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2024 BDAASA CONFERENCE – A GATHERING OF POSITIVE ENERGY

The 2024 BDAASA Conference brought members together at Plettenberg Bay for the first time, providing a great opportunity for us to network and share ideas, as well as to learn about what was happening on BD farms in our country, as well as in Zimbabwe and Egypt.

It also provided a significant boost to the burgeoning PGS Group in the Plett area as interested parties were invited to participate as day visitors. Since the Conference, 29 people have joined the BD Farmers group.

A FULL AND VARIED PROGRAMME

The theme of the conference, which took place from 25 to 28 October, was "The Farm as a Threefold Individuality".

Among other activities, Day One included a Eurythmy performance by Martin and Christiane Wigand and a panel discussion led by Avice Hindmarch. These set the tone and began the conversation around how biodynamic agriculture can help us future proof the farm organism and influence humanity.

Activities on Day Two included a presentation by Martin Wigand on 'The Challenges of our Time', visits to farms in the Plettenberg Bay area - Athens, Kwendalo and the Sabrina Love Foundation, as well as farm presentations. Among these were Kufunda in Zimbabwe, Bloublommietjieskloof - our original Demeter certified farm and two of our Western Cape Demeter PGS certified farms - Brocha and Sweet Farms.

Delegates also learned about the cultural and social practices that had arisen out of the productive context of SEKEM in Egypt.



▲ Liesl Haasbroek and Raymond Auerbach. Igniting flame in the opening ceremony.

As the festive season approaches, we extend our warmest wishes to all our readers for a joyful and safe celebration filled with love and happiness.

Avice then brought us up to speed on the Planetary Configuration.

BDAASA's AGM and report back took place on Day Three, followed by a report by Wendy Lilje on the status of Demeter PGS in South Africa, an update from Karen Mack on BD Farming today and where we're

headed, as well as farm presentations on Abalimi Bezikhaya, Moya, Sillery Farm and Reyneke Wines. These were followed by lively discussion.

The presentations were interspersed by poetry, games, delicious meals and opportunities to get to know each other.



▲ Eurythmy performance by Christiane and Martin Wigand.



▲ Tony and Suzy Lubner lighting the candle to start the conference



▲ Avice Hindmarch facilitating the panel discussion.



▲ Trymore Samkange, Wendy Lilje, Galeo Saintz, Naglaa Ahmed and Alan Rosenberg, Panel of Experts Discussion



FEEDBACK

Feedback from delegates highlighted the spirit of togetherness experienced over the weekend. "So many people travelled all that way to come and participate. It's not easy to farm biodynamically and so we all need to get together and help each other. The conference was an opportunity to remember that what we are doing is special and to experience the co-operative spirit that supports and encourages us," said Alix Clarke.

Jo Fuller described it as a big gathering of positive energy. "It was beautiful and inspiring to see what people were doing on their farms, and to learn about BD farming initiatives in Zimbabwe and Egypt," she said.



▲ Panel of Experts Discussion



▲ Martin Wigand giving a lecture on Biodynamic Agriculture – The Challenges of our Time



▲ Bulelani Zodwa raising a question at the AGM



▲ Avice and Ishaan giving thanks at the end of the conference.



▲ Morning circle at Kwendalo on Day Two



TWO MORE FARMS ACHIEVE DEMETER PGS CERTIFICATION

As the Demeter PGS certification process gains traction in South Africa, we are proud to announce that two more farms in the Western Cape recently achieved certification – Swee Farm on the slopes of the Klein Drakenstein mountains near Paarl and Sillery Farm in Constantia.

We spoke to the owners about their farms and what they have gained through their involvement with their PGS Group.

SWEE FARM

Swee Farm, farmed by Alix Clarke, is a three-hectare farm where the main crop is mangos, in addition to litchis, nuts, citrus, vegetables and flowers. Alix's interest in Biodynamic Agriculture began with her interest in children's education.

"I have always thought that Rudolf Steiner really understood children and their stages of development and so used a Waldorf curriculum for many years to home-school my daughters.

"It seemed natural that if he was so accurate with education, he might have good ideas on agriculture! I appreciated his emphasis on compost making and soil re-vitalisation, so years and years ago, I thought to give BD farming a go. The results spoke for themselves and I have now used biodynamic and organic inputs for over a decade.

"Most of our produce goes to organic shops in Cape Town and around and we also like to give a good

many mangos to the Hospice who run a feeding scheme. The kids there just love our mangos!

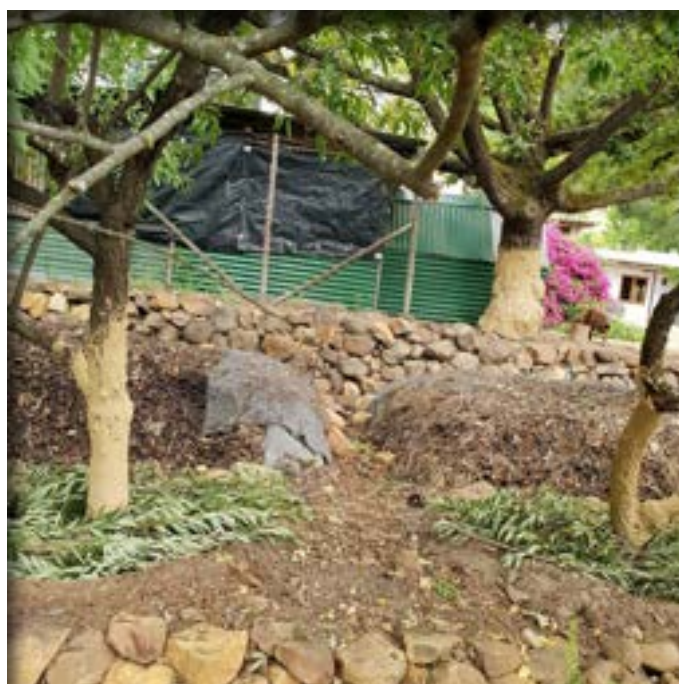
"I really appreciate and enjoy our PGS group. We have a lot in common and can learn so much from each other. I think it is important to ask ourselves why we farm in a biodynamic way. For me, BD farming offers a structure that helps me give back meaningfully to our Earth. Belonging to the PGS group and now the PGS certification help keep me on track.

"It is a great challenge to each of us to farm biodynamically as it requires us to go the extra mile, often. Certification is my way of showing everyone else in our group that it is possible and that no-one must give up!

"PGS certification is encouraging acknowledgement of all the hands and beings who work so hard on the farm. Somehow, the plants and trees and soils here know that we have been certified, and we all know what happens when one is recognised and appreciated!", said Alix.



▲ Compost heaps - Swee Farm



▲ Tree paste - Swee Farm

SILLERY FARM

Sillery Farm, owned by Jo Fuller, is a three-hectare farm in the heart of Constantia, next to the Waldorf School. The land is diverse and includes forest, wetland and has a river running through it. Vegetables are grown on the upper areas and a wide variety of flowers are grown in the various habitats.

Jo describes Sillery Farm as a place where people gather. In addition to farming vegetables and flowers, the farm is designed as a place of learning for schoolchildren from Waldorf and other schools. Sillery Farm also runs courses for adults on topics such as: Nature and Soul, Rewilding your Consciousness, Vegetable Growing and Wreath Making.

Jo and her partner, who teaches at Waldorf, have had the land for about 10 years.

"When we acquired the land, it was very overgrown, so our first years were spent clearing and rehabilitating the wetland. We also began designing the beds and planting fruit and olive trees. About three years ago we began actively growing food.

"I had been exposed to BD farming for about 15 years, having worked and taught at Soil for Life, but when we first came to Sillery Farm we were inconsistent about applying it. Over the past two years, we have been applying the preps as directed and our inputs have either come from our land or from Bloublommetjieskloof.



"We sell our products locally – to BDAASA for their online food ordering system and to Metro Organics and Spirit Café. We also supply our local SPAR with fresh flowers and sell packaged seeds

"Demeter PGS certification is important to me because it says we are doing things properly.

"It only adds value where people recognise the brand so at this point it doesn't make much difference in terms of our sales. But being able to certify our products enables us to play our part in growing awareness of the benefits offered by biodynamic farming, and to grow demand for products farmed in this way."



"Being part of a PGS group is very supportive as we are able to get advice from others. It's also really inspiring to see everyone's farms."

