



INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT TO MAIZE TRUST

1. PROJECT

BUHLE FARMERS' ACADEMY – Practical farmer skills development of emerging farmers with special reference to the maize industry in S.A.

2. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

TRAINING

The following practical training in maize and crop production are being supported by Maize Trust donor funding:

COURSE	TRAINEES	DATES
Crop Production Course (C10-07)	20	17 th October 2007 – 12 th June 2008
Maize Production Short Course (1)	15	March 2008
Maize Production Short Course (2)	15	April 2008

Training for 21 students began on 17th October 2007 however one student dropped out after a few weeks leaving 20 students who will complete the course on 12th June 2008. Training includes technical instruction in the principles of maize production, on-farm crop management, maize marketing channels and processing as well as farm business management, production planning, cash flow and loan finance management. At least 2 Maize Short Courses are envisaged for March and April where current maize farmers will be trained in the finer points of maize farming. To date 137 trainees and farmers have attended the 9 month crop production course at the Academy.

Each trainee has again been allocated 1 ha of land at Buhle for maize production and will be evaluated on the practical management of this "micro" farm. Trainees established a successful maize crop and have maintained good weed control. Yields look set to exceed 6.5 per ha this year due to excellent rainfall in the Delmas area during the first half of the season. The motivation of the trainees is good with no problems having been experienced during the period under review. The Progress Report from July – December 2007 is attached for further information on Buhle's wider training activities.

FOLLOW-UP PROGRAMME

The support system for maize farmers through the Academy is now a well-established major component of the Buhle approach in establishing entry level and existing maize farmers in their own sustainable and profitable enterprises. The subject specialist primarily entrusted with the follow-up programme to maize farmers is Mr Johan Roos, a well-respected senior agronomist with vast experience in the maize industry.



In conjunction with Buhle, Tongaat Hulett Starch (previously African Products) has committed substantial resources both in kind and financial to the Ithuba Farming Project. Ten selected Buhle crop graduates have planted 120 ha's of company land to maize in a commercial operation. Tongaat Hulett Starch have made the land available, erected fine accommodation and facilities for the learner farmers, provided the tractors and farming equipment, are financing all the production inputs and will purchase the crop at harvest. Buhle provides day-to-day technical and management support and coaches the learner farmers as needed. Net profits will be shared with the

farmers and the acquiring of land for next season for these new farmers is being addressed. Another 10 new crop graduates will be accommodated in this project for next season.

3. RESULTS ACHIEVED

The outcome of the training provided at the Academy through funding from the Maize Trust and other co-donors and partners is making a huge impact in the lives of graduates who return home filled with knowledge, skills and the irrepressible drive to farm successfully as a result of the training and encouragement received at Buhle. There are many serious obstacles confronting new farmers but the Academy enables them to make knowledgeable decisions with willing support from the Academy staff. As each graduate is set up, they not only provide a living for their immediate family but soon provide job opportunities as their farming operations expand.

4. APPLICATION OF MAIZE TRUST DONOR FUNDS

FUND UTILIZATION IN RELATION TO OBJECTIVES

We believe the Maize Trust's grant funding is a direct investment in the basic empowerment of primary commercial maize farmers in S.A. and that this falls squarely within the objective of benefiting the maize industry through training entry level producers, disseminating scientific and technical information and supporting market access for emerging maize producers.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Current Crop Students list C10-07
2. Ithuba Farm Project Learner Farmers
3. Buhle Farmers' Academy Progress Report: July – December 2007

Neil de Smidt
Director: Buhle Farmers' Academy
3rd March 2008