

1 AGRA / CCF PARTNERSHIP PRESENTS SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC LECTURE FOR FARMERS

Agra, in partnership with the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), presented practical farming courses in 2006 and 2007, tailored to suit the specific needs of farm workers. To date, 113 farm workers and farmers have been provided with the unique opportunity of gaining additional farming knowledge and skills, so improving their productivity and that of their agricultural operations.

This concept has now been extended to benefit a wider community.

As a result of the great success and hands-on approach of those courses, Agra presented a one-day public lecture on Thursday, 9 August 2007 at the Agra/Standard Bank Ring for emerging farmers, weekend farmers and farmers who are interested in learning the basic principles of practical farming .

The public lecture was officially opened by the Honourable Minister Nangolo Mbumba, Minister of Education. Honourable Minister Mbumba referred to the partnership between Agra and the CCF, highlighting the link between conservation and economic goals. "While farming may be considered mainly an economic activity, if applied properly, conservation plays an important role in managing our resources to achieve conservation as well as economic goals" Minister Mbumba said in his opening remarks.

Agra's CEO, Peter Kazmaier said that "since Agra's inception more than 27 years ago, Agra has always been a trusted partner of the local farming community. From Agra's side we would like to assure you that we shall continue to remain a partner as long as we have a role to play, a contribution to make and as long as we can offer a realistic business service to the farming community."

"Like any other industry, farming methods and best practices change continuously. What is applicable today might no longer be appropriate tomorrow. This year we may have ample rainfall and sufficient fodder to feed our animals, whereas tomorrow we might be faced by a drought. Our challenge is to ensure that we make the best use of our resources, maximise the output from all our efforts, but at the same time ensure that we act responsibly towards the conservation and future sustainability of our natural resources," says Kazmaier.

This means that we need to understand agricultural economical cycles and be prepared to operate within these cycles with a view of achieving long-term sustainability rather than short-term profit maximisation. What this means is that responsible and productive farming requires thorough planning, the acquisition of skills and experience, a lot of confidence and, above all, patience. Farming is unfortunately not a 'get rich quick industry'. At the same time we need to conserve our land to ensure we can continue farming productively the following year. That often means putting something back, and not using everything at once. We also want to make sure that our livestock obtain the best possible prices at auctions, that our agronomic output improves and that our farming effort is profitable. "

Practical demonstrations and exhibitions by Agra, the CCF and Voermeester on topics such as livestock auctions, livestock husbandry and management, livestock production, managing predators and supplementation of cattle formed part of the public lecture.

100 participants including business people attended this first public lecture by Agra in cooperation with the Cheetah Conservation Fund.

Due to the success of this first public lecture by Agra and the CCF, similar public lectures will also be presented in other areas of the country in future.