

## **Agra – Involved at the community level**

Agra's objectives include, amongst others, to strengthen its core business, build and maintain constructive relationships with role players and to place people into the heart of our business. As a co-operative, Agra's profits are channeled to shareholders and a certain profit percentage is ploughed back into the development of Namibia.

Agra assists initiatives that support the productive and optimal use of our natural resources, including the development of Namibia's human capital. The positive feedback received from these initiatives promotes yet another Agra objective, namely establishing the Co-operative as a brand name and the preferred partner in agriculture.

Agra supports the following institutions and initiatives:

### **Agra/Dagbreek Agricultural Project**

The project includes the cultivation of vegetables on the premises of the Dagbreek School for the mentally impaired. The project teaches the children various aspects and skills of cultivation and aims to promote self-sufficiency. Fresh and processed produce is sold from a stall on the school premises. When the school's garden cannot meet demand, fresh produce is procured from Stampriet and other suppliers. In his project report Mr. Paul du Plessis expressed his gratitude to Agra for its support, which enabled the procurement of equipment to accommodate groups of ten school children, each with their own gardening implements, in the garden at a time.

The installation of a sprinkler system has resulted in the production of high quality products. Expansion is planned and a greater area will receive shade netting. This initiative has led other institutions, including Eros Primary School, Baumgartsbrunn Primary School and the Life Change Centre in Windhoek, to Dagbreek School to learn more.

### **Agra/ Cheetah Conservation Fund Farmworkers' Course**

In 2006 the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) in association with Agra designed a practical agriculture course for farm workers. Two courses were presented in 2006 and, due to popular demand, three courses have been held to date in 2007 at the CCF's Research and Training Centre.

The course aims to equip farm owners and workers with the necessary practical experience and knowledge regarding effective livestock management and the sustainable use of natural resources. The course furthermore addresses the ecosystem in which farming operates, with particular attention paid to predators within this system, the advantageous role they can play and management practices to reduce stock losses as a result of natural predation.

A total of 113 farm workers, managers and owners have successfully completed the course and course facilitators are convinced that participants view farming in a new light after attendance.

Phenomenally positive feedback has been received. One employer was greatly impressed by an employee's knowledge acquisition despite the challenges posed by differing levels of literacy and command of the language. This highlights the value of practical presentation and interaction between participants during the course. Yet another employer noted the positive motivational effects of the course on an employee. A need for additional and advanced courses has been expressed.

By supporting this initiative, Agra was able to create development opportunities for

Namibian producers, thereby improving productivity while maintaining production. In return, it was provided a prime platform for corporate and product exposure.

### **Communal Farmers Consortium**

The Communal Farmers Consortium is the result of the collective desire of various companies to contribute to the development of communal farmers. In addition to Agra members of the Consortium include Agribank, First National Bank, Meatco, the Meat Board, Namibia Breweries, Feed Master, Sanlam and Telecom.

In co-operation with the Namibia National Farmers Union (NNFU), the Consortium's main aim is to assist farmers' and regional agricultural unions in communal areas in the holding of local and regional shows.

This supportive process aims to assist the efforts of government in narrowing the gap between the commercial and communal sectors and creating a united agricultural sector. This is possible by empowering communal farmers with the skills, expertise and necessary financial resources to help bring them on par with their commercial counterparts.

Consortium members receive acknowledgement for their support by banner displays, representation and involvement at shows.

### **Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF)**

The NNF is a non-governmental organisation whose main objectives include the promotion of sustainable development; the conservation of biological diversity and natural ecosystems; and the prudent and ethical use of natural resources to the benefit of all Namibians. The NNF is involved in excess of 90 projects.

The NNF is dependent on support from donors and partners, of whom Agra is one.

Agra understands the importance of balancing financial, social and environmental factors by applying sustainable practices to business enterprises that will make it proud of Namibia. Agra's involvement and social investment in organisations such as the NNF underlines Agra's economic, environmental and social responsibility and should lead to improved and increased long-term benefits through exposure to and support from such organisations.

The NNF presents various training programmes to assist in self-sufficiency. Five youths from the Tsintsabis repatriation programme were trained in the recycling of glass and the production of recycled glassware. This not only provides a source of income but also supports environmental cleanliness and safety.

(Source: NNF newsletter May 2007)