

## DISTELL INITIATES TROUT FARMING VENTURE FOR FARM WORKERS

Distell has created an opportunity for workers on its 985-hectare Plaisir de Merle farm at Simondium to earn additional income in their spare time by becoming involved in a broad-based trout farming venture.

Through Distell's negotiations, Plaisir de Merle is embarking on a pilot project, involving 12 of the farm's 64 workers in the venture. Although an autonomous profit centre, the trout farming venture is connected to a larger initiative led by the Hands on Fish Farmers Co-operative that will provide a smoking service and also market all the fish, fresh and smoked, to retailers and restaurants, on behalf of its members

The co-operative is being run in association with the University of Stellenbosch Department of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences, with funding supplied by the national Department of Science and Technology.

The first fingerlings will be introduced to one dam on Plaisir de Merle in next May, with the trout harvested in November 2006. According to farm manager Freddie le Roux, in its pilot phase the project is expected to yield between 6 and 8 tons of fish with an estimated turnover of R150 000, generating a profit of around R50 000.

“Depending on the success of the venture in year one, the extent of the operations can be expanded and additional workers encouraged to join and thus share in the benefits,” says Hannes van Rensburg, Distell group manager: farms. “The intention is to broaden the skills of the workers, enabling them to augment their income while also exposing them to business management training. We hope to facilitate the involvement of more workers as we are confident the scale of production can be increased after the first year.”

Distell is also providing some of the infrastructure necessary to establish the venture at no cost, including the use of the dams and water supply as well as all legal input.

“Our keenness to support the project is to help workers in constructive, self-empowering ways that will enhance the quality of their lives,” says Van Rensburg.

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| DATE      | DECEMBER 2005   |
| ISSUED BY | DKC (DE KOCK COMMUNIATIONS)   |
| FOR       | DISTELL GROUP LIMITED   |
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