

Biodynamic Agricultural
Association of
Southern Africa



*To strengthen, promote and advance
the practice of biodynamic agriculture
in Southern Africa*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN OUR BIODYNAMIC TRAINING PROGRAMME.

Our ONE YEAR, non-accredited, Foundation Programme in Biodynamic Agriculture & Horticulture, addresses the issues of Food security, ethical practices, environmental respect and sustainability through carefully selected content.

The purpose of this Prospectus is to inform you about specific aspects of the training course such as the course content, the academic requirements, the resources available to you as trainee, and the administrative procedures.

We hope you will find it to be useful and informative.

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1. In a nutshell, this programme is suitable for someone wishing to live on a farm and gain valuable hands on experience as they learn. Alternatively, if a trainee cannot live on the farm, access to an agricultural or horticultural enterprise is essential.

Usually a trainer is available at the farm or an alternative mentor/trainer may be sought. BDAASA will endeavor to assist in this matter.

Once joining the programme, the trainee will ideally be inducted into the daily life of the farm or garden. Formal learning takes place at five seminars (or block courses) held approximately every 8-10 weeks. Usually these seminars run from Mon – Fri or Fri – Sun/Mon, depending on the units being covered, and at times, they may run for longer periods. We recruit specialist lecturers in their field for certain topics and we have been very fortunate to have also had a great selection of international speakers and lecturers. Assessments are set and given at the seminars/workshops (and block courses), which must be completed on time and up to a satisfactory standard. Not all assessments are assignment/essay based. You will be guided by the lecturer at the time.

The academic calendar for this programme is: January – December. Students may join a farm anytime between December of the preceding year and February of the Academic year if that suites all parties. However, full enrollment must be completed, with all fees, probation period, documentation etc being finalized before the first seminar which is usually held mid-February. This is when a short induction will be held and the programme officially gets underway.

Fees: Once off **registration** of R2000 (non-refundable) plus the **Programme fee** of R24 000* (payable monthly in advance R2000* per month x 12 months).

**subject to change – please confirm when you enquire/apply*

2. History of Biodynamics in South Africa

Biodynamics in South Africa spans a history of seven decades which was mainly built up through the dedication, determination and drive of its proponents. Despite the constraints of climate, opposition from chemical farmers, the expansion of GM crops and the lack of formal training the achievements of the pioneers who persevered is all the more remarkable.

The earliest record of biodynamic practice in South Africa was in the 1930s and it was not until 1982 that the long nurtured vision of forming an association was realised. The Association does important work in upholding and promoting biodynamics in South Africa. The Biodynamic Agricultural Association of Southern Africa (BDAASA) holds an annual national biodynamic conference, publishes a quarterly report, distributes a unique, South African planting calendar, distributes the biodynamic preparations annually, and has a mandated training and research circle. (In 2009, assisted by Annelie Franken, the Agriculture Course by Rudolf Steiner was translated from the German into Afrikaans by Dr. Helene de Villiers from Stellenbosch.)

BDAASA maintains regular contact with members and affiliates on its database, advising them of developments, topical issues, new initiatives, courses workshops and seminars, via our website and email.

Today, the Biodynamic Agricultural Association of Southern Africa is effectively reaching out to all like-minded organisations, farmers, gardeners and consumers to engage in truly sustainable agriculture. Interest in and awareness of biodynamics is growing and being followed up in neighbouring countries such as Zambia, Botswana and Namibia.

3. History of Anthroposophy

Anthroposophy was founded and developed by the Austrian philosopher and polymath, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Anthroposophy aims to extend the intelligibility and methodological approach of the recently developed natural sciences into the phenomena of the subtle realms of nature, along with the realms of soul and spirit. As such it is a spiritual philosophy and path of practice that embraces a profound and multi-leveled understanding of the human being, society, the natural world and the wider cosmos.

Through the development of methodologies founded on Goethe's work, Rudolf Steiner conducted ongoing research into the spiritual world. In presenting the results of his research, Steiner sought to awaken individuals to their own spiritual experiences and life questions and to encourage attentiveness to the expressions of spirit in daily life. Steiner studied science, edited Goethe's scientific writings and cultivated an extensive range of interests. Along with his spiritual research this led him to innovate in many fields including the philosophical, educational, medical and cultural. He worked with the Theosophical Society from 1902-1911 and founded the Anthroposophical Society in 1912, making his headquarters in Dornach, Switzerland. Today the principles of anthroposophy inspire the work in many fields and institutions including schools, homes for children and adults with special needs, biodynamic farms, medical practices and educational centers for the visual and performing arts.

4. Entry Requirements

General guidelines for accepting applications:

Age

The applicant should be over the age of twenty-one.

However, if all the other criteria are met, the individual Approved Farms may make a decision that someone under this age is eligible for the Training Programme.

Language

Although BDAASA acknowledge the diverse language use in our country, the course content (written and oral) will be conducted in English. All applicants must be fluent in written and oral English communication skills as assessments are conducted by orally and through written submissions.

Numeracy

The applicant should at least meet the requirement for NQF Level 2-3 or equivalent in Mathematics or Maths Literacy. The trainee needs to be able to work to matric standard, if they don't have their matric (Grade 12).

Physically able

The applicant should be physically able to carry out such tasks as are demanded by the nature of the work at the particular centers.

Interest and motivation

The person applying should have the interest and motivation to work with the land and/or with the animals, and be able to understand what it means to learn practically. At some Farms this requirement might be extended to fulfill the tasks needed for those farms.

Experience and Probation

All trainees must undergo a probation period of between 3 – 6 weeks regardless of experience prior to full registration. If the probation period is successful, the trainee will be offered full registration placement.

Attitude

The person applying should be able to work independently and as part of a team.

Due to the diverse nature of the individual Approved Farms participating in the Training Programme, each farm may stipulate variations on the general guidelines for entry requirements. For example, some centers will require the trainee to hold a valid and current driving license. Others farms may require a trainee to work and live with people with special needs. Potential trainees and Approved Farms are asked to specify all such matters once an application has been favourably considered prior to probation and or registration. Should it be that the potential trainee has special needs (disability, dietary or living needs) these are to be negotiated with the individual farm in question.

5. Application process

Prospective trainees should contact BDAASA who will assist them to apply to the prospective farm/s, either in writing or by email, giving details of their interests and experience. Once initial contact has been made, an application form must be submitted via BDAASA. A preliminary visit is recommended as well as an interview which may be telephonic depending on circumstance.

Once the prospective trainee and Farm have agreed a placement, and BDAASA has confirmed that all documents are in place:

An offer for Probation detailing the terms and conditions specific to that farm/trainee will be sent to the trainee by the Farm. Once this has been received and signed by the trainee, the final arrangements with the specific farm can be made between the trainee and the farm for the commencement of the probation/full registration.

Once full registration is offered (subsequent to the successful probation period) the farm will confirm in writing that they are offering you full training as well as any terms and conditions. You will then also receive the trainee handbook and the relevant policies of BDAASA. This will be sent to you via BDAASA.

Upon receipt by the trainee, it must be signed and returned to BDAASA and the full registration fee becomes payable.

Please request an application form: training@bdaasa.org.za

6. Allowance/Stipends for trainees

Live-in Trainees are expected to participate fully in the life of the farm. Board and lodging is usually offered to trainees. However if this is not possible the trainee will be responsible for his/ her own board and lodging. Some farms may contribute towards the monthly fee or provide a small allowance/stipend - entirely at their own discretion and not until probation has been completed, however not all farms will offer this and the trainee is responsible for ensuring that all programme costs are adequately covered.

7. Criminal Convictions

Trainees applying to the BDAASA Agricultural Training Programme will be required to disclose their criminal history/any convictions. (BDAASA will consider whether such convictions are compatible with a place on this programme.)

Alcohol and Drugs

The BDAASA Training Programme is mindful of the welfare of its entire trainee body and is concerned that the use of alcohol and/or drugs by its trainee body should not impair their health and social life. Moreover, to the extent

that misuse of alcohol and/or drugs may have detrimental effects on a trainee's attendance and work performance or upon their ability to effectively take part in their course, the interests of the BDAASA Training Programme, its trainers, and trainees will be invoked.

Trainees applying to the BDAASA Training Programme will be required to disclose their drug usage history/any convictions whereupon we will consider whether such usage/ convictions are compatible with a place on this programme.

BDAASA regards an individual's dependency on either alcohol or drugs as an illness. The same provisions, allowance and recommendations for treatment will be made as for other illnesses ie. testing, medical or other interventions and referrals.

The BDAASA Agricultural Training Programme has considered it appropriate to draw up an alcohol and drug policy - refer to the Trainee Handbook for further information.

8. Fees

The registration fee (non-refundable) of R2000 is payable before commencement of the course (but after successful probation). A non-refundable monthly fee of R2000* is payable at the beginning of each month. 2 (two) full calendar months written notice is required to BDAASA should you intend to discontinue the programme. Fees remain payable during that notice period. The fees include course delivery/content, lectures/seminars, food and accommodation (basic level) at the seminars, but excludes transport to the seminars. Access to our library and any other resource is actively encouraged.

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9. Programme structure

The Biodynamic Agricultural Training Group coordinates the training and supplements the practical learning with courses designed to inspire a deepened understanding of biodynamic agriculture.

Trainees are expected to take part in regular study groups and tutorials and to complete a certain amount of project work. Additional seminars on key subjects are arranged between the farm centers during the year. The keeping of a daily work diary, a portfolio of evidence, the recording of quarterly personal reflections, as well as the independent completion of assessed work, are all essential components of the training.

10. Programme Aims and Objectives

The BDAASA Foundation Training Programme aims to:

10.1) to give a preliminary introduction to the skills, knowledge and understanding of biodynamic agriculture practice and principles

10.2) introduce its trainees for the vocation of biodynamic farmer/gardener

10.3) Create a foundation for developing an independent understanding of the earth, life and human beings from a spiritual perspective

10.4) Offer a teaching climate in which the learner can become familiar with the inner attitude and perspective required for biodynamic farming.

11. Learning Themes

Various units per theme are selected from the following and are delivered through the seminar or block course workshops:

LEARNING THEMES
(1) World task of agriculture (Human/Social)
(2) Soil
(3) Plant
(4) Animal
(5) Astronomy (cosmos)
(6) Economic/Management/ Business
(7) Farm Organism
(8) Fencing, Machinery, Work Experience and Final Project

12. Teaching Schedule

On commencing the course, trainees will be given an outlined learning schedule and timetable for the seminar (and block courses) planned for the year. Trainees are expected to attend every seminar (block course). Assessments based on the seminar content (in line with the themes and units) are set and given at the seminars.

13. Assessments/Assignments

The programme operates with several different types of Assessment/Assignments eg Journal keeping, Practical Assessment/Assignments and Written/Oral Assessment/Assignments

Deadlines are set according to the assessment criteria and to give trainees sufficient time to research and reflect on the content sufficiently themselves. It is essential to work through the trainer or mentor with these assessments.

14. Assessment

The Programme is based on portfolio assessment. This means that you will need to familiarise yourself with the learning outcomes and assessment criteria set out in the units descriptors – details will be provided with each assessment plan or assignment.

15. Completion of programme - recognition

Towards the end of the programme, the Programme Coordinator, will determine, with input from the trainer and if required, from the Core Training Group:

- whether a satisfactory level of competency has been achieved and;
- whether the trainee has demonstrated satisfactory attendance at seminars (block courses).

Thereafter a certificate of recognition will be issued by BDAASA. The issuing of the certificates usually takes place in February of the following academic year.

16. Trainee programme evaluation

In order to maintain and improve the quality of the programme delivery, we invite trainees to give formal feedback to the trainer and on the programme as a whole.

17. Contacts:

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