



How Klipfontein came about...

Klipfontein is located in Vyeboom and it is owned by 9 black farmers. Franco explained that the farmers received the farm in 1994 via the Irad scheme at the Department of Land reform and Rural Development. “Stargrow Nurseries is the strategic partner to the farm. We primarily farm with apples and pears. In 2017 we started developing the farm and we are currently on 40 hectares.”

What is your farming philosophy?

“We aim to farm sustainably, with nature. We have protected areas on the farm and we do alien clearing. We are very close to nature.”

How did you get started with FruitLook?

“With the drought a few years back there was a lot of concern regarding irrigation.” Franco says that they found out about FruitLook when they attended an irrigation seminar hosted by Hortgro in 2018.

“We decided to give it a chance on the farm. We started using it to see if we could manage our irrigation water more efficiently.”



How do you use FruitLook and/or integrate it into your everyday actions and decision-making process?

“We use FruitLook on a bi-weekly basis to look at our blocks. We integrate it a lot with the irrigation decision making process. We mostly look at the biomass production of our blocks to see if it goes up or down.”

Franco says they also look at the biomass water use efficiency, leaf area index, evaporation deficit and more recently the nitrogen in the upper leaf layer.

Any stories of how FruitLook has helped you in a specific situation?

“In 2017 we planted a pear block, but there were 5 rows which were not planted. We planted those 5 rows two years later in 2019. FruitLook consistently showed us that those five rows were growing weaker in comparison to the rest of the block.”



Franco says that FruitLook helped them to realize that they had been managing the irrigation incorrectly. “We had been managing those 5 rows the same way as the rest of the orchard. Those 5 rows are actually two years younger than the rest of the block and thus the water had to

be managed differently for them.” Franco says that FruitLook showed them that they had been overirrigating the 5 rows.

What would you say is the biggest benefit of FruitLook?

Franco says that FruitLook gives them a good overview of the farm. “You get a bird’s eye view of what is happening in your blocks. You can use it a lot for problem solving. We use FruitLook a lot to investigate areas which are not performing as they should. It is an extra check we can do.”



What would you recommend as the biggest improvement for FruitLook?

“The colours you see on the spatial maps need to be better explained, as not everyone understands it so well.” Franco suggests that there should be a key somewhere to help one quickly interpret the colours. Furthermore, Franco mentioned the data also being a bit old. “We would be able to use FruitLook more often if the data is more up to date.”

Are there any shortcomings to FruitLook?

“No, nothing really.”

What would the best channels be to communicate to users with?

Franco suggests going using their Farmers Union's website. "You should send the newsletter through to the Farmer's Union, because then it will reach every farmer. Like myself, I am certain that most farmers check the Farmer Unions' website every morning." In terms of the best method for communicating, Franco says he prefers email.

How can FruitLook be used in the context of regenerative farming or climate-smart farming?

"With the use of FruitLook, you are using your natural resources in a much better way than previously. It helps you to not overuse resources. We don't overirrigate, we only use what is needed."

