



2022/2023 ANNUAL REPORT





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Message from the chairperson

Dear partners, contributors and stakeholders,

At the outset I would like to thank our board of directors for their voluntary time, travel, advice and input into HGA. Your selfless contributions and expertise are greatly appreciated and contribute to the ongoing success of HGA.

Once again, thank you to our sponsors, without whom, we would cease to be able to make a difference in our Harry Gwala district among the needy and less fortunate. It is indeed our duty as farmers and associated up stream businesses and corporates to help upskill and improve the lives of our neighbors in our Harry Gwala district.

As is always said, but is truly meant, HGA are blessed to have Dylan and Misty Weyer heading up HGA on a day to day operational level. They both have a calling and a passion for this work and so thank you to you both.

When John Bredin had the vision for getting this organization going he drew on his contacts in the corporate world. In so doing he approached Peter Christianson with his vision. Peter, all the way from Durban, without hesitation got involved in HGA. Peter is a meticulous accountant with huge corporate experience and knowledge. Peter, with his guidance and the work of Colenbrander helped us achieve PBO status. He has fastidiously ensured our accounting is 100% correct and compliant with our PBO status. His advice and direction has been colossal. A few months ago Peter addressed the board stating that he believed HGA was on its way as an organization and that he would like to retire as a director. I took this as a huge positive from a man of such insight and knowledge that HGA was at last on its feet. Thank you Peter. He has now resigned as a director, but has agreed to field questions and advise us and scrutinize our accounts until the end of our financial year, being 28th February



2024. Peter, no words would do justice to what you have done for HGA and we sincerely thank you.

HGA has 2 main thrusts of focus in our region, namely food security and our student programme.

In recent times we are bombarded in the news, social media, government and various articles about the need for food security in Africa. You will see from Dylan's project report back that this is exactly the space that we are operating in. Food security is a vital need in our rural areas of KZN and Africa and our sponsors of HGA are through this organization getting involved in one of the most crucial areas of need in our country and province.

Our second main focus is the student in-service training programme. Students who study agriculture through the TVET colleges cannot obtain their diplomas without 18 months of practical experience. HGA, with the incredible involvement of Pannar Seed fund 20 students at any one time doing their on farm pracs. I do want to mention that at the outset of this initiative we had more

students and money than we had host farmers. We now have more potential host farmers than we have funding to be able to place more students. This is testament to the success of the programme. We will always have more students than we have host farmers and money because there is such a need and desire from these students to qualify and better their lives. The more funding we receive in this regard the more we can roll out this programme.

In closing, I hope that you find this report inspiring and motivational to continue or start contributing to this worthy organization.

Thank you
R G Stapylton-Smith

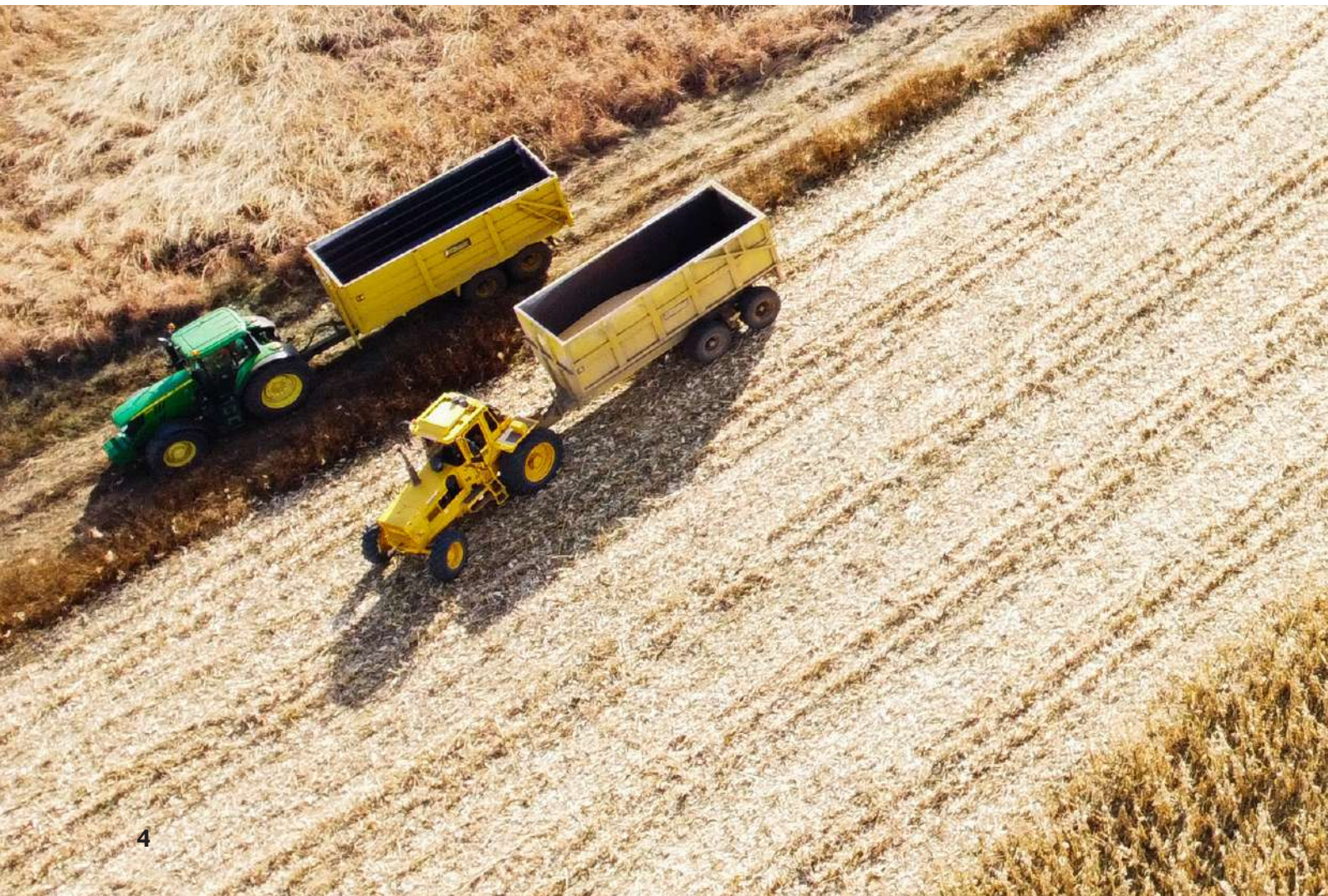
The organisation

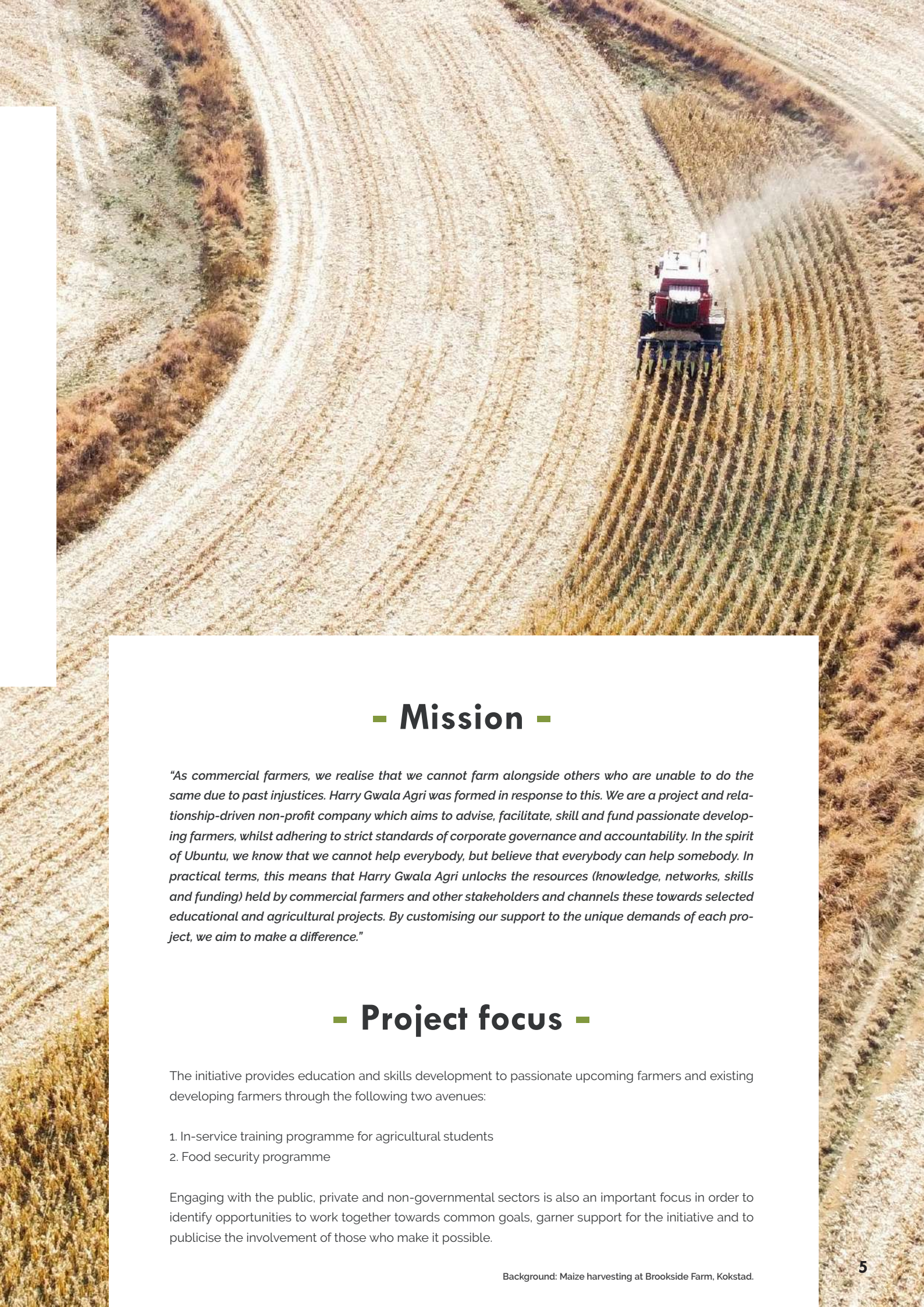
Harry Gwala Agri is a non-profit company aimed at the upliftment of aspiring farmers in the Harry Gwala District Municipality of southern Kwa-Zulu Natal through skills development and education. The initiative was established by commercial farmers and founded on the belief that they can no longer farm alongside others who are unable to do so due to past injustices. It was felt that action needs to be taken to extend support to those for whom agriculture is an important or potential livelihood option and who have the motivation and will to improve not only their own circumstances, but who, with the right guidance and skills, can make a meaningful contribution to the local economy.

In addition to this, part of the impetus behind setting up the company was the realisation among the commercial farmers that many had over time, sought to address the districts inequalities by establishing projects with their staff or neighbouring communities and that these projects would benefit from being consolidated under

one umbrella in order to strengthen their collective impact and to grow the initiative from the platform they laid. Four farmer's associations presently underpin the initiative: Highflats-Ixopo, Ingwe, Zwartberg and Mount Currie.

Harry Gwala Agri was launched as a non-profit company in March 2017 and is a registered NPO (2016/140997/08), PBO (930066774) approved by SARS for tax exemption and a BB-BEE level 1 contributor. The company is chaired by Robert Stapylton-Smith, and vice-chaired by Rory Bryden, both successful dairy farmers in the district. The board consists of seven other directors, all of whom bring a unique set of skills and expertise and whose involvement is governed by a shared belief in the organization's mandate and guiding principles. Together they offer, without remuneration, invaluable direction and support to the company's management comprising programme manager, Dylan Weyer and secretary, Misty Weyer.





- Mission -

"As commercial farmers, we realise that we cannot farm alongside others who are unable to do the same due to past injustices. Harry Gwala Agri was formed in response to this. We are a project and relationship-driven non-profit company which aims to advise, facilitate, skill and fund passionate developing farmers, whilst adhering to strict standards of corporate governance and accountability. In the spirit of Ubuntu, we know that we cannot help everybody, but believe that everybody can help somebody. In practical terms, this means that Harry Gwala Agri unlocks the resources (knowledge, networks, skills and funding) held by commercial farmers and other stakeholders and channels these towards selected educational and agricultural projects. By customising our support to the unique demands of each project, we aim to make a difference."

- Project focus -

The initiative provides education and skills development to passionate upcoming farmers and existing developing farmers through the following two avenues:

1. In-service training programme for agricultural students
2. Food security programme

Engaging with the public, private and non-governmental sectors is also an important focus in order to identify opportunities to work together towards common goals, garner support for the initiative and to publicise the involvement of those who make it possible.

Board of directors



Robert Stapylton-Smith - Chairperson

Rob Stapylton-Smith is a commercial dairy farmer from Eastwolds, Donnybrook, and a director of Stapylton-Smith Farming CC, Baynesfield Estate and the SA Large Herds Conference. He believes that HGA is a vehicle through which to redress the wrongs of the past in our country.



Rory Bryden - Vice Chairperson

Rory Bryden has been a commercial dairy farmer in Kokstad for 20 years, is the former chairperson of the Mount Currie Farmers Association and HGA. He believes HGA presents the opportunity to help developing farmers and people in our community and in the process, secure the future of farmers and food security on our land.



Leigh-Anne Hauff

Leigh-Anne Hauff is a registered Counselling Psychologist and married to a commercial dairy farmer in the Donnybrook area. She is excited about the role that agriculture (and commercial farmers in particular) can play in reducing the huge levels of inequality in our country. She believes that no project is too small and that connection and communication is key.



Phila Mkhize

Phila Mkhize is a Clinical Research Associate by profession but also passionate about agriculture and has devoted a significant amount of time working alongside developing farmers in the Hlutankungu area near Highflats, to make the land productive. He believes that the promotion of agriculture in our rural communities is the backbone of a healthy future in our country.



Douglas Strachan

Dougie Strachan has been a commercial dairy farmer in the area between Umzimkhulu and Highflats since 1973, establishing a successful food security project with two communities in the process. He brings a great deal of wisdom on the subject of poverty alleviation through upskilling farmers at the household level. In seeking to make a meaningful contribution to the rural communities of this district, he believes HGA's mandate is aligned with his own.



Dale Hutton

Dale Hutton spent several years working in the environmental science field before returning to Creighton to farm dairy alongside his family. His work with rural communities across the continent gives him first-hand knowledge of the existing challenges and innovative strategies to address them. As the chairperson of the Ingwe Farmers Association, he is enthusiastic about seeing local communities realising the full potential of agricultural practices in their areas.



Cindy Kidger

Cindy Kidger is a publicist whose PR agency represents numerous agricultural companies in SA. She and her husband own-manage a cheesery on their dairy farm in Creighton, which supplies the hospitality and retail industries in KZN. She is a strong advocate for education and the power of self-respect as a step in the right direction for raising the daily average income of households in Africa.



Nathan Barrow

Nathan Barrow is an agricultural consultant and accountant, passionate about education and mentorship. Having set up and supervised an 800-cow commercial dairy on community owned (restitution) land, he understands the contribution that rural communities can make to food security when they combine latent land with innovative farming techniques to get the best use out of what they have.



Leigh Stokes

Leigh Stokes is an artist living on a commercial dairy farm in Creighton, whose involvement in community associations provides valuable insight into small community dynamics. With experience in the advertising industry both locally and broad, she brings creative thinking to the HGA team and is excited to be working with a dynamic team of individuals committed to the sustainable upliftment of disadvantaged rural communities.

Management team



Dylan Weyer - Project manager

Dylan Weyer has been working as the only full time employee at HGA since April 2018. He is responsible for establishing and driving progress in identified projects as well as managing stakeholder relationships. His passion for rural communities and their development, has helped him facilitate key partnerships between commercial farmers, developing farmers, students and the private sector.



Misty Weyer - Secretary

Misty Weyer has a background in Occupational Therapy, social entrepreneurship and small business development. With 15 years' experience in the non-profit sector, she took on the part-time role of secretary of HGA in 2022 and is responsible for the administrative tasks related to the operations of the organisation.



Student in-service training programme

We began engaging with the Esayidi TVET College in Umzimkhulu in mid-2017 and found that there was no system in place for their farm management students to obtain the 18 months of experiential learning that they require in order to obtain their national diplomas. At the time, this campus alone enrolled upwards of 200 students for this course every year with the vast majority unable to graduate because they were unable to find an opportunity to undertake their training.

The statistics being published by Stats SA clearly indicate that youth with a tertiary qualification are far less likely to fall into the rut of unemployment than those without. Thanks to the establishment of our partnership with Pannar Seed and several commercial farmers coming on board by agreeing to offer students the opportunity to gain experience on their farms, we have been able to assist in a small way to get more graduates into the labour force and particularly within the agricultural sector.

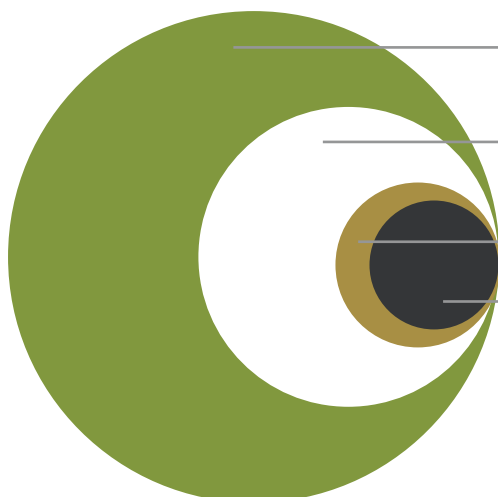
According to Stats SA in the first quarter of 2022 the unemployment rate for those aged 25 – 34 was 41.1 % while those for graduates in this age category was 22.4 %. There is still much to be done to try and get more qualified youth into the work space and this serves as a major motivation for the running of our programme.

There are more than 10 million youth in South Africa between the ages of 15 and 24 and only a quarter are active in the labour force. The average age of our students is 25 and so at a critical age to be able to take hold of their chosen career path when the opportunity presents itself. Our efforts engaging with the colleges and the Department of Higher Education in the first few years of our programme seem to have paid off as we seldom now encounter any issues with our student's diploma applications and the students who complete their training with us graduate and are able to continue along their career path.

88 % of the students we have assisted and who we have been able to maintain contact with have now graduated.



- Impact to date -



165 students have been interviewed by HGA.

101 of these students have been hosted by 31 commercial farmers to obtain their training.

55 % have been female students.

for 43 % of students, the stipend is the only earned income their families are receiving at the time of their enrolment, supporting an average household size of seven people.

R2 million has been committed to student stipends in addition to host farmer contributions.



Past HGA student, Siphiwo Nguse working alongside farm manager, Curtis Van Zyl at Colwehn avocado farm at Hlutankungu.

- Other facts -

- The vast majority of our students (86 %) have been undergraduates undertaking their National Diplomas in Farm Management at one of the training and vocational (TVET) colleges in or near our district.
- The students themselves are mostly from KZN (70 %) but we receive many applicants from the Eastern Cape as well (30 %).
- The average age of students when they enrol in the programme is 25
- For many of our students, the desire to pursue a qualification in agriculture is driven by the ambition to start agricultural businesses in their home communities to provide employment opportunities to their peers.

Student alumni

Maintaining contact with our alumni remains a great source of encouragement for us as we see our programme achieving its desired outcome. At the end of 2022, 66 % of our past students were either employed, self-employed, doing another internship or studying further. This year we are pleased to say that the figure has grown to 80 %.

The figure to the right illustrates the current status of our past students. What is encouraging is the increase in the number that have found formal employment over the last year, as well as those that have found opportunities to be able to start their own businesses. In our last report we described the success that Zikhona Bhantshi and Athayanda Mdanyana had achieved in their cash crop business near Bizana. The duo continue to make great strides and have over the last year expanded their area under cultivation to 5 Ha and are building up a good client base in the area through local retailers, school feeding schemes and bed & breakfasts.

Other past students are also achieving success in their agribusinesses. Sabile Monakali started her business in 2022 growing maize, potatoes and vegetables near Lusikisiki and is also supplying the local Boxer and some of the schools nutrition programmes.

The majority (76 %) of those in formal employment have remained in the agricultural sector with several students having obtained positions on the commercial farms on which they obtained their training.

Current status of past students

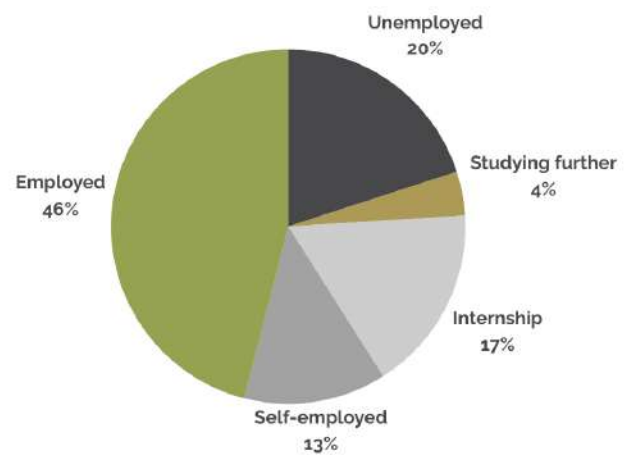




Photo provided by student.

■ Pamela Ncane ■

Pamella Ncane was born in Port Shepstone and lost both her parents by the time she was 17. She was raised by her aunt in Inanda from the age of four and she would tell her while she was growing up that she could not build a house or leave anything behind for her if she died because she had children of her own, but that she is giving her an opportunity to study and be independent so that she can build her own home and achieve her own goals one day. For this reason she said her aunt had been the biggest influence in her life.

While in grade 11, Pamella would visit her cousin who was working at a Sizakala Centre and involved with small-scale livestock farming. It was during this time that she developed a love for agriculture and saw herself one day owning her own livestock farm. As she had not studied science at school, she completed a National Certificate in Primary Agriculture after matriculating, with the hope of studying towards an agricultural degree at university. She unfortunately was not accepted to do this but, unperturbed, undertook a national diploma in farm management at the Esayidi TVET College.

Pamella successfully completed the first 18 months of her diploma in mid-2019 and was then faced with the challenge of trying to find an opportunity to obtain the 18 months of work-place experience required to fulfil the requirements of the qualification. During this time she gave birth to her son and only a month before she was invited to be interviewed for a position in our programme, he tragically died of a heart condition at only 5,5 months old. When she mentioned during her interview that this had taken place we could not believe her tenacity and determination to keep pursuing her dreams despite so recently having suffered this trauma.

Pamella went on to be placed on a prominent dairy farm near Underberg, where she completed her 18 months of work experience. She went on to apply to the Future Farmers Foundation for another internship and found a position as an admin clerk at a call centre in Durban in the interim. In September 2022 she was awarded her National Diploma and a position in the Future Farmers programme shortly thereafter. She hopes to ultimately obtain an internship abroad through the same programme and to one day get that degree she previously aspired towards before going on to become a successful female commercial farmer and set an example for other young women.

- Sipiwo Nguse -

Sipiwo Nguse is from Nokweja, a rural community located near the town of Umzimkhulu in the Harry Gwala District Municipality. For many families who live in rural areas, agriculture is a way of life and can offer an important livelihood option and income stream. Sipiwo's father farmed chickens and pigs while he was growing up and exposed him to agriculture from a young age.

Sipiwo encountered a few challenges at home during his final year of school and was unfortunately unable to obtain a matric pass which led him to undertake a National Certificate in Primary Agriculture, which is an equivalent qualification. Beyond this though the course provides an excellent foundation on which to build a career in agriculture. Clearly a young man hungry for knowledge and experience, while he was doing this course, Sipiwo completed learnerships in carpentry, upholstery and charcoal production and also volunteered at the Tzu Chi Foundation on an ad hoc basis for 12 months and assisted in the delivery of food parcels and blankets to those in need.

He then embarked on a National Diploma in Farm Management and after completing the theory component was selected for placement in our programme in June 2021 and carried out his 18 months of in-service training on an avocado farm near Highflats. He said

he found the first six months of his training tough as he was required to prove himself in the basic tasks on the farm and had to be patient in waiting for bigger responsibility. This came with time but brought with it the challenges that accompany managing people. After completing his training he was offered a full-time position as a foreman on the farm and was faced with the daunting task of leading staff members who were older than him. His reward for this was being given the opportunity to attend a short course in sub-tropical fruit production organised by the Agricultural Research Council which he felt was a real step-up in terms of being more qualified to be involved in avocado production.

One thing that struck us about Sipiwo from the onset of his involvement in our programme was his single-minded determination to succeed. From early on he was faced with the difficult decision of whether to befriend members of the staff who were not always committed to the tasks on the farm and who were engaging in unhelpful activities in their free time, or to isolate himself for the sake of focussing on what he needed to accomplish on the farm but at the cost of being ostracised. He chose the latter and two years after joining our programme his position of employment and the respect he has earned from his co-workers speaks for itself.

He was asked what advice he has for other young aspiring commercial farmers and to this he answered the following which we feel really speaks to his character:





“The first thing I would say is that anyone wanting to do their in-service training must be humble. Secondly, they must be passionate about agriculture because farming is not a playground. You need to be attentive as there are many tasks that you have to learn to do: one day you can be a plumber, then you can be an electrician, then a soil scientist. You also have to be fit enough to do many tasks. You must not be lazy if you want to farm, you have to be energetic.”



- Other alumni stories -

Thembaletu Memela | Donnybrook | Enrolled: Sept 2020 – Mar 2022 (18 months)



Photo provided by student.

- He worked on a cattle farm on the weekends while at school to gain exposure.
- His real passion was to study agriculture but started mechanical engineering at Ethekewini College because an opportunity presented itself for this but was forced to stop as he could not afford the tuition.
- He then started his National Diploma in Farm Management and performed well above the class average.
- He performed well during his in-service training on Andrew Gilson's dairy farm near Underberg and was subsequently given a full-time position on the farm which he has now held for 18 months.
- He is also an accomplished chess player.

Sthembile Sibiya | Umhlali | Enrolled: Apr – Oct 2022 (6 months)



Photo provided by student.

- Sthembile was born in Manguzi, Maputaland and exposed to agriculture from a young age, cultivating maize, spinach and ground nuts alongside her family.
- Living close to the Kosi Lakes she also developed a love for fishing.
- Before studying farm management she picked up work experience as a cashier at Nu-metro and at Steers and then after completing the theory component of her course, obtained 12 months of in-service training on an avocado, macadamia nut and sugarcane farm in Eshowe.
- Her real interest was however in animal production and so applied to our programme and was placed on Olivar Dairy Farm where she saw out her remaining 6 months of training.
- Since graduating she has spent 7 months at Hygro Agri in Mpumalanga where she did a post-graduate internship and subsequently obtained a 2 year internship with the Department of Agriculture and is based closer to home, in Stanger.
- As a side hustle Sthembile has a business planning events and selling gift hampers.

Amahle Qasha | Mount Ayliff/Kokstad | Enrolled: June 2021 – Dec 2022 (18 months)

- Before studying agriculture, Amahle obtained valuable work experience working alongside her grandfather on a community crop cultivation project. This exposed her to the challenges farmers face.
- After completing her studies she was placed on Poleni Farm through our programme and was involved in poultry production.
- After graduating she obtained an internship position at Hygro Agri in Mpumalanga, completing 6 months there before being placed on a cattle farm in KZN where she is currently seeing out the remainder of the contract.



Stalwart member of the Hlutankungu community and the One Home One Garden initiative, Nigel Dennis.





Food security programme

With the original purpose of HGA having been to consolidate the individual efforts of commercial farmers around the district who were assisting or mentoring their staff or neighbours with agricultural projects, HGA's first step was to review the projects in existence so as to ascertain where support could be offered. The projects occurred across a broad spectrum in terms of scale from commercial to subsistence. From the onset we knew that one of our primary roles would be to act as a facilitator or middle man in linking the participants of these projects with the agricultural expertise and assistance that they required which dovetailed well with our concurrent drive to establish partners with agricultural companies in the private sector.

The original projects around which the organisation was established still exist while the commercial farming community continues to extend assistance to those within their sphere of influence and so the number of projects continues to grow. Still being an organisation in its infancy a measured approach has however been required to decide where our biggest impact could be felt in the district and matched to our capacity.

According to Stats SA, in 2022 one out of five South Africans (23,6 %) were affected by moderate to severe food insecurity, while almost 15 % experienced severe food insecurity and Kwa-Zulu Natal was the worst off province in this regard. Kwa-Zulu Natal also had the most number of households classified as poor in the country (based on household monthly expenditure and dependency ratio).

It has been found that there is a correlation between household size and food insecurity with bigger households being more predisposed to this issue. Our countries population grew from 40,6 million in 1996 to 55,7 million in 2016 yet an analysis of land cover change between 1990 and 2014 indicated that subsistence agriculture only increased by 1.1 % over the 24 year period.

With the majority of our districts population residing in rural communitites and having access to land, we feel we can have a noteworthy impact on improving food security by extending support to rural households who would like to be producing their own food but either for the lack of skill or access to resources, are unable to do so.



Bernard Gebashe, a key role-player in the Madakane chapter of the Dougie Strachan's food security project.

- Dougie Strachan's project -

Highflats dairy farmer and HGA director, Dougie Strachan was approached by an employee in 2009 requesting guidance on how best to cultivate the land she had available in the nearby Mazabakweni Community. Dougie agreed to assist and offered to hold a planting demonstration for the community and taught an agro-ecological cultivation method which does not require the need for mechanisation. What followed was a full-time research project involving eight households over a period of two years where Dougie investigated how this method could be employed to improve a household's nutrition through greater diet diversity and earned him a Masters in Sustainable Development in the process.

What has transpired since has been a process of household-to-household extension through labour assistance, shared decision-making and knowledge sharing and support and as a result, an ever-increasing number of households successfully growing their own food. With the success of this model in the Highflats and Umzimkhulu area HGA has looked to scale it up across the

broader district. For these sorts of projects to be successful they rely on good relationships and this has been possible in our case by working through long-standing relationships between the commercial farmers and the leadership of the communities that they neighbour. When beginning work in a new community our first step is to arrange a farmer's day where commercial farmers invite representatives from their neighbouring rural communities (who are often their staff and/or family members of their staff) to attend. At times starter-packs for the representatives are provided which include the repackaged inputs (seed & fertilizer), a hoe or fork and a 20m rope with the planting intervals marked out on it.

Beyond the communities of Mazabakweni (Highflats) and Madakeni (Umzimkhulu) which Dougie has worked alongside for several years now, we have engaged with communities near Franklin, Donybrook, Ixopo and Hlutankungu in the process of scaling up this project.

- Innovative solutions -

developed through Dougie's project

Protecting crops from invasion

In the rural landscape, diversification of one's livelihoods is critical in order to have a safety-net during tough times. Agriculture presents a range of options and the average household will typically have chickens, perhaps a few goats, sheep and cattle and may also be cultivating crops. The latter activity is however challenging when there are animals about and even if one has a secure fence to keep the small and large stock out, the chickens still pose a problem.

To tackle this issue, Dougie has designed a lightweight cage that can be used to cover a 2 x 1.2 x 0.6 m doorframe-sized vegetable bed to protect it from invasion. The frame is covered with plastic chicken mesh, allowing one to be able to water the vegetables with the cage in place, while still being light enough to be easily lifted out of the way when planting, weeding or harvesting need to take place. For the approach to be used optimally, three cages are required allowing one to rotate crops and to have plants in the ground year-round.



Photo taken by Dylan Weyer.

Avoiding reliance on mechanisation

In most rural settings, tractors and their accompanying implements are few and far between and where they can be found they are generally in varying states of disrepair. The hire thereof is also costly and there is generally a waiting list so land preparation and planting is seldom done on time.

The planting method that Dougie teaches removes dependency on mechanisation and is a precise approach using rope marked with the planting intervals and ensures maximum yield is attainable on the land available. Although the labour demands for this scale of agriculture can typically be met by the household, cultivating by

hand is strenuous work and unfortunately the status quo in these areas is that it is often elderly females doing the bulk of the work which for some is unsustainable over a long period.

In response to this issue Dougie has through trial and error, designed a fork that allows one to put their full weight on the implement to penetrate the soil and then has two long arms which allow for leverage to loosen the soil which makes the job of digging planting pits much easier for the elderly and frail. The implement is available for hire for a nominal fee within the community.



Photos taken by Dylan Weyer.

Weed control for the elderly and frail

For the elderly and frail, managing weed control in ones patch is too onerous a task and they prefer to resort to the use of chemical control. This can be a bit of a minefield for those new to the task and particularly the uneducated. Which chemical to use? What quantity is needed relative to the size of my land? When to spray it? What to spray and what not to spray? Is the chemical hazardous to me? Where can I store it out of harm's way? Will my spraying affect my neighbour's crops or even those further afield?

Dougie has been engaging with Farmers Agricare to get the best guidance on which products would suit our farmers, particularly given that within a fairly small area there may be many people growing a great variety of crops and spraying a particular chemical may be to the detriment of your neighbour's garden.

In addition to this, to avoid people having to purchase a knapsack and far more chemical than what they need, a system is being employed whereby a knapsack can be hired that has been calibrated and is ready to be sprayed. A smartphone application is also being used to measure the size of people's plots to further improve the accuracy of the calibration.



Photo taken by Dougie Strachan.

The cost of inputs and accessing quantities appropriate for small-scale cultivation

A major stumbling block to aspiring small-scale farmers is the cost involved in purchasing inputs in the quantities they are typically sold - you don't need 50kg of fertilizer when only cultivating 0.25 Ha. To overcome this, Dougie began purchasing inputs in bulk and then repackaging these into quantities suitable for small-scale farmers. The repackaged inputs were distributed to central points in the community from where they would be sold by a community member, saving the farmer both in terms of the cost of the input and the cost of travel in order to acquire them. Initially the repackaging was being done at the Strachan's farm but the communities are now equipped with a scale and sealer so that this process can be carried out on site and means that fewer trips are required to replenish stock.

The initial purchase of the inputs is done through a fund but the cost is recovered once the inputs have been sold while the seller adds a 10 % mark-up to the cost to be remunerated for their efforts. As there are inherent risks with keeping cash on hand we are look-

ing to move to electronic payments using smartphone applications such as PayShap but the challenge is that this is generally met with scepticism by the older generation.

In order to monitor stock and cashflow the sellers are using a smartphone application called Kobo Collect to monitor stock received, quantities repackaged and amounts sold. This significantly aids the management of the project as well as providing data for us to measure our impact.

Dougie has also been exploring alternative seed and fertilizer options so that the poorest of the poor have the option of growing their own food. The feedback he has received from community members is that the handout of free seed and fertilizer does not translate to more households growing their own food and that when people have had to put money on the table, whatever the value, there is incentive to make it work.



Photo taken by Dylan Weyer.



Water conservation

With our climate seemingly becoming harder and harder to predict, measures to conserve precious resources such as water are important. To reduce the amount of water household's use in their vegetable gardens, Dougie has worked alongside irrigation company Irritech, to design a drip irrigation system. This system also saves the time and energy required to collect water as many households within our communities still do not have access to running water.



Photo taken by Dougie Strachan.

- Creating new jobs -



The future farmers of the Mazabakweni community.

In a country where the number of people who are unemployed far outweighs the number of jobs available, the only way to have an impact on unemployment is to create new jobs. This project is doing just that:

1. The person repackaging and selling the inputs in each community is earning a commission on every input sold.
2. The implements for land preparation and planting and the wherewithal to control weeds by applying chemicals are available for hire, creating the opportunity for able-bodied individuals to charge a fee to carry out these tasks on behalf of others.
3. As the number of people cultivating grows there is a parallel growth in the demand for inputs, which has led to the employment of additional personnel to assist with transportation.

Although our efforts are currently focussed on improving food security at the rural household level, the end goal is to see these households develop in their ability to cultivate good produce and ultimately be in a position to be able to contribute to the local economy through the sale thereof. What has been achieved in the Mazabakweni Community, where Dougie first started this project, is a fine example of this. The growing number of people achieving success in their own gardens led the group to form a stokvel to pool their resources in order to scale up their activity. Their hammermill provided opportunity to small-scale maize growers far and wide to mill their produce allowing the group to diversify their farming to poultry production for example, as well as invest in farming implements to for the cultivation of bigger areas through the income obtained from this.

The cases of Lilydale Farm and the One Home One Garden project in Hlutankungu are also excellent illustrations of how subsistence agriculture can be scaled up in time to a commercial enterprise.



Bambelela Ngcobo and Thokozani Ngcobo enjoying the day to day activities of growing their own produce at Lilydale.

■ Lilydale Farm ■

A portion of Lilydale Farm was sold to government about ten years ago and assigned to the community residing there. They have timber and a beef herd and access to arable land which they have wanted to cultivate. HGA held a planting demonstration here in May 2021 and were approached by a group of young adults wanting to start a cash crop business and were looking for assistance. Rob Stapylton-Smith and Buzz Hauff, who own parts of the farm, agreed to assist and over the course of 2022 and 2023 have contributed in different ways.

In their first season crops of potato and cabbage were grown successfully with the latter being sold to the Spar in Donnybrook, setting the business up nicely to progress forward. Over the course of the last year the group have begun using a tunnel to cultivate their own seedlings and have added dry beans and spinach to the range of crops they are cultivating. Unfortunately they, like so many other farmers who farm in rural communities, have had a challenge with invasion of their crop by goats and so are working as swiftly as they can to install goat-proof fencing. The other challenge has been that of access to reliable manpower. Community members jump at the opportunity to accept temporary employment on commercial farms in the area but this means that they are unreliable to the team trying to maintain productivity of the business.

- One Home One Garden -

Hlutankungu

The One Home One Garden (OHOG) co-operative is a group of small-scale commercial farmers in Hlutankungu south of Highflats. A dynamic and cohesive group who farm independently of one another but benefit from the knowledge sharing and support that comes from being part of a co-operative.

Surveying the hilly terrain around Hlutankungu is quite inspiring. One farmer has their beehives methodically positioned on the side of the valley. On the other side of the valley neat rows of chilli plants are being grown successfully by another farmer. Nigel Dennis, who co-ordinates the activities of the OHOG co-operative, has moved his operation to entirely organic approaches, supplying local retailers in Highflats. His farm is quite an experience to walk through as he is cultivating everything from turmeric, ginger and lemongrass to more regularly encountered crops such as cabbage, spinach and lettuce. He and his son also engage in poultry and rabbit production.

The OHOG group has grown to 22 members including several youth. They continue to meet on a monthly basis to share knowledge and offer support to one another. To safeguard commitment to the group, a R20 admission fee is charged at meetings and if one misses a meeting the fee must still be paid in addition to a R20

fine! Besides the farm visits they do most months, guest speakers are invited to give presentations on various farming topics. Dougie Strachan has lately been engaging quite a lot with the group, giving a presentation one month and then a planting demonstration the next. The group seem interested to adopt some of his cultivation approaches and we are excited to see how this may entice more households in the area into food production.

Soil test results taken in the co-operative members lands indicated that many had concerning acidity levels. With the high cost of inputs, HGA undertook to assist and approached Geysers Fertilizer and Lime who have supported our projects in the past and we were incredibly grateful when they agreed to donating no less than 35 tonnes of lime to the group. We would like to thank them for the generous support, as well as Stapylton-Smith Farming CC who covered the cost of the transportation of the lime. With improved soil quality comes improved productivity and Nigel Dennis says that the majority of the members of the group are selling some of their produce and because they are farming across quite a large geographic area, they can supply local demand without being in competition with one another.



Market day in Hlutankungu with HGA programme manager, Dylan Weyer, HGA past student, Onwabile Mnethu and HGA director and member of the One Home One Garden group, Phila Mkhize.



- Partnership with CHEP -

CHEP South Africa's forestry and milling division owns 18 pine timber farms in the Harry Gwala District Municipality. Brambles, of which CHEP is a subsidiary, has a number of sustainability goals, one of which is to better the communities within which they work through improved food security. With this in mind, the company approached HGA in early 2021 wanting to achieve this for their staff residing on their timber farms, some of which are located in remote parts of the district a long way from retailers. The project was launched in August 2021 on Runnymede farm near Swartberg and once the garden had been established there and had begun to be productive the next garden was established at Draaikloof farm near Kokstad.

A total of 208 m² of vegetable cultivation has been established at Draaikloof and 176 m² at Runnymede and to date entirely organic methods have been employed. Plans are now afoot to broaden the focus of this project to include some of the rural communities that neighbour CHEP's timber farms. Preliminary work has already taken place at Mqondekweni community near Bulwer and the modus operandi will be to establish food gardens on the premises of the local school. This will create a great space from which to teach the school pupils about the importance of being able to produce one's own food and to involve past or present HGA students in the process of the management of the gardens and the sharing of knowledge and skills. The school garden could also offer the perfect space from which to engage the broader community in planting demonstrations and general farmer's days which dovetails well with HGA's existing food security project.



Other projects

- Brookside Farm -

Brookside Farm near Kokstad was sold to the government in 2008 by the Van Niekerk family and entrusted to the care of the previous employees on the farm. They had a tough time maintaining productivity on the farm as they lacked the capital to purchase the inputs needed to grow a crop and being tenants and not owners, were not able to apply for a loan. Although having spent many years on the

Staff at Runnymede timber farm enjoying the produce from their garden.



Cecelia Gokela who is responsible for the day-to-day planning at Brookside Farm.

farm employed in various capacities, they lacked the expertise to manage the farm successfully on their own.

In 2019, they were informed by government that they needed to increase the productivity of the farm or risk losing it. At this point they approached the son of the former owner and agricultural contractor, Jed Van Niekerk, for assistance who in turn approached HGA Vice-Chairperson, Rory Bryden and together they put a plan in place to assist. They decided to concentrate on the cultivation of 56Ha of maize with Jed assisting with the mechanisation and Rory with the inputs and both offering mentorship through the process.

Three seasons after Jed and Rory first offered assistance to the six member Brookside Farming CC team in 2020, they are now in a favourable position, having already settled all of their accounts ahead of the harvesting of their maize this year and moving positively to-

wards financial independence. As a result of this sure footing they are now in a position to be able to expand and will be planting an additional 14 Ha of maize this season as well as doubling their potato production to 4,5Ha. A favourable alliance has been forged with Jed where the cost of the mechanisation support he offers the farm is offset against the cost of leasing a portion of the farm for grazing.

Both he and Rory continue their roles as mentors and have been impressed by the excellence with which the team have executed all procedures on the farm. The entirety of the crop management is carried out by them from the spray programme to fertilizer application, making their growth in knowledge very apparent. Sadly, despite having been entrusted with the farm by government 15 years ago, they still have not obtained title deed to the property and this remains a major obstacle to their progress and hampers any prospects of new business ventures.

Annual Financial Statements

Harry Gwala Agri NPC

(Registration number: 2016/140997/08)

Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 28 February 2023

Statement of Financial Position as at 28 February 2023

	Notes	2023 R	2022 R
Assets			
Current Assets			
Trade and other receivables	2	2 244	-
Cash and cash equivalents	3	567 245	227 696
		569 489	227 696
Total Assets		569 489	227 696
Equity and Liabilities			
Equity			
Retained income		569 489	200 886
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	4	-	26 810
Total Equity and Liabilities		569 489	227 696

Harry Gwala Agri NPC

(Registration number: 2016/140997/08)

Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 28 February 2023

Statement of Comprehensive Income

	Notes	2023 R	2022 R
Income	5	2 141 844	1 104 230
Operating expenses			
Accounting fees		30 526	46 156
Bank charges		2 169	1 896
Computer expenses		1 539	5 711
Employee costs	6	677 231	676 289
Entertainment expenses		252	-
General expenses		1 620	-
Insurance		15 663	14 348
Meeting costs		4 121	1 180
Motor vehicle expenses		8 999	13 000
Printing and stationery		4 431	6 143
Project expenses	7	995 508	335 609
Telephone and fax		1 007	895
Travel - local		25 177	38 951
Workmen's Compensation Commissioner		3 629	1 664
		1 771 872	1 141 842
Operating profit (loss)		369 972	(37 612)
Finance costs	8	(1 369)	(234)
Profit (loss) for the year		368 603	(37 846)
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income (loss) for the year		368 603	(37 846)

Publicity

- CK Communications media campaign -

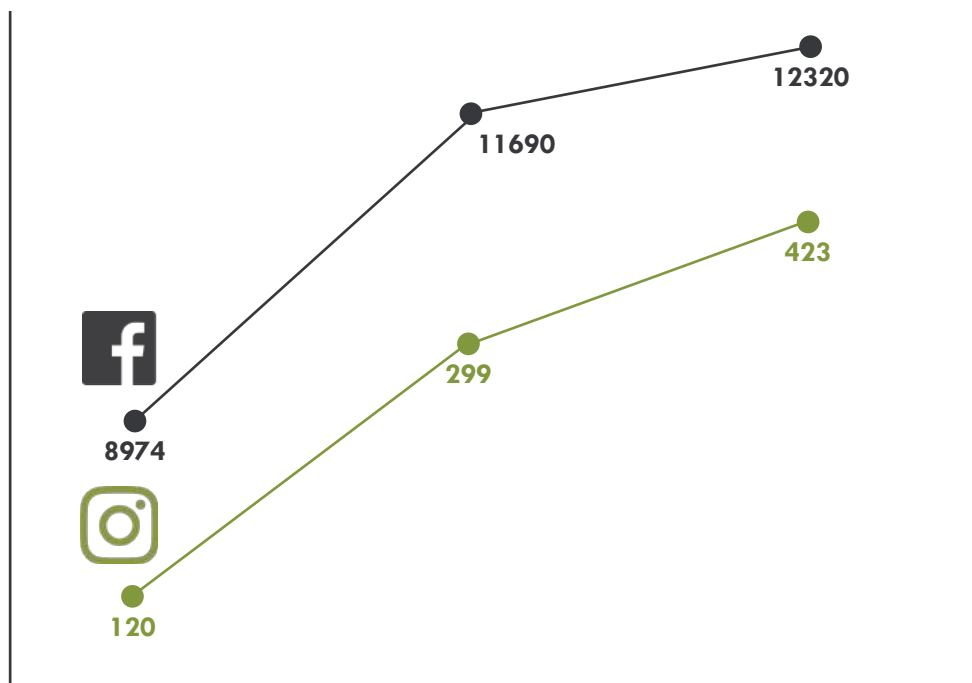


On 1 July this year, a media campaign led by CK Communications was launched with the purpose of garnering further financial support for the organisation but also to give extra publicity to our loyal partners and acknowledgement for their support. The campaign is focussed on growing awareness about the work we are doing through our social media platforms, namely Facebook and Instagram and using these avenues to direct interested parties to our website.

The PR strategy includes tailored content presented and positioned for HGA's ideal audiences based on the agreed objectives together with a highly targeted social media advertising campaign. The campaign is still in its inception phase, with the current focus on building awareness, objectives and the organisations numerous successes. As such, the page had grown by 3346 followers on Facebook and 303 followers on Instagram in the first four months. In addition, there had been 185 clicks to the website to find out more.

Building on the current progress made on HGA's Facebook and Instagram pages, CK Communications will continue with its efforts to build on trust and connection with individuals and businesses to drive funding support in the coming year.

The graphic below shows the growth in followers on each of these platforms which has included 12 698 comments, likes and shares as well as 185 clicks to our website.





- HGA film -

As part of the drive to grow awareness of what our initiative is achieving and to publicise the involvement of our farmers associations and partner companies, Usihle Molohe, a seriously talented young videographer and film-maker from Underberg, has put together a short documentary on HGA titled "Joining hands to make the land productive" which we have published on our Youtube channel (HGA). We recommend checking out Usihle's Facebook page, Gnarls Media to see more of his fantastic work.



Partners

■ Ongoing partners and their commitment to HGA this year ■

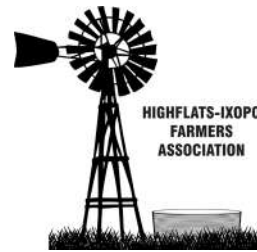
Partner		Investment	Allocation
	Mascor (Partner since October 2017)	Loan of a Toyota Hilux 4x4 Extended Cab	HGA
	Pannar Seed (Partner since February 2018)	R576 000	Student stipends and running costs of in-service training programme
	De Heus (Partner since March 2018)	R3/tonne/month of feed sold in the Harry Gwala District	HGA running costs
	Clover (Partner since July 2018)	R15 000/month	HGA running costs
	Meadow Feeds (Partner since August 2018)	R5/tonne/month of feed sold in our district	HGA running costs

■ Additional contributions made to HGA this year ■

Partner		Investment	Allocation
	The Co-op Community Trust	R5000/month until the end of August 2023	HGA running costs
	Limagrain South Africa	12 bags of SC506 maize seed	Dougie Strachan project
	Mount Fifty	R60 000	HGA running costs
	Geyser's Fertilizer & Lime	35 tonnes of lime	One Home One Garden Co-op

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our four partnering farmers associations: Highflats-Ixopo, Ingwe, Mount Currie and Swartberg which remain the backbone of our initiative. This year again, 20% of the funding received by HGA has come from individual members of these associations.



- Peter Christianson -



- Lianne Ashton -

Although not being a commercial farmer in our district nor even a resident, when John Bredin approached Peter Christianson to consider becoming a director of HGA at its inception in 2017, he obviously felt it was a cause worth supporting and subsequently devoted many hours in selfless service to our organisation. Peter is a Chartered Accountant with over 20 years' experience sitting on the Boards and Audit Committees of several Public Sector organisations and so played an invaluable role in steering HGA towards sound governance. He was particularly instrumental in the lengthy applications to SARS which ultimately led to our achieving Section 18A status. Peter worked alongside former HGA secretary Sarah Firth and our current secretary Misty Weyer in putting together the monthly management accounts and I am sure both would agree that they learnt a great deal from him. Peter and his wife Pam emigrated to the UK in 2023 to be closer to their family and we wish them a prosperous time there.

Lianne continues to volunteer her exceptional talent to our organisation by showcasing the work that we are doing through her beautiful photographs which have proven invaluable for the publicisation of our programmes and our partners that make them possible. Unless otherwise stated all photographs included in this report were taken by her.





Company Registration No:

2016/140997/08

Registered with Social Development as a Non-Profit Organisation:

218-645 NPO

Public Benefit Organisation No:

930066774

Level 1 BB-BEE Contributor



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