



VREDENDAL SAMEWERK BOERE (VSB)

Vredendal

Project objectives:

- Purchase five hectares of water from LORWUA.
- Prepare soil for planting.
- Plant 2 hectares of tomatoes, 1.5 hectares of sweet corn and 1.5 hectares of cabbage.
- Harvest and sell.

Project Timeframe:

4 months

Long term goals:

- Secure additional water.
- Secure longer term access to land.
- Develop 20 hectares.

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The Vredendal Samewerk Boere, or VSB as they are also known, is a successful emerging farming project located on the outskirts of Vredendal on the West Coast. The emerging farmers group consists of seven members, most of whom are women. Jan Fortuin, one of VSB's founding members and current chairman, was born and raised on a farm and is thus no stranger to agriculture. Fortuin says: "The VSB project

wine grapes which produces about 40 tons of grapes per year. The project delivers the grapes to the Trawal Cellars. "We used to deliver to Vredendal Cellars, which is obviously much closer, but they could not pay us on delivery, and in a small business, cash flow is its life-blood," says Fortuin.

"We also plant about five hectares of cash crop each year," says Fortuin. "The farm has 15 hectares under drip irrigation and although we try to be efficient, water is expensive as we pay industrial rates to the municipality. We are in negotiations with the Lower Olifants Water Users Association (LORWUA) to purchase five hectares of



started in 1998 when a group of unemployed, previously disadvantaged people were given the opportunity to farm on 20 hectares of commonage land belonging to the Matzikama Municipality. Currently the group farms five hectares of

irrigation water at about R1,200 per hectare per year". In order to achieve this VSB applied for funding from the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry's IWRM programme for a project that aims to test the process by which emerging farmers can ac-





Water for Resource Limited Farmers and Reform



cess water from established water user associations like LORWUA.

“We to started small and built a sustainable business, model” says Fortuin. “Fresh produce is labour intensive and thus more expensive to produce than wine grapes.”

A concern that the group has is that the Matzikama Municipality recently withdrew its support. “The municipality used to give us a tremendous amount of support, at one point they were even paying us salaries,” says Fortuin. “However their policy has changed and they no longer give this type of support.” Despite new challenges, the VSB emerging farmers remain positive: after all what would farming be without bit of “sukkel”.

