Sweet success for Silver Charm

by Hanlie du Plessis

“Black economic empowerment can only be successful when the proposed initiative makes financial sense,” says Charles Rossouw, an established Groblersdal citrus and grape farmer. Charles was one of the first commercial farmers in his area to develop a project in conjunction with his employees.

Silver Charm is a project that will receive part of its funding from his existing farming operation, Rosle, and will utilise Land Redistribution for Agriculture (LRAD) funding for 100 of his employees to establish 30 ha of table grapes over a two-year period.

“I started Silver Charm first and foremost because the business plan makes economic sense to all involved.” He adds: “I bought ground adjoining my property three years ago and had planned to develop it next year. Then the opportunity arose to develop the property and empower our farm workers at the same time, and this made sense to me. We planted 2 ha of Crimson Seedless grapes last year.”

Although the funding and final structure of the project have not yet been finalised, this has not delayed the development of Silver Charm. “We are still negotiating with the relevant institutions to finalise the structure. This should happen in good time,” says Charles Rossouw.

Koos de Wet, manager of Silver Charm, says: “Our vineyard is well-established and growing nicely under the nets (hail is a frequent occurrence in these parts). This year we plan to plant a further 22 ha – 17,5 ha of Red Globe and 4,5 ha of the new black seedless cultivar, Midnight Beauty.”

Ronald Matlou trained as a teacher and is now the personnel manager at Rosle Farms. He is excited about this ongoing process. Ronald’s education as a teacher has helped with the skills development programme at Rosle, which commenced with a PAETA skills development programme.

Before starting the ABET adult education training, the students first have to complete an individual evaluation process to establish at what level their training needs to commence. Ronald has completed this process with his first group of 80 learners.