

VP AFRICA REPORT 2019

The best thing that could ever happen for this continent in respect of communication will be the WJCB meetings in Kenya and Rwanda where the African forum will be called. The introduction of different countries to one another will be key for future working platforms, which I am very excited about. The tour will also illustrate what different Jersey set-ups look like in other African countries besides South Africa, and will give us new perspective.

Since my 2018 report, the South African economy has been extremely sluggish, this has had a direct impact on producers as milk prices has not recovered since the big drop in 2018. Traditionally a winter premium was offered, but no news on that this year. One can clearly see on the figures, and by talking to fellow breeders, that most producers are just trying to survive at this point. Semen sales nationally have dropped and the use of bulls has increased. Registered Jerseys in South Africa have increased slightly, turning the downward spiral of the last 12 years around. On that point, the demand for Jersey cows is quite high, and one often hear of waiting lists for animals. The Jersey cow markets herself!

An issue that is often spoken about (for a number of years) is the difference in value of registered cows compared to commercial animals. The main reason for that was the opening of the semen market for allowing any breeder to use any semen of worldwide origin in their herds. That has kind of levelled the genetics in most herds. This will also be the biggest reason for the decline of registered Jerseys on the books. The advantage that the registered cow has, is depth and guarantee of pedigree.

The move to larger, more commercially run, farms can be experienced at all fields in the industry. There are currently around 617 000 milking cows in South Africa on 1422 dairy farms. The predictions are that producers will drop to 950 within 7 to 10 years. This reflects on shows too. Bar for 2 shows in the Western Cape, showing of Jerseys, (All dairy animals for that matter) will be at the National Show, every 2nd year. National Shows are decent affairs with good number as was experienced in 2018.

With this report being public at our meetings in Rwanda, I would like to stress that South Africa is the logical window for Jerseys to the rest of Africa. South Africa has one of the largest populations in the world with very good quality. I invite all other African countries to use Jersey South Africa as your first point of reference and I am hoping for good working relationships in the future.

Arno Theron, World Jersey Cattle Bureau Vice-President, Africa Region.