

Ceres Fruit Growers environmental practices bearing fruit

The sustainability efforts of Ceres Fruit Growers is bearing fruit - saving the environment and the bottom line in the process.

For Tru-Cape Fruit Marketing, the sale of their growers' fruit is serious business. Managing Director of Tru-Cape, Roelf Pienaar explains: "We take our role in the marketing of the fruit from our growers to heart not just because of our commitment to our growers to return the best value achievable but also because more than 15, 200 people rely on our successful ability to sell fruit for their livelihoods."



Rahim Hassan

Investing in renewable energy

Rahim Hassan, manager engineering services at Ceres Fruit Growers, says that a dedicated sustainability task team reports to the board about their efforts in reducing impact on the environment and saving resources. "Since 2013 we have successfully used renewable solar energy to reduce the stress on the national power grid and, at certain times in peak summer, we are able to generate surplus solar electricity which we are able to offer back to the power provider," Hassan explains.

He adds competitor fruit companies situated in different municipal areas of Ceres who are thus able to purchase energy directly from Eskom and not via the municipality at 23% premium don't have to work as hard as CFG does to reduce costs. "Currently, CFG is the majority electricity user in the area accounting for over 38% of the all the electricity used. We are very proud of the strong business-government relationship we and the municipality have working to the benefit of all in our area," he says.

"We have 4,060 solar panels which for eight months of the year successfully power the machine rooms in the controlled atmosphere complex number six. We have saved nearly R5 million because of our solar investment not to mention the reduced carbon footprint using renewable energy over fossil fuels but the system only meets around three percent of our total electricity costs."

Saving water

Hassan continues that with water being a scarce and highly prized resource, the company has reworked water reticulation to allow for borehole water to be used in the refrigeration systems. "With all the decisions, we have to evaluate the cost versus the benefit and because we are so committed to saving natural resources we have invested further to add softeners to the borehole water so that the heavy metals and other minerals found in ground water, do not damage the equipment.

We also use recycled water for our sewage system.

Working at achieving energy efficiency and zero emissions

While we continue to learn how we can add to our electricity generation we are also better managing our electricity demand by replacing LED lighting with the newest versions which are twice as bright and lasts longer than previous LED lighting solutions with even less energy drain. In fact, for the past 20 years, we have been practicing electricity saving. During the apple and pear picking season, we run day and night but typically only run machines at night to take advantage

of off-peak rates.”

Ceres Fruit Growers is, according to Hassan, also among the biggest user and client of Toyota’s electric forklifts. “We have 54 battery-operated forklifts which are much quieter and far more energy efficient than fuel burning ones with zero emissions and reduced carbon footprint. Since 2011 we have seen annual reductions in our carbon footprint and we continue to make improvements where we can that are in line with ISO best practices,” Hassan ends.

Pienaar says: “Our task to sell the fruit of Ceres Fruit Growers and of Two-a-Day is made easier when our packhouses align themselves so fully with best environmental practices that make us leaders in the field.”

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