The Limpopo region is known for citrus of high internal quality and low waste. In a season like 2008 it was an important characteristic to have in a branding approach. The next important factor is timing. Because of our climate this area produces the first fruit to be exported out of South Africa in virtually every variety. When one looks at branding characteristics, these mentioned characteristics would most probably be the most important. The biggest effect on the production of citrus in the Limpopo region will not be the characteristics of the fruit but the people who produce it. Through time different people played their role in the development or destruction of Mankind and its abilities in the region.

According to archeological work done it seems as if the first group of immigrants or migrants to live in the area were the Bushman. Except for a few paintings they had very little influence on the area. After them the Venda people arrived. They utilised the land for both animals and the production of food by cultivation. The next group of people to arrive were the Lemba people who claimed to be of Jewish descent. They melted gold and other metals in the area. They integrated with the Venda people over time. The second last group of immigrants were the ones of European descent. This group contributed a lot to new technology and management styles. They increased productivity, infrastructure, and a lot of monetary benefits. They ignored one of their own values in “all people are equal under the law” and found enough excuses to apply it only to those people who looked like them. This caused an unbalanced situation where the majority of people in the area did not have the same access to opportunities as some other people. Like in the rest of South Africa we face the challenge to put right the imbalances of the past without destroying the opportunities of the future. The last group of people to arrive were the Zimbabweans who destroyed their future in the process of putting right the past.

In agriculture, under which citrus production falls, the restoration of land ownership is the process that drives the reform process. Unfortunately up to now a lot of focus by government has fallen on land transformation instead of knowledge and skills transformation. For some reason farmers were identified as the enemy and not part of the solution. The empowerment of the people with claims on the land by the development of their potential has so far fallen flat. The people need to be taught how to utilise the land as a resource to sustain and improve themselves and those not so fortunate and to compete in a world that becomes more competitive every day. The only source of knowledge needed to be transferred to the previously disadvantaged, is the knowledge of the existing farmers. Only those who befriended and respected them for who they are and the knowledge they have will obtain the knowledge. This focus on land reform instead of people reform has opened the doors for all the Samaritan vultures to take the benefits which should have flowed to the target groups (the claimants). The land goes to the people and the access to the real benefits of utilization goes to the Samaritan vultures who mine out these highly developed and productive farms and spit them out after sucking them dry.

Private initiative under the Nzelele Valley Initiative and goodwill between existing farmers and claimants of land in the Limpopo region has reached the point where skills can be maintained, transferred and grown and people previously disadvantaged can experience access to opportunity and not just land. We have successfully established the relationships, the structures necessary, trained the different people

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Mixed Fortunes for 2008 Season

JOHN EDMONDS

The 2008 South African citrus export season yielded a mixed bag of results with an initial strong pull from the markets due to excellent lemon and navel prices, and good grapefruit results in the earlier part of the season.

Early in the Valencia season signals from the marketplace prompted the Citrus Marketing Forum (CMF) into meeting on 12th August where discussion amongst grower representatives and exporters revealed that due to the high initial prices for Navel oranges and condition problems experienced with some Navel cultivars, stocks in the markets had built up and were likely to affect the prospects for the export of Valencia oranges. Growers and exporters were urged to consider very carefully the size of fruit to export and the markets to which they sent. This proved to be a timely intervention and the “spike” in Valencia exports at the end of the 2007 season which antagonized our European counterparts, was not repeated in 2008 as can be illustrated in the chart below.

Comparing 2008 exports from participating countries of the Southern Hemisphere Association of Fresh Fruit Exporters to 2007 there was an increase in exports to northern and southern Europe as well as the Middle East. UK volumes stayed constant, whilst Russia (E.Europe) and South East Asia received less.

South African grapefruit exports to all markets decreased from 2007 to 2008 except for Russia (up 24%). Lemon volumes to all markets increased, except to the Far East/Asia (down 18%). Navel volumes to N Europe (up 22%), S Europe (up 38%), Middle East (up 22%) and USA (up 33%) all increased at the expense of Far East (down 33%), Russia (down 20%) and UK (down 5%). Valencia volumes to northern Europe went up 8% as did those to the Middle East. Without the “spike” in week 38 Southern Europe ended down 24% having been 2% up as late as week 36. UK was down 9%, Russia up 1% and the Far East is up 4%. Soft citrus exports to Russia doubled, N Europe up by 31%, Middle East up by 23% and Canada up by 55%; UK down by 9% and the USA down by 40%.

The variety focus groups estimate their respective crops in March. Once the season starts they have monthly teleconferences where they review the season to date and revise their projections. 2007 proved to be a difficult year with respect to estimating export volumes out of South Africa with most citrus variety estimates well outside the 10% target variance. However the 2008 estimate proved to be extremely close to the final export volumes with the exception of lemons which were 18% over estimate. Grapefruit volumes were 1% under estimate, as were soft citrus. Navel were 9% over estimate whilst valencias came close at 3%. Overall the total citrus exports were 5% higher than the original estimate.

Limpopo Region

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People in different levels, employed those trained and eager for employment into positions matching their competency and abilities. We have identified people for further training and encourage them to take part in the training to improve themselves and to empower themselves for further promotions. The beneficiaries of the land are now empowered to decide for themselves up to where in the value chain they want to take part. We are now ready for land reform to take place as we have empowered the recipients of the land to make informed decisions on how to utilise the land. Both the claimants and farmers now await Government to do their bit to remove the last stumbling blocks by facilitating the actual land transfer for all the people of the region to individuals and collectively move on with their lives and face the opportunities of the future.

Luck is the point where qualification and opportunity meet.

Wealth will migrate to those in the population with the highest skills base, not those with the highest land base.