

VP AFRICA REPORT 2020

In my 2019 report I expressed my excitement for the opportunity for the WJCB to experience Africa at its best with our annual tour to East Africa, June 2019. I, myself being born in Africa just a 4 hour flight south of Rwanda, had an eye opener, it was different to what I expected. With all the different African countries who attended the workshop, it was clear that the majority of African countries will be concentrating on small-holding farming practices and sustainable farming. The whole world witnessed how our special Jersey breed assists with poverty relief and giving hope. It really gave me pleasure seeing all the tour participants from all parts of the world enjoying East Africa and its unique cultures. I never felt far from home really.

The African forum has not yet taken off as I have anticipated. There has been delays, and communications has been slack or non responsive. According to Mr David Hambrook, some momentum should be possible once travel becomes easier again. There has still been a demand for cattle from South Africa, including bulls for AI centres.

At homefront, COVID has had its impact since the end of March 2020. South Africa has just come out of a 5 month lock down. The economy has been hit hard. I have seen reports of 2.2million job losses. A country that cannot afford it. Bar for the delays in freight getting parts for agricultural use and some reluctant staff, it was business as usual for us farmers. It is a fact that consumer buying power has been under pressure. I have witnessed first-hand being closely involved with a processing plant, that products have been moving much slower than they used to.

Breeders in South Africa, well farmers in general, are at an all time low mentally. Rural safety has become such a serious issue, it's scary. The amount of brutal farm murders is shocking and it's getting worse. Country wide I get reports of huge theft problems, prize winning cattle being brutally slaughtered. Staff reluctant to work properly has made farming very difficult. My heart really goes out to my fellow breeders who try their heart out.

Milk production in South Africa in 2020 is 1.9% lower than 2019 and producers are in a better position price wise. Imports to SA have been low due to the lockdown. Southern Africa has been blessed with good rains, which is positive. The ongoing trend to de-register animals is not stopping. Mainly because of economics. Jersey SA is making plans how to serve those breeders and to keep them involved. Overall jersey numbers are still on the rise and the jersey breed ever more popular.

Arno Theron, Vice President, Africa.