New generation farmers definitely not afraid to think out of the box

by Sanette Carrick

South Africa is the world's leading exporter and producer of high-value, highly nutritious macadamia nuts. Macadamias are produced in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal.

The beautiful South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal is climatically like the commercial home of the macadamia, Hawaii. Interestingly, Hawaii started planting Australian-sourced macs many years ago to reduce the island's dependence on sugar crops.

In some ways you could even be in Hawaii in these Macadamia fields so close to Margate. The laid-back calm of the residents, the endless summer days and the surfing – the South Coast is a pretty special area of South Africa.

Once predominantly mostly sugar cane, KwaZulu-Natal is also now host to more diverse crops, like macadamias, blueberries, gooseberries, granadillas and many more interesting crops besides.

On our Durban visit with Nick von Bargen, our Technical Advisor for the area, it was clearly visible to us that today's farmers are not afraid to think out of the box.

Innovation seems a hallmark of the KwaZulu-Natal farmers it

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Tydens ons Durbanse besoek aan Nick von Bargen, ons Tegniese Adviseur vir die area, was dit duidelik sigbaar dat hedendaagse boere nie bang is om uit die boks te dink nie! Alle moontlike grond spasie word benut, hoe onmoontlik dit ook al mag lyk of klink! En natuurlik haal ek my hoed af vir ons Tegniese Adviseurs, wat met planne vorendag moet kom om die spasie benutting te ondersteun en te maak werk! Dis sy doelwit om alle besproeiingsprojekte to foutloos en glad as moontlik te laat verloop.

Dis opmerklik hoe die oorhoofse suikerriet area stadig besig is om te transformeer na n meer diverse area, macadamias, appelliefies, grenadellas, en vele meer is besig om hul verskyning te maak.

Een van Nick se kliente, Liam Highcock, het vir my uitgestaan met sy besproeiing metodes op sy macadamia uitleg. In plaas van drip besproeiing of mikro besproeiing, het Liam besluit om 4 x 5.2l/h "button" drippers per boom te gebruik. Hy maak dus gebruik van "pulse-irrigation" – kort siklusse meer gereeld. Liam het ook besluit om sy plante op heuwels te plant om dreinering te bevorder, veral tydens vloede of groot reën neerslae. Nog voordele van die heuwels

seems, with brilliant space utilisation and design all-round.

Indeed, I take my hat off to our Technical Advisors, who assist to support the brilliant space utilisation and help to ensure the crops flourish in all terrains. Agriplas Technical Advisors' goal with their clients, the farmers, is to ensure irrigation projects run as smoothly and as productively as possible.

One of Nick's clients, Liam Highcock is the epitome of the modern, tech-savvy and innovative young farmer. His expanse of macadamia trees looks great. Liam uses precision agriculture technologies such as drones and probes on his own farm and uses these technologies in his consultancy to other farms in the area. He started macadamia farming after using drones for drone mapping and land scouting, to assist other farmers to design and set-up their enterprises.

Button drippers

Liam's innovative approach to farming is immediately apparent with his irrigation methodology on his macadamias. Instead of drip Irrigation or micro irrigation, Liam chose to use 4x5.2l / h

is groter blootgestelde areas vir verhoogde grond temperature wat natuurlik help met wortel ontwikkeling, groter spasie vir die boom se wortel stelsel. Die heuwels se grond bly ook losser en word nie vasgetrap.

Indrukwekkende pompkamer

Liam se gekose besproeiingstelsel is arbeid intensief en met my vraag aan hom rakende sy grootste uitdagings rondom die installering van die drip stelsel,

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button drippers per tree. He therefore uses pulse irrigation with short cycles more frequently.

Liam also decided to plant his macadamias on gently sloping beds to promote water drainage, especially during floods or heavy rainfall. Other advantages of the slopes are that there are larger exposed areas leading to elevated soil temperatures, which naturally help with root development and thus facilitate greater space for the tree's root system. The small hills' soil also remains looser and is not trampled.

Impressive pump house

Liam is rightly proud of his impressive pump house. Liam puts a lot of thought into every action on the farm. For example, he tests the pH of the water before it reaches the plant, using an ITC Dositec electromagnetic dosing pump. Liam also uses a Galcon web-based irrigation controller to handle his irrigation scheduling. "If any problems arise I receive a notification and can act immediately to take action and prevent any damage from happening," said Liam.

Next project for this innovative and friendly farmer is to switch his entire farm to solar.

Liam is passionate about his macadamias, and I look forward to visiting him again to see how his healthy Macs are growing. His plantation is going to look spectacular in a few years' time when the Macs are larger trees. Liam is a big proponent of Agriplas products (his impressive pump house tells the story) and he is very pleased with Nick's support and advice. It is a great business relationship, and heartwarming to be a part of.

Thank you Liam, we really enjoyed visiting your farm!

Please feel free to contact Nick von Bargen at Agriplas for further information, or any of our Technical Advisors in your area. Alternatively visit www.agriplas.co.za or sales@agriplas.co.za

was sy antwoord: "Om drippers met 'n "toolpunch" op n warm heuwel in Februarie maand in te sit!" Die "punch" het bly glip te danke aan al die sweet aan sy hande, en die grond was baie warm."

Liam se trots is sy indrukwekkende pompkamer. Nog iets wat hy verkies om anders te doen, is om die water se PH te toets voor dit by die plant kom, hy maak gebruik van 'n "ITC Dositec electromagnetic dosing pump" daarvoor. Hy maak ook gebruik van 'n "Galcon web based irrigation controller" om sy besproeiing skedulering te hanteer, indien daar enige probleme ontstaan kry hy onmiddellik n kennisgewing op sy foon en kan hy dadelik optree om skade te voorkom.

Die volgende stap vir Liam is om oor te skakel na sonkrag! Liam is passievol oor macadamias en ek sien uit na ons volgende besoek aan hom. Liam is n groot voorstaander van Agriplas produkte (sy pomp kamer vertel sommer self die verhaal) en is hy baie tevrede met Nick se ondersteuning en advies. Dis n lekker warm gevoel om die hart! Dankie Liam, ons het die kuiertjie baie geniet!

Kontak gerus vir Nick von Bargen by Agriplas , of enige van ons ander Tegniese Adviseurs in jou omgewing. Alternatiewelik besoek ons by www.agriplas.co.za of sales@agriplas.co.za