No major injuries of students or staff were experienced this period, but losses from theft of fencing and beans from the land occurred. The twenty year old plus tractor required a major overhaul and substantial repairs but this was covered by the income from crops.

Substantial progress has been made in securing funding for the Academy for the next few years as endeavours to meet the requirements of funding institutions finally seem to have paid off. With the decision by the Maize Trust in principle to commit R670 000 per year for three years, approximately one third of the total requirements have been met. Monsanto Fund has just informed us of their further commitment of R830 000 per year for two years and the application to Umsobomvu Youth Fund through the Gert Sibande College (Further Education and Training) at Standerton for R830 000 stands a good chance of being granted within the next few weeks.

There is a growing awareness of the huge need for practical farmer skills training and we are confident that the necessary future funding will be found to continue. We remain, to my knowledge, the only institution offering practical skills training over an extended period corresponding to the production cycle of the specific commodity around which the training is structured. Most of the practical courses on offer by our competitors cover a period of only a few days and cannot develop the depth of knowledge and skill in the technical, business and life skills that is possible at the Academy. This remains a unique feature of our training that embeds sustainable skills in the trainees. The increasingly visible results that are achieved through the graduates' activities verify the validity of our approach.

2. TRAINING COURSES

Course statistics are as follows: The Academy has been operational for 3½ years now and 30 courses have been held during this period involving a total of **564 students**:

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| ○ Basic Vegetable Production | 145 trainees |
| ○ Crop Production | 57 trainees |
| ○ Poultry Production | 122 trainees |
| ○ Livestock Production | 26 trainees |
| ○ Basic Nutrition | 182 trainees |
| ○ Project Management | 32 trainees |

On average, 161 students have been trained per year, with an average of 109 students per year in agricultural courses. No additional courses are envisaged at this stage but further short courses can be introduced on demand.

3. PARTNERSHIPS

Productive interaction has been pursued with the following institutions:

- ◆ Land and Development Bank of S.A. - A formal application for a training grant in the form of a bursary programme was submitted to their Corporate Social and Investment Programme. Second application for funding submitted. Second payment from previous year not yet paid out. Involvement in trainee selection.
- ◆ Foundation for Farmer Development - Involvement by the FFD in the selection of trainees has been secured. Response to a proposal to FFD for the joint establishment of training centres around S.A. is still awaited.
- ◆ Primary Agricultural Education & Training (PAETA) - BFA application for accreditation submitted. The process has bogged down but further submissions are being made.
- ◆ Department of Labour - Application for recognition as an approved training provider submitted.
- ◆ Japanese Embassy - BFA application for funding resubmitted. No response received.
- ◆ Kameleon Environmental Education - Environmental awareness module presented over two days
- ◆ Eskom Development Foundation - The final approval for the grant is anticipated within weeks.
- ◆ Department of Agriculture - Presentation of Nutrition module to trainees
- ◆ Tshwane University of Technology: Department of Food & Hospitality Management.
 - 5 day Nutrition Course presented.
- ◆ Tshwane University of Technology: Language Dynamics
 - 1 day Communications module.
- ◆ Gert Sibande College (FET) - Assistance with funding application to Umsobomvu Youth Fund and with trainee selection.
- ◆ Roos Agri-consultancy - Crop Course presentation and course development and funding applications.

4. OPPORTUNITIES

The Academy is receiving enquiries for training from a wide range of individuals and groups from 7 provinces. The opportunity to provide excellent practical skills training continues to expand, as does the need to provide effective, persevering follow-up services to our graduates.

In order to access funding from the **Umsobomvu Youth Fund** it was necessary to partner with an existing FET college. A good relationship has been forged with the **Gert Sibande College** based at Standerton with other campuses at Ermelo and Secunda. The GSC will assist the Academy with accreditation, curriculum development and training materials and administer the funding from UYF.

AfricaBio proposal - drawn up by AfricaBio to provide training in agriculture in conjunction with the Academy, to children affected by HIV/Aids. This proposal has been submitted to the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund for consideration.

5. FINANCIAL

To date the status of funding for the Academy is as follows:

| ORGANISATION | FUNDING REQUESTED | FUNDING COMMITTED | TYPE OF FUNDING | STATUS |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| The Maize Trust | R670 000 x 3 years | R670 000 x 3 years | Operational | Approved in principle |
| Monsanto Fund | R830 000 x 2 years | R830 000 x 2 years | Operational | Approved |
| Eskom Development Foundation | R475 304 | | Infrastructural | Final approval awaited |
| ABSA Bank | R688 000 x 3 years | R45 000 | Operational | Approved |
| WK Kellogg Foundation | R180 000 x 2 years | | Operational | In process |
| Umsobomvu Youth Fund | R830 000 x 3 years | | Operational | In process |
| Omnia Fertilizers | R50 000 | R50 000 | In kind - fertilizer | Approved |
| The Oilseeds Trust | R250 000 x 3 years | | Operational | In process |
| The Japanese Embassy | R460 275 | | Infrastructural | In process (2 years) |
| Land Bank | R504 500 | | Operational | In process |
| Total | R4 938 079 | R1 595 000 | | |

6. RENNOVATION OF TRAINEE ACCOMMODATION

The repair and repainting of the 19 houses and 2 ablution blocks for accommodating the trainees is 98 % complete. The final painting of the ablution floors can now take place as the students have completed their training. The work has been performed to an acceptable level by a local contractor and the facilities are presentable, liveable and neat. Once again we express our grateful thanks to Monsanto Fund for funding this additional need at the Academy.

7. CONCLUSION

The core business of practical farmer skills training continues to be effected. The current focus is on upgrading and restructuring the training management to ensure higher standards of student assessment and follow-up. Additional presenters are becoming involved as the scope of training increases. A more structured programme is therefore needed without losing the flexibility required by practical courses.

A further area of emphasis for the Academy is the more intensive follow-up of graduates. Specific funding for these increased costs have been included in the budgets and associated funding applications. Our real reward continues to be the feedback from graduates who are using the skills and knowledge gained at the Academy to establish their farming enterprises, become self employed and achieve the essence of our mission, the "enabling of new farmers".