



UNLIMITED
GROUP



PRESS RELEASE

AGRI-BEE PARTNERSHIP YIELDS FRUIT



The Vutsela Iglobhu Board from left to right: Gerrit de Vries, Nic Elliot (Chairman), Riël Malan, Gay Makoena, Hans Muylaert, Mpho Maepa, Johan Burnett.

In October 2008, Ryton Estates, a 250 hectare citrus and avocado farm recently acquired by the Department Rural Development (DRD) and Land Reform, was on the verge of becoming another agri-bee statistic. The farm's electricity was about to be cut off, fertilizer and sprays were not applied and only a skeleton staff was employed.

Vutsela Investments, a group of black agri-entrepreneurs came to the rescue and acquired a long term lease from the DRD for Ryton. They then proceeded to enter into a joint venture with the Unlimited Group, a diversified and established player in the fresh produce sector. Management of the farm was transferred to the newly established joint venture on 1 October 2008, and a recovery plan was immediately implemented to turn operations around. The workforce was re-appointed and the farm currently employs 90 people permanently and 300 seasonal workers during harvest.

“Partnerships between commercial organizations like the Unlimited Group, Vutsela and the DRD are vital for successful Agri-BEE transformation. Support from the DLA and other government agencies is another crucial ingredient for projects like these to be successful. These partnerships should however be based on sound fundamentals. We believe that ours is.” says Mr. Nic Elliot, Chairman of Vutsela Investments.

“Our partnership with the DRD, Vutsela is yielding great results” says Riël Malan, Managing Director of the Unlimited Group. “It has been a very positive experience. Vutsela is a dedicated and active partner. After successfully turning Ryton around, we hope to do many more similar projects with Vutsela and the DRD in future.”

In a landscape littered by unsuccessful agri-empowerment project, the Vutsela-Unlimited Group joint venture serves as a model of what can be achieved if a structured approach to land reform and agri-bee empowerment is taken. It is also an example of how timeous and decisive partnering between the DRD and commercial BEE partners can ensure transfer of farms without jeopardizing farm infrastructure and food security.

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