

# EXPERT – LENNOX PLAATJIES

## SELECTION OF PARTNERS

The selection of the right partner for a new business venture is extremely important. In a farming business, qualities such as leadership and organisational skills are invaluable.

One of the main goals of the PALS initiative is to establish more black commercial farmers. Therefore, the focus is on individuals or a small group of people as shareholders in the farming company. The larger employee group or people who work the land benefit through profit sharing of the personnel/employee trust.

The selection process of possible black commercial farmers and co-shareholders should preferably be done in terms of objective criteria. The two options for a commercial farmer who plans to implement a land reform enterprise are to select candidates from his group of employees or to select a black farmer or candidate who is not an employee, but has certain qualities that make him/her a suitable candidate.

### PROCESS

The suggested process for selecting individuals or a small group from the farming employees might include the following steps:

- Discussions with a group of employees to explain and agree on the process of applications and selection criteria.
- Deciding on and communicating the objective selection criteria.
- Interviews with shortlisted candidates.
- Analytic tests might also be requested as well as the successful completion of specific training courses.

The selection of one or more candidates depends on the potential of the new economic enterprise and its specific requirements. In

some cases, one suitable candidate, who will be supported and mentored to become a commercial farmer, will be the preferred option. In other cases, such as large commercial enterprises, a small group of up to 10 people can be accommodated.

When a single candidate is elected, it is also important to ensure that a strategy in event of death or debilitating illness is in place.

The possible objective selection criteria might include a combination of the following:

- Years of service and disciplinary record.
- Being a true farmer.
- Seniority (current post level).
- Finances (budgets).
- Management principles.
- Production.
- Marketing skills.
- Communication skills.
- Leadership.
- Organisational skills.

### TRAINING

Intensive and continuous training should be provided during all the phases of the establishment of the new land-reform enterprise. PALS found training should focus on financial skills, leadership, new venture creation and the roles and duties of directors, trustees and shareholders.

The most important aspect is open and frank discussions about values, expectations and fears, between the commercial farmer and the candidates for the role of new black farmer.

When deciding to work together as partners, the new co-owners must move forward together to build mutual trust and inspire each other.