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1. Background to the need for the project

- The propagation of plants, quality control, the understanding of integrated pest, diseases and weed control, as well as the influence of the physical and biological environment on crops are very important aspects in the successful production and export of pomegranates
- Skills Development in these disciplines has a positive impact on effectiveness that will lead to cost reduction and profitability of this delicate crop
- Intensive fruit farming and processing is one of the most lucrative and cost-effective sectors in creating good and sustainable jobs
- Employees are expected to have at least the minimum skills required to ensure productivity remains at acceptable levels, health and safety is not compromised, product quality is improved and business strategies and workplans are understood and supported
- This point of view forms the basis for the interventions made to support this project

Areas of focus:

- 1. Increase awareness of health and safety principles
- 2. Improve safety of people and environment when using chemicals
- 3. Improve standard of management and communication on farms
- 4. Improve quality systems
- 5. Improve the understanding of business and horticulture best practices



2. Introduction

- AgriSETA sponsored the Pomasa Karoo Wonderful Pomegranate project with R100 000
- The skills required were identified by interaction between farmers, Pomasa as commodity industry and the project managers and training facilitators
- It was agreed that the bulk of inputs should be completed by November 2021
- The Karoo Wonderful Pomegranate project adds value to the farms in the Little Karoo that are already producing fruit, and aims to establish an additional 2000 ha of permanent crops over the next decade. The majority of this will be pomegranates, as one of the outcomes of meetings with farmers is an acknowledgement of diversification as an insurance and value adding proposition



- Pomasa is fully supportive of this project. Additional interventions will be financed by the industry. These include:
 - pruning
 - forming of young trees
 - trellising demonstrations
 - pest control
 - Information in video format informing learners of the differences between various insects, including but not limited to fruit fly, codling moth and false codling moth has been circulated and photographs of some of the most common pests will be made available to orchard monitors. These will assist them to identify insects with more certainty.

3. Training facility

- The infrastructure on the farm Celebratio (located between Calitzdorp and Oudtshoorn) was kindly made available to the project free of charge
- · Accommodation and meals were provided
- The course was attended by 39 learners
- Participants come from great distances, as far as Parys (Freestate), Ladismith (Western Cape) and De Rust. These farms are all part of the Karoo Wonderful Pomegranate Project
- Mr. Gerhard and Mrs Marita Meyer are sincerely thanked for their generosity and management of participant communication, logistics and benefits



4. Course structure

The course comprised both theoretical and practical components

4.1 Theoretical component

- · Four unit standards and a life skills module were taught
- The unit standards were
 - 119707 Health & Safety
 - 116065 Handling and Managing Agro-chemicals effectively and responsibly
 - 116206 Attend to soil and plant nutrition
 - 116128 Plant manipulation
- The quality of the facility infrastructure contributed to an environment conducive to learning
- The Class Atendance Register is attached as Addendum A



- A life skills module was added as a complementary activity
- · This activity was really appreciated by the learners, despite being very direct
- It was agreed that even should one have all the skills, but one's life falls apart, one cannot be successful in the workplace or at home where more than 100 hours are spent weekly. The learners put much focus on being "on the green arrows".





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4.2 Practical component

Activities were undertaken to enhance the learning in class.

Orchard visits

Pruning of trees to minimise wind damage and sunburn were discussed and demonstrated.

Learning from experienced workers, managers and farmers was of great help and added much value.

The reasons for the trellising of trees were discussed and various systems were addressed, with consensus reached that by trellising trees both wind- and sunburn damage can be reduced. The cost of trellising and the restriction on the free movement of workers in trellised orchards were identified as negatives. The pros outweigh the cons.



Drought is a severe factor on farms in the area. Various irrigation systems were discussed and wasting of precious water addressed. The use of certain plants, including Australian Creeping Salt Bush, known as "rooipitjie", was thought to be a unique manner of restricting evaporation whilst the plant itself absorbs very little water. The use of wood chips, though said to be expensive, is also a water wise solution.



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Chemical store visit

A visit to the chemical store on Celebratio illustrated to learners precisely how a chemical store should be designed and built to comply to rules and regulations. The neatness aspect was highlighted. Secure locking, good ventilation, proper lighting and the separation of chemicals according to their risk and hazard status were pointed out as important. Various pictograms displayed on chemicals were observed and the meaning of each pictogram was explained.

Fruit inspection

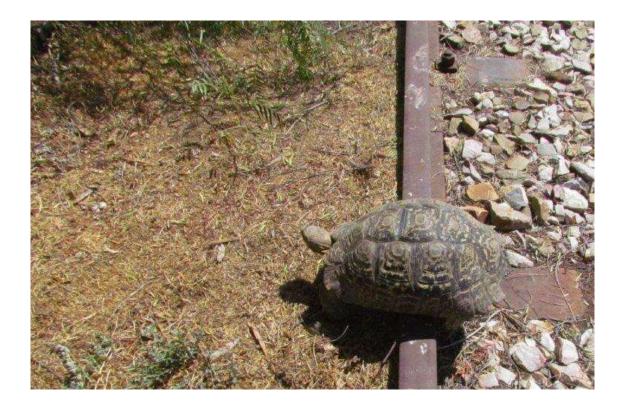
Ripe fruit that have been cold stored for some time were displayed before cutting these in half. An experienced learner conveyed the various properties of the pomegranate fruit to the class. The learner shared the popular belief that all pomegranates, irrespective of size, have 613 seeds. There is said to be spiritual meaning to this figure as the fruit is mentioned in various religious writings and was used in religious ceremonies and in temple decorations. This prompted some great discussion.



Soil sampling

Soil samples were taken before planting new orchards. Analyses will confirm what macro elements should be rectified. This ties in with nutrition.

It was experienced that in agriculture it is not always the ideal situation to be in perfect balance, as was the tortoise on the railway track nearby. It could not get off the track by itself! Sometimes taking a risk is necessary and often a helping hand is necessary - it could result in winning!



5. Pomasa group meeting

A meeting was held on 20 October 2021. The Meeting Attendance Register is attached as Addendum B.



SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Date: 20 October 2021 Time: 08h30 - 11h30

Place: Celebratio, Oudtshoorn

Attendance: 35 individuals with apologies for the others

Information shared

The first item was informing farmers of what exactly was covered in class. This was done to prepare farmers to know what they can realistically expect their workers to know and do.

Certificates

Certificates for the training sponsored by AgriSETA were handed over. There was appreciation expressed by many participants as well as employers. Reference was made to ELI as the service provider applying for funds and issuing the certificates.



The facilitator told those present how certification works in practice in this project-based training. The unit standards covered were mentioned, as well as that learners received books (manuals) which are their property. These should be shared with employers and management to inform more people of the content.

The importance of keeping the certificates in a safe place so that these can be on-hand when GAP's like EuropGAP, GlobalGAP and local retailer GAP's need to be complied to, was stressed. The certificate is property of the learner, but employers should keep the original copies and issue workers with duplicates. Should a worker resign or retire the copy must be exchanged for the original.

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Other matters

- 1. There was a firm decision to continue with skills development in future. AgriSETA sponsorship is greatly appreciated. It was agreed that the programme should be repeated in 2022 and instructions were given to the facilitator to prepare an application for launching with the AgriSETA. Farmers expressed their willingness to contribute to the costs of ad hoc inputs by the facilitator when required. There is a strong shared vision that a long-term association is preferred to a once-off intervention. These contributions could be matched by Pomasa. Farmers are of the opinion that workers who could not attend the training should be given an opportunity in future.
- 2. Practical assistance when forming young trees, winter pruning, trellising and general production inputs is a critical need. The facilitator is tasked to find solutions that can be implemented as soon as the orchards established in 2022 have grown enough for trees to require manipulation. Employers were referred to the POMASA website with reference to pruning, although the tree forming information may be insufficient regarding methods, plant density and timing of manipulation actions.



- 3. The facilitator expressed a desire to be involved with the project on a continuous basis, a feeling shared and supported by employers. The inputs will not be limited to pomegranates only, as diversification remains important.
- 4. Mr Meyer motivated employers to subscribe as members to POMASA so to not be excluded from information and activities.

Appreciation

Those present were thanked for taking the time to attend and for contributing to the discussions. It was noted that some employers had to travel quite big distances to attend. Those present and completing the course included individuals from Parys (Freestate), Ladismith (Western Cape), Calitzdorp, Oudtshoorn and De Rust.

Andriette de Jager of POMASA was thanked for her invaluable inputs and support.

Celebratio Pomegranate Farm was thanked for all the assistance and making the magnificent facilities available. The owners, Gerhard and Marita Meyer, did a great job of the organising of the training, meals, refreshments and overnight stay of learners.

The group that benefitted from these interventions expressed their hearty thanks to AgriSETA and expressed the desire to participate in this type of initiative again in future.



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CONTACT PERSON: Lean Direllewolls

CONTACT NUMBER: OSS JOUGZE FAX/E-MAIL: PEGAL DOLL, 10, ZO VENUE: COPOS VOTES

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NAME OF INSTRUCTOR: C.J. T. Krazze

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