



CASE STUDY

KAROO VALLEY FARMS



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About Karoo Valley Farms

Karoo Valley Farms stretch over an area of 8 km along the Olifantsrivier in the Oudtshoorn district. It used to be an ostrich farm and more recently a dairy farm, but nowadays Karoo Valley Farms commercially produce nearly 309 hectares of lucerne for their seed or for animal feed.

We sat down with George Schneiganz, the farm manager of Karoo Valley Farms, to discuss how FruitLook supports him to farm more efficiently.



How did you first get started with FruitLook?

George first learned about FruitLook when he attended an introduction and training session about it at the Oudtshoorn Research Farm a few years ago.





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

George uses FruitLook every week during the lucerne's growing season. Water available for irrigation is usually limited during mid-summer, and it is during such times that George finds FruitLook to be very helpful. "I base my decision on where to allocate the available water using FruitLook's biomass data."

They have a system where fields are re-established every 10 years. The lowest-producing of the older fields will receive less water and be left to produce seeds before they are eventually re-established. "I also use FruitLook to determine which fields are peaking, in other words, which are producing the highest amount of biomass production for a certain period. Most of the water will be allocated to these fields."

"I base my decision on where to allocate the available water using FruitLook's biomass data."

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

George says that the spatial maps in FruitLook helped him identify spots of weaker production within one of the fields. "When it gets really warm, these weaker spots become evident, no matter how much you are irrigating. FruitLook drew my attention to them, and I was able to sort out the issue." This field is now producing biomass homogenously again.



What would you say is the biggest benefit of FruitLook?

“The biggest benefit of FruitLook is that any differences in colour within a field immediately catch your eye. You will then know where your attention is needed.” George says that it is important to investigate the reason for these colour differences, especially if you are irrigating on a large scale and can’t always be in the field yourself. “We recently picked up a fault with the sprinklers by using FruitLook.”



How can FruitLook be used in the context of regenerative farming?

George referred to the case where he used FruitLook to identify spots of weaker production within one of his fields. “The treatment of those spots was cheaper than treating the whole field. Not only does one use fewer chemicals, but it is also more cost-effective.” They already practice minimum tillage at Karoo Valley farms and are moving away from the heavy use of fertilisers and chemicals. “We try to rather apply foliar feeds when it is necessary.”



What is your farming philosophy?

Karoo Valley Farms strive for maximum yield from their land and the given weather conditions. They believe that sustainable practices will allow them to continue farming. “It is not worth going only from day to day. One should have a plan on the table and think ‘sustainable’ when thinking about the future.”





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