



PROGRESS REPORT – JANUARY TO JUNE 2006

1. OVERVIEW

The Academy continues to meet the exciting challenge of effectively empowering new entry farmers to plan, establish and manage sustainable farming enterprises in the complex commercial environment of South African agriculture. This is demonstrated in the lives of many graduates who, as a direct result of their training at Buhle have started their own farming ventures – vegetables, crops, poultry and livestock enterprises, that form the nucleus of a sustainable economic future. Not only have they created employment for themselves but for others as well, as their farming activities expand.

Strong new partnerships are being developed with the Farmers Development Trust, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, African Products, Premier Foods, AgriSETA and Hygro, while still maintaining the existing relationships of supporting institutions including Monsanto Fund, Monsanto SA, The Maize Trust, Land Bank, Omnia Fertilizers, Standard Bank and ABSA. This indicates good progress towards the intended goal of broadening of our support base. No State support for capacity building of emerging farmers has yet been forthcoming but this continues to be actively pursued with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Labour through the National Skills Fund. Despite the progress made, the constraint of insufficient long-term funding commitments for Buhle is still a major cause for concern.

Many enquiries regarding farmer skills development and training have been received from African countries to the north including Ghana, Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia. Recently a delegation of top Nigerian officials visited Buhle and expressed keen interest in the application of the Buhle Model in addressing the same needs in their respective countries.

The Academy's activities remain focussed on the core business of skills training and farmer support. More and more good feedback is being received from graduates who have secured land, Land Bank loans, Department of Agriculture assistance through the CASP programme and from independent agents that report on the quality of the knowledge, abilities and enthusiasm of our graduates.

2. TRAINING

The following successful training courses were conducted during the six month period under review:

COURSE	DATES	STUDENTS
Crop Production Course	4 th October 2005 – 15 th June 2006	16
Livestock Course	17 th January – 17 th March 2006	13
Basic Vegetable Course	7 th February – 12 th May 2006	15
Crop Short Course	20 th – 24 th February 2006	23
Crop Short Course	27 th – 31 st March 2006	43
Poultry Course	28 th March – 12 th May 2006	24
Hawkers Course	15 th – 20 th May 2006	15
	Total	149

These students graduate on 15th June 2006.

A fully funded Hydroponics Course is being added to the range of courses on offer through Buhle. It will be presented for the Academy by Hygro – a specialist hydroponics training company accredited with AgriSETA. Initially this course will be linked to the Basic Vegetable Course but may later be run independently depending on demand. A functional net house covering 450m² will be erected at Buhle for this purpose.

The Netherlands Embassy is facilitating the involvement of Dutch agricultural education specialist agencies to conduct a detailed evaluation of the training presented at the Academy and will compile a readjustment programme to improve the standard of tuition, training materials and support still further. The submission of additional unit standards that more accurately address the specific needs of emerging farmers for consideration by the appropriate SAQA Standards Generating Body will also form part of this exercise.

3. GRADUATE SUPPORT

Graduate farmer support activities are in progress during May, June, and July whereby individual farmers are visited on their farms by Buhle staff.

TRAINER	SPECIALIST FIELD	AREA
A. Dube	Vegetables, Poultry, Livestock, Crops, Co-operatives, Farm business management	Limpopo, Mpumalanga
J. Roos	Crops, Livestock, Farm acquisition, enterprise development & planning	North West, Mpumalanga, Gauteng
C.A. Meyer	Vegetables, Poultry	Gauteng, Mpumalanga
F. von Emmenes	Livestock	All areas

Graduates are given a questionnaire for purposes of our database, their farming progress is monitored, planning issues and problems are addressed, linkages to other support groups or commodity organisations explored, access to funding agencies or markets are promoted and graduates are encouraged to persevere in their efforts. It is clear that a dedicated support officer will need to be appointed to provide this service on full-time basis.

4. BUHLE DEVELOPMENTS

- **AgriSETA ACCREDITATION**

Accreditation No. : PAET8700 Provider code: P8BUH30720000000605

Since full accreditation was awarded to the Academy 5th December 2005, a workshop was attended in Pretoria at which the extensive administration requirements were explained and the associated software programme demonstrated. It is envisaged that additional Unit Standards will be incorporated into the training courses at Buhle over time.

- **WESTERN CAPE FARMER SKILLS TRAINING**

Two visits were made by senior officials of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture lead by the Head of Department: Ms Joyene Isaacs including the Director of Training: Mr Marius Paulse responsible for Elsenburg College of Agriculture. The purpose was to familiarise themselves with the facilities and approach of Buhle to farmer skills training with a view to establishing similar training centres in the Western Cape in a joint venture between the Department, Elsenburg and Buhle. The Netherlands Embassy is facilitating this development and the information emerging from the Buhle analysis will be applied in the Western Cape development.

- **FARMER DEVELOPMENT TRUST**

Discussions have been held with Mr Teddy Matsitela and Dr Sekokotla the Chairman and CEO of FDT respectively, to enable the FDT to assist in securing long-term funding for Buhle and the national replication of such farmer skills training centres in the other provinces and regions of S.A.

- **COMMERCIAL BROILER JOINT VENTURE**

In an effort to generate sustainable income for Buhle's activities, the Trustees have approved the establishment of a joint broiler venture between Buhle, EPA, Umsobomvu Youth Fund, ABSA and Earlybird Farm. Two suitable sites have been identified at Buhle for units that will also be used to train young broiler farmers who when competent will receive land through the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and funding through UYF to set up their own commercial units with support from Buhle.

- **AFRICAN PRODUCTS**

Besides the three year grant funding commitment made by African Products in support of training at Buhle, a project is being developed whereby land owned by the company will be utilized by Buhle graduates for further coaching and mentoring after which these farmers will be in a position to conduct commercial farming operations independently.

- **PREMIER FOODS**

Support for a new Hydroponics Course has been provided by Premier Foods. Hygro, an accredited training provider will present the training for Buhle and advise in hydroponic production on site. The materials for the net house are being provided by various donors connected with the industry.

- **BOSAS – “BUHLE ONE-STOP AGRICULTURAL SERVICES”**

A partnership has been established between input suppliers to emerging farmers, a major bank and Buhle to provide a “one-stop” support service whereby selected emerging farmers can receive skills training at Buhle, fertilizer, seed, financing, marketing services and technical support and follow-up services through the expertise of the input suppliers technical specialists and Buhle staff. The administration and support services provided by

Buhle will be funded through a percentage of the input suppliers turnover thus making this a self-sustaining, commercially linked, holistic support service channelled through Buhle Farmers' Academy. We believe this has enormous potential for establishing new farmers. Several suitable farmers are being lined up for the new season.

- **VISITS TO BUHLE (January – June)**

US Grains Council, Nigerian delegation, The Maize Trust, Netherlands Embassy, AfricaBio, Standard Bank, USDA Farmers Outreach, Manstrat, BOSAS, Department of Agriculture Western Cape, Premier Foods, Eskom, Meadow Feeds, SABC.

- **GENERAL**

- **Commercial Crops**

Definite indications of climate change have again occurred this year with a late start to the rainy season. The dry beans have not performed well largely due to persistent rainy conditions for a period. The maize has once again done well with top yields of 6 tons per ha anticipated. The maize price has rallied and a good income is anticipated. All profits generated are used to support the costs of training. The price for poultry is low in relation to our production costs (as a result of a highly competitive local market and cheap imports) and the best use of our production is to keep it in cold storage to supply food to students in the form of "import replacement". The vegetable crop is looking really good as we begin to harvest.

- **Rhodes grass**

20ha of Rhodes grass (*Chloris gayana*) also known as Katambura grass has been very successfully established on the lands across the Delmas – Bronkhorstspuit road (R42) primarily because of theft problems with cash crops but also to improve the per hectare income through the sale of grass seed that promises to be more lucrative.

- **Security**

Student safety must be addressed in the form of electric security fencing around the student houses. Funding for this is urgently needed. Theft of fencing from Buhle remains a difficult problem. Stolen iron poles are being replaced with concrete columns to discourage theft.

5. FUNDING

Sufficient funds were granted by our regular donors during the period under review and commitments have been secured for the next training season to December. New applications for funding have been submitted to The Maize Trust and Standard Bank and we are awaiting their response. Where training was conducted for other institutions and government departments, full or partial funding was obtained from the respective institutions contributing to own generated funds amounting to 11,8% of our total requirements so far this financial year. Further details of the financial position of Buhle and the latest approved financial statements for 2005 are available on request.

It is vital that funding be obtained from government to supplement the great contribution made by the private sector since the inception of this training programme in 2000, especially in the light of land resettlement beneficiaries who make good use of the training offered and the tangible results delivered by Buhle.

6. CONCLUSION

I believe that there could be no more opportune time to address the skills needs of emerging farmers in South Africa. This Buhle is increasingly doing. It is abundantly clear that no amount of resources **on their own** can deliver agricultural production. Land *per se* does not provide food or wealth. It is the entrepreneurial farmer who must combine all the production factors into a profitable outcome. Investment in human capital is clearly the missing link in the formula for successful agricultural development in South Africa and I commend those who are bold enough to recognise this and direct resources to this end.