**Kenneth Interview notes**

**INTERVIEW INFORMATION**

Date: March 2021 – present

Location:

Interviewer: Makhanana Malungane

1. **PERSONAL INFORMATIONS**

Name/pseudonym: Kenneth

Age: 44

Sex: Male

Highest Level of Education: Masters

Role in agro-food system: Farmer

Do you have other occupations? Business consultant, innovator, and speaker

How long have you been involved in the business? Since 2015

1. **FARMER**

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| Where do you farm? | Makhado, Nwanedi, Modimolle |
| What do you grow? Which of these are your main products? | Sweet potato  Chillies  Butternut  Tomatoes  Ginger  Grains (sunflower and canola seeds) |
| How many hectares do you farm on? | 50h |
| How did you obtain this land and under what tenure arrangements? | I am leasing the farms in Nwanedi and Modimolle. While the farm in the Makhado area is a family farm. I do not believe in buying land to farm on. There are numerous ways to utilize the money in the operations of the farm |
| Have you always produced and sold the same thing? | No. We initially produced tomatoes for the first 2 years and then we began to diversify into the other produces |
| How did you start farming? How did you learn the business? Where did you obtain the capital? | My father is a farmer. I learnt a lot from him. Although I began on the corporate side of things I always knew I end up back at the farm |
| How many people are employed full-time and how many casual or seasonal workers? |  |
| What are your main inputs | * Seedlings * Water * Electricity * Cold storage * Packaging and boxing * Tractors * Irrigation systems * Employees |
| Where do you obtain your inputs? | Everywhere. You see Makhanana a farmer is also a businessman, so you need to be economical at well. It depends on where I get the best prices |
| Where do you sell, which markets, to who? | * Johannesburg Fresh Produce Market * Polokwane market * Tshwane * Households in Polokwane and Gauteng * Local communities close to the farm * Exports: SADC region |
| What do you supply? | Processed chillies  Chillies  Sweet Potatoes  Tomatoes  Ginger  Butternut  Robot peppers  Onions  Spinach/Cabbages  Garlic  Lemon  Grapes  Avocados  Apples  Carrots  Pineapples  Oranges/Naartjies  Apples/Pears  Grapes/Melon |
| How often? | There are days off for a farmer. No holidays I tell you. We work waya waya. But deliveries go out every day. It is the frequency that changes. Sometimes I will have 4 trucks to send to the Joburg Market every second day and sometimes one. It depends. |
| How did you get/find your market? | I had worked extensively in the agriculture space through my work, so that gave me a leg up. Also with my dad already in the business, I knew people I could approach of the bat. |
| Are produce sold collected or delivered? | It depends on the destination. But most of the products are delivered by a farming business |
| What quantity or value of each crop/produce sold? |  |
| Which markets are working best for you? | All of them. You just need to know your marketing strategy and who your clients are. If I am making a loss in one market I will be making a profit in another |
| What could be improved to make markets work better for you? | Collaboration is key. I was only able to make it this far through connections I made at conferences and forums and the likes |
| Have you sold elsewhere before? | No |
| Are you part of any association or organisations | Yes. I am the Chairperson of the African Farmers Association |
| Do you have any collaborations? | I collaborate with farmers. I am a big advocate of the out-growers model and incorporation of associate farmers in operations |
| Since this time last year, has there been any changes in your farming, and if so what changes and when and if there was a change that caused the changes? | We started a box delivery service to meet the household fruit and vegetable gap in the market during the lockdown. |

H. COVID-19 and COVID measures

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| What do you know about government responses to Covid? | I know that the government is trying to contain the outbreak of the virus by limiting certain activities and movements in the country depending on the lockdown level |
| How did you hear about Covid and the government responses to it? | Through the media |
| How have these responses affected you? | It has required for the business to be more agile and leverage innovations in the space |
| How have Covid and Covid measures affected your household and reproductive work? Any effects on economic activities |  |
| How have you responded to the changes brought by Covid? |  |
| Have you benefitted from any Covid related government or non-government support? If so, what support was received? |  |
| How have you responded to the changes imposed by the government? | 1. What did they do in response (probe any innovations, changes in equipment or technology)?      1. Participation in any associations? Has the role of that association changed? 2. Have you been part of or had any discussion with any government officials or leaders? If so with who/which level of government? Did you get any benefit or see any change from that discussion?   . |
| Has there been any change since Covid in what you and your family eat? |  |

**Additional Notes**

**1 March 2021**

Telephonically

I met Kenneth during an internship programme in 2015. At the time, Kenneth was the CEO of a flourishing business in the African innovation space and had several employees.

Fast forward to 2020. I heard Kenneth speaking on a podcast about his thriving farming business and contacted him via LinkedIn. Kenneth and I have spoken a couple of time and have briefly met up at the market but have not had a chance to finish all the interview questions. Below is a summary of all the interviews I have had with Kenneth.

Kenneth began farming in 2015. He used money from his personal savings to start the business. Within the first year, Kenneth was able to sign an off-take agreement with a large agro-processor for 6000 tons of tomatoes which would be used to make tomato sauces and pastes. Knowing that the 6-hectare farm (with only 3 hectares of arable land) he was leasing was unable to produce the required tonnage, Kenneth used the out-grower model to bring on 86 farmers that will assist him to meet the order. Again, Kenneth fronted half of the start-up costs for the order while the agro-processors assisted with seedlings (on loan). At the end of the harvest period, only 10% of the 86 farmers he enlisted fulfilled their commitments resulting in only 3000 tons of tomatoes being delivered to the agro-processor. The remainder of the farmers either did not plant the tomatoes at all, selling them for a profit, meanwhile, others grew the tomatoes and sold them to bakkie traders that were willing to pay more than what the order was offering.

Not deterred, the following year Kenneth negotiated for a bigger contract with the agro-processors for 12 000 tonnes of tomatoes but this time he would go into alone – ditching the out-growers (associate farmers) model. During this season Kenneth increased production to 9 hectares and employee better expertise, like agriculture graduates and farming managers. Through these amendments, he has able to meet over 80% (10 500 tonnes) of his contracted tonnage. The agro-processor was impressed which led to a lower seeding loan ratio in his favour.

Aside from tomatoes, over the year Kenneth began to plant other produce such as sweet potatoes, butternut, ginger, chillies and grains (sunflower and canola seeds) – which he began experimenting with within the last two years. He has also brought on business partners to aid with the marketing side of the business particularly for his exports in the SADC region.

Similarly, during the lockdown Kenneth diversified his service offering to include processing of the chillies - he grows on the farm - in Makhado into dried and bottled chillies. He has also entered into the fresh produce box delivery business making him not only a seller to the market but a buyer as well. On numerous occasions when he delivers produce at JFPM he is also picking up his own orders for home deliveries and retail orders. Kenneth retells a story of how he had to get to the market at 3 am in order to buy pineapple from the truck during the hard lockdown when the alcohol was banned. He says prices were sky-high then and you had to agile to survive.

Kenneth holds 2 Master’s degrees in Investment and Leading Innovation and Change Systems from Oslo University in Norway and York St John University, respectively. He is a mechanical engineer by trade and served as chairman for numerous innovation-related organisations