

Recapitulation and Development Program (RADP)...

The buzz phrase is “Do not Duplicate PLUG in”

Tito Vorster

Tito Vorster and his partner Prof. Desiré Vorster are Simbra commercial farmers in Piet Retief. The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform has appointed Tito as a mentor of three farmers Jeremia Mathebula, Nico Ramathuba and Wilson Ngema. Each of these farmers is leasing a farm from the Department. The question is: can this program (RADP) work?

The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform is committed and focussed to this program. They are responsive and enthusiastic with a sense of urgency in dealing with all the pitfalls and difficulties that are encountered along the way. The Piet Retief office of this department is an outstanding example of service delivery. Sihle Moloi is the Project Manager appointed by the Department.

The Objectives of RADP are:

- to increase production,
- to guarantee food security,

- to graduate small farmers into commercial farmers;
- to create employment opportunities within the agricultural sector; and
- to establish rural development monitors.

RADP requires that land reform farmers should enter into partnership with either a Strategic Partner or a Mentor for the purpose of capacity building, market linkages, business plan etc. Through mentorship programme the Department wants to ensure that the farms are operated in a sustainable manner, there is maintenance of production disciplines and a good value chain integration.

The contractual responsibility of a mentor is as follows:

- Mentor one or two farmers or a group of farmers
- Conduct farm assessments and oversee due diligence exercises
- Prepare a farm plan, business plan and a teaching schedule/plan for the mentee and mentor
- Visit the mentees farm on a regular basis or according to an agreed schedule
- Be readily available to answer queries from the mentee
- Provide a regular input to the farmer and the Department on the progress with the enterprise.

Mentors can however, play a much broader role, other than just the contractual obligation as stipulated in the agreement. By embracing this program mentors can



Nico Ramathuba and Jeremia Mathebula



Wilson Ngema and his son Xtolisa



▶ Tremble

◀ **Sihle Moloi**,
project manager,
alongside Nico and
Jeremia



▶ Tassle

build bridges across our polarised and racially divided nation. Make new friends and introduce our new rising commercial farmers to the broader agricultural family and structures. We need to ensure that these farmers do not create new race based structures but get plugged into the existing structures.

Approach to Mentorship

- It is important that mentors accept appointments as mentors of farmers in their close proximity. There needs to be a rapport between the mentor and mentee and the mentor needs to be committed to the program. Tito approached this project as follows:
- He selected his candidates carefully and ascertained that he and the candidates had a shared vision.
- He made sure that they understood his role, accountability and work ethics.
- He established the principle that he is not employed or farming on their behalf, but to mentor and transfer skills and knowledge.
- From the outset he introduced the mentees to business partners and got them plugged into existing structures.
- From day one it was understood by all concerned that the grant received from the Government was not for 4X4 vehicles, fancy salaries or overheads expenses. The purpose of the grant is inherent to the program

i.e. "RECAPITALISATION". The grant is hence only spent on improving infrastructure in order to increase sustainable food production.

- The candidates are introduced to service providers in respect of each and every aspect of farming. All service providers buy into the Recapitalisation Program and are keen to add value to ensure the success of the program.
- The farmers are also introduced and exposed to existing organised agriculture.
- Training takes place on an ongoing basis.
- Governance over the grants is important. Care must be taken that sound business sense is applied in respect of each payment made. Payments should be in line with the business plan presented to the

Department and for recapitalisation only. Care is taken that nothing is bought without at least two quotes.

- The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform has also improved their governance over the grants paid by them. Grants are now paid in tranches and the mentors and farmers must report back and give account prior to further payments.
- Although not required, we are in continuous contact and discussions with the project leader Sihle Moloi and other members of staff based in Nelspruit and are looking forward to present our progress made at the next reporting date.

Cattle Farming Strategy

The farmers produce weaners for the feedlot market as well as breeding replacement heifers for their own herds.

We decided to farm with Simbra and Simbra-type cattle. The Simbra breed is an all-rounder that adapts easily, is disease resistant, fertile and an easy breed to farm with. Most important though is the fact that the Simbra weaners are in high demand by all feedlots. This is important because feedlots are the target market for these farmers.

It was an easy task to convince Nico, Jeremiah and Wilson to buy registered, performance tested Simbra bulls, as herd sires. This enabled us to select the correct bulls on Estimated Breeding Values (EBV's) and structural correctness, for their herd breeding objectives. This very concept was accepted by all three farmers from the outset. We also bought some Simmentaler bulls for corrective breeding on the more Brahman type Simbra cattle.

Our first priority was to improve the cattle handling facilities on each farm, fix and create grazing camps and water supply to each camp where necessary. Careful attention was given to an annual feeding plan for each farm.

These farmers are paying their own way. They are already in a position to pay the running expenses of the farms

and carry their own overheads. Between the three farms they have already employed twenty employees.

Our Business Partners

The **Simmentaler and Simbra Cattle Breeders' Society of Southern Africa** have also committed technical expertise to this project and will make their Technical Advisors available to ensure the breeding herds are improved to rapidly meet their breeding objectives. Each animal within the herd will be evaluated and non-performing animals (most emphasis on reproduction) will be culled and replaced with superior breeding stock. This Simmentaler/Simbra Breeders Society has over 500 members. The Society has also indicated their willingness to participate in this program on a broader national basis. The Society will also provide ongoing training to these emerging commercial farmers.

A major partner in the project is **BREEDPLAN South Africa**. BREEDPLAN® is the world's leading recording and performance system and has about half the recording market in cattle in Southern Africa. BREEDPLAN recently announced a partnership with the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), South Africa's leading Agricultural Research Institute. Producers in the project will be able to maintain proper records of their whole cow herds. This will enable them to benchmark the performance of their own herd against other commercial herds and at the same time be shown how to select the correct animals to insure that genetic improvement is made every year. Cows that fail to produce a calf every year will be identified and culled. Users will be put onto a herd management program (HerdMaster) to ensure that details of all events are logged and properly recorded. Producers will also attend various courses in herd management. BREEDPLAN SA runs a Stockman's school for both commercial and beginner farmers and producers in the project will receive the required training. Jeremiah and Nico have already attended last year's Stockman's School.



Maria Dlamini (middle) from First National Bank

Molatek will be providing the cattle feed expertise and their area representative, Enlin Neveling, will be calling upon each of these farmers on a regular basis to ensure that the nutritional needs of their cattle are looked after.

First National Bank has also joined this project. They have made all their banking facilities available to these farmers, inclusive of internet banking and other financial services. They have also set up internal control procedures to ensure that the grants received remains under the joint control of the farmers and the mentor. The Piet Retief branch of FNB has also made Maria Dlamini available to this project and she is adding immense value.

In Conclusion

The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform has initialised the "Recapitalisation and Development Plan" strategy. They cannot implement it on their own. Each commercial farmer, irrespective of race, can add value to this strategy by participating in this process. South Africa, our people and our Government needs success stories in Agriculture. You can make a difference, create jobs and alleviate poverty. Do your share, make your expertise available!!! ■

Jeremia Mathebula

Jeremia is 31 years old. He is a farmer and also a silviculture contractor in forestry. He was at school in Mphulusi in Mayflower and graduated at Vista University (now the University of Johannesburg) where he obtained a B.Admin degree.

Jeremia is married to Thandi and they have two children of which his first born is a learner at a private school, Maranatha, in Piet Retief.

Jeremia wishes to become a Simbra Stud Breeder and works hard to ensure the success of the RADP.

Wilson Ngema

Wilson is a year young experienced business man. He has a close relationship with his son Xtolisa which is actively involved in this project and also the farm manager on this project.

Wilson is 56 years of age and has been involved in agriculture for many years. He has already befriended his neighbours and is well known in the broader community as one of the successful farmers. It will be demeaning to refer to a man of his stature as an "emerging farmer". Wilson has arrived and is going places. Watch this space.

Nico Ramathuba

Nico is an astute business man. He graduated as an optometrist and is the sole owner of an optical laboratory. He is a B. Optom graduate from the University of Limpopo.

Farming is in his blood and he is passionate about Simbra cattle. Nico needs no motivation, he is a self start and has the drive and desire to be a successful commercial farmer.

Nico is married to Nondumiso and they have three children. Their firstborn, Fulu is already in grade 1 in Maranatha.