



Newsletter



First Quarter
2023

Our Strategic Partners

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Strachan's Food Security Project



Limagrains ZAAD South Africa

In the process of scaling up the Strachan's food security project, HGA has looked for opportunities to be able to arrange farmer's days in new communities in order to assist in getting them going with the cultivation of their home gardens. Part of the reason why this project has been a success is that we have worked through existing and long-established relationships between our commercial farmers and the rural communities that many of them share boundaries with.

In spring 2022 we worked alongside John Bredin to arrange a farmer's day in the Ofafa community near Ixopo which was attended by 26 community members. Dougie Strachan performed the planting demonstration and John Bredin covered the cost of a starter pack for each participant to kick-start the cultivation of their home gardens.

HGA has been working hard to establish new partners in order to scale up this project even further and are very grateful to **Limagrains ZAAD South Africa** who have kindly agreed to supply 12 bags of the SC506 maize seed that the Strachan's have been using in the starter packs for some time now.

Beyond the costs required to roll out this project, the involvement of the commercial farming community is critical and we welcome the input from any farmers within our district who neighbour a rural community and know that they would be keen to get more involved in home garden cultivation.

Dougie Strachan and Mr Gebashe in Mr Gebashe's garden in Madakeni near Umzimkhulu

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 the remainder of the farm, agreed to assist and over the last year have contributed in different ways to get the group going.

After Graeme Horne had soil samples analysed the first challenge to address was the need to improve the drainage in the roughly 0.5Ha plot. A furrow was excavated and thereafter land preparation began which involved the application of about 2 tonnes of 4:3:4 and the disking of the plot three times. Ducky Ngcobo, who grew up in this community, also assisted with this process.

Planting began in September 2022 with potatoes and cabbage and, to the credit of the six individuals involved in the project, they managed to sell their cabbage crop to the Spar in Donnybrook which remains willing and keen to purchase more produce from them. Going into autumn of 2023 they have cabbage and dry beans in the ground and have taken things a step further by beginning the process of growing their own seedlings.

The next challenge to overcome is that of irrigation and Irrigation and Drainage Services have been approached to put together a low pressure sprinkler system. We look forward to seeing further strides taken by this group of enthusiastic farmers.



Photo left: screenshot from HGA film (Usihle Molohe); Right: current cabbage crop – March 2023 (Dylan Weyer)

In-service Training Programme update



We are soon to place our 100th student and thought it a good opportunity to provide some background to the students we have been supporting:

- 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 and there is a fairly even split between male and female applicants.
- For around half of our applicants, the stipend they begin receiving upon enrolling in the programme, is the only 'earned income' their households are receiving at the time with the average household size being seven.
- 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.

Photo: Sanele Madikizela from Bizana completed 18 months on the Reynolds farm near Ixopo and was an asset in the management of the calves on the farm





Overcoming setbacks in a determined pursuit of a career in agriculture

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 instead.

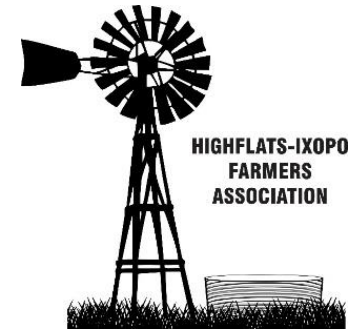
Pamella successfully completed the first 18 months of her diploma in mid-2019 and was then faced with the challenge of trying to find an opportunity to obtain the 18 months of work-place experience required to fulfil the requirements of the qualification. During this time she gave birth to her son and 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 and completed her 18 months of work experience there. 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 and then to go on to become a successful female commercial farmer and set an example for other young women.



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The backbone of HGA



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