

# the bulletin

Forestry & Agriculture Edition - VOLUME 1 - 2024



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ANNIVERSARY

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### Cover

This Bell Cane Loader, serial number BCH157, was built in 1977 and has worked out its life on a farm near Eshowe in Northern KwaZulu-Natal. At 47 years old it is a great testament to the longevity of our machines and is now proudly on display at our Richards Bay factory.

### Published by

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## insight



**Our** NAMPO 2024 theme is "Growing places with you" and as the new Group CEO of Bell Equipment I look forward to the opportunity of meeting customers at the show, learning about your businesses, and discussing how we can grow and succeed together.

Bell Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture are in a dynamic space with a focus on growing both our independent dealer network and our product range as part of our strategy to better serve and support our expanding customer base and machine population.

To date we've carefully selected and signed up over 30 dealers. Some of the newest appointments are featured in this magazine and importantly, like Bell, they are all in the business of building lasting relationships with you, our customers. To support this ethos, we've recently held our

first dealer conference where we outlined our commitment to ensuring we give our dealers the support they need to keep your machines and businesses thriving and provide you with a positive customer experience.

Part of this support is providing innovative mechanised solutions, and we have some exciting forestry products in the pipeline. Many foresters and contractors are already aware of our timber processing head that has performed well during extensive testing and represents a step change to our forestry business. This year we will be building pre-production units with a view to launching in 2025 to complement our range of attachments that are already available internationally. Added to this is a new skidder prototype that has been built and testing will start in due course.

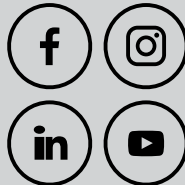
In terms of JCB Agriculture, while the brand is synonymous with backhoe loaders, our drive is to create awareness of the JCB Loadall concept. Considering the experiences in overseas markets and the various customer testimonials within these pages, we believe the JCB Loadall is a more versatile machine for many farming operations, which would benefit from the higher utilisation they would be able to achieve with this piece of kit.

In closing, 2024 marks the 70th anniversary of Bell Equipment and forestry and agriculture is the cornerstone of our story. I'd like to thank all members of the Bell team, suppliers, customers, and dealers for being part of our extended Bell family. Your trust and support inspire us to continually innovate and excel. The best is yet to come!

Ashley Bell  
Group Chief Executive Officer

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# Bell Loggers support renewable energy creation at Coega Biomass Centre

*There is a lot of good news emanating from the Coega Special Economic Zone (SEZ) north of Gqeberha on South Africa's vast Eastern Cape Coast.*

First, there's an international company that has invested in an innovative idea to turn invasive tree species into a source of sustainable renewable energy while creating jobs and earning valuable foreign exchange for its host country, South Africa. Then this same company is empowering local timber harvesting contractors by utilising their services, so sustaining more jobs and with an unprecedented benefit, assisting them in buying the mechanised equipment they need while enjoying the use of it.

The company creating this positive energy is a subsidiary of an international company based in the Netherlands and is aptly called the Coega Biomass Centre. Here

we meet Emiel Hanekamp, Manager Biomass Supply and Sustainability, who tells us more about what this innovative company is doing: "We are producing wood pellets as a source of energy and heat for export to Europe as the South African market for these pellets is still under development. In addition, we produce wood chips for both the European and local energy markets.

"We use invasive tree species such as eucalyptus, pine, and wattle as our feedstock. While we pay the contractors who extract the timber for us, we don't charge the landowners or farmers where the timber is sourced and they in turn are happy to be rid of these and

other invasive species that are generally heavy on the water table. We're proud to say that we use 95% of the timber that we extract, compared to a pulp or saw-log operation where as much as 30% of the biomass is left behind, which can be considered a potential fuel load for forest fires."

"All land where harvesting takes place is 100% under internationally recognised Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification and while all current harvesting operations are motor-manual, there is the potential to develop this partly into mechanised harvesting," says Willem Jacobs, General Manager of Bio-Logistics Africa, a company contracted by





Coega Biomass Centre that has been overseeing the timber harvesting since 2019. "We're currently harvesting timber in a radius of 175km from Coega, which extends from the Bloukrantz River to East London and inland to Jansenville."

"The larger part of our feedstock timber, in fact about 75%, is transported to our plant here at the Coega SEZ in round log form. The balance is chipped on site leaving only stumps and thin branches behind," Emiel continues. "At our plant, the inbound truck carrying the timber crosses a weighbridge to determine the mass and therefore costs and unloads the timber onto a stockpile."

From this point on the timber enters a chipper, which drastically reduces its size. The smaller fibres

are dried to contain only 15% moisture and then compressed into pellets, which are cooled.

"The pellets we end up with are 100% wood with nothing added as the lignin in the wood acts as a natural binder. When these pellets are burnt, they produce very little ash, making them an ideal source of heat and energy," Emiel says. "We're excited to have exported our first 10 000 tons of wood chips to European markets as breakbulk at the end of August 2023 and we plan to export the first pellets at the end of 2023. In a few years, we will export at least 120 000 tons of pellets per year."

"On the harvesting side, we make use of contractors and former out-of-work forestry workers who have the basic knowledge and some experience of this type of work," Willem explains. "We

currently use four harvesting teams and 45 people infield. The harvesting side is also under the auspices of the FSC in terms of skills transfer and adhering to strict safety protocols, working in daylight hours only."

Willem expands on the fact that because the contractors were using older timber handling equipment that delivered availabilities of less than 20%, Coega Biomass Centre took a decision to assist them by buying two new Bell 225F Loggers from EdgeQuip, the Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture dealer based in the Tsitsikamma area.

"We were comfortable in approaching Mike Cowie, the Manager of EdgeQuip about what timber handling equipment to buy as we had bought spares and consumables from his company in

the past," Willem says. "What sets EdgeQuip apart as a dealer is that its owner, Danie Scheepers, is a timber harvesting contractor and with that link we obtained the best possible advice on what equipment to buy."

EdgeQuip suggested Coega Biomass Centre buys two new Bell 225F Loggers. Once ordered, the machines were delivered a mere two weeks later, on 5 May 2023, with one machine going straight into service in the Tsitsikamma region and the other delivered to the Coega Biomass Centre in the Coega SEZ.

"We're assisting the timber harvesting contractors by allowing them to rent the machines from us with those rental charges taken as

instalments to pay off the machines so that they end up owning them," Emiel adds. "This creates a win-win situation for all concerned as the contractor gains sustainable employment and we in turn are assured of an ongoing supply of timber feedstock for our plant."

"Being familiar with Bell Loggers from past experience, we've been impressed with how much quieter the new F-series Loggers run with the Yanmar engines, and with an average fuel consumption of around five litres an hour they are quite economical," Willem says.

"They also seem more powerful and with average utilisation of seven hours a day, this greater

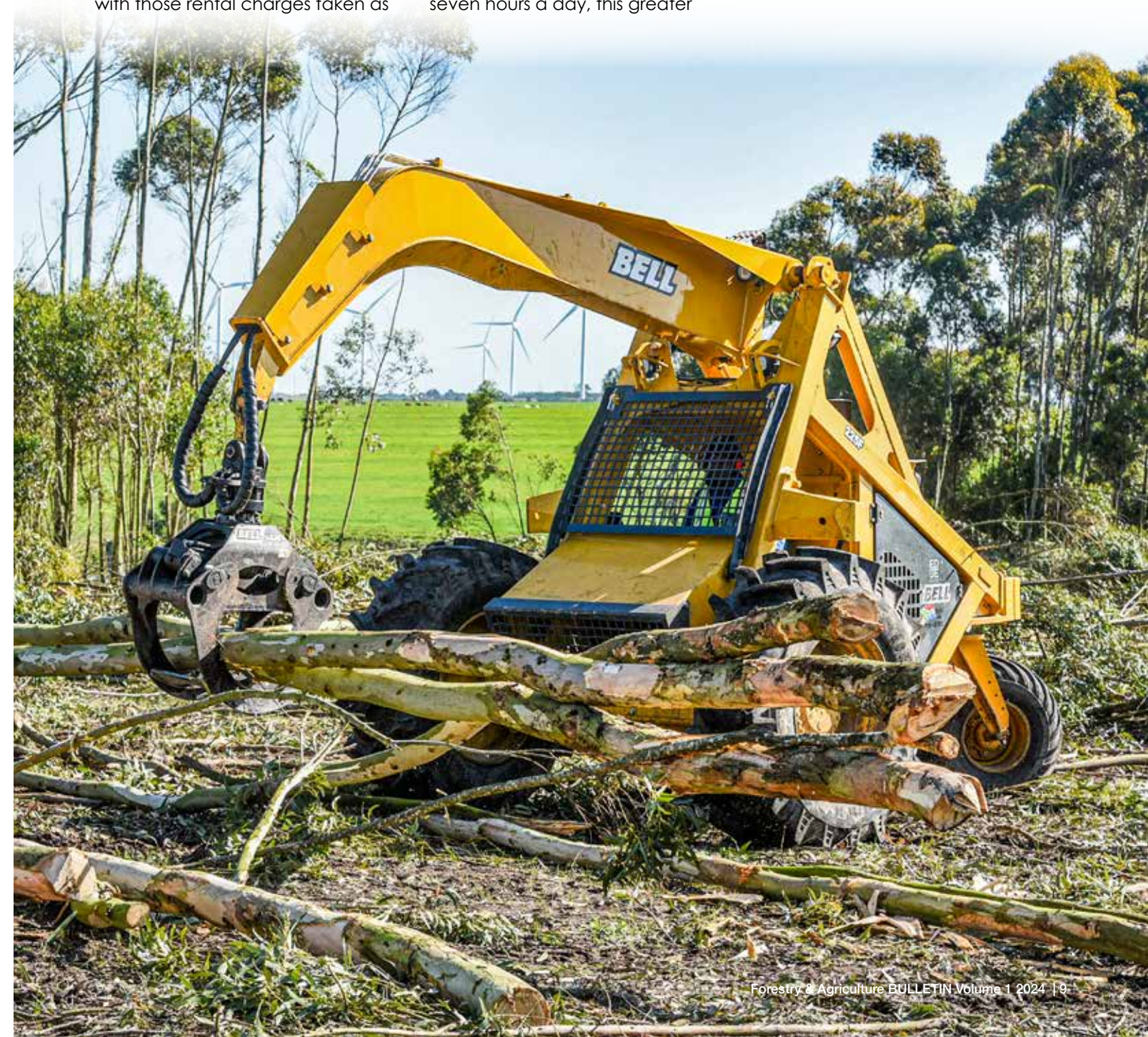
power translates into less operator fatigue resulting in safer operations infield and on loading areas."

Coega Biomass Centre bought the Bell 225F Loggers with extended warranties to 2 000 hours or two years and during this time all servicing will be done by EdgeQuip's mechanics.

"We as Coega Biomass Centre are proud that we can be part of the global transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy forms while assisting others in creating and sustaining jobs and becoming owners of reliable timber harvesting equipment such as that which Bell Equipment designs and builds," Emiel says.



**Emiel Hanekamp (left), Manager Biomass Supply and Sustainability, with Willem Jacobs, General Manager Bio-Logistics Africa with an older Bell 225A Logger at the Coega Biomass Centre.**





# JCB Loadall is an invaluable multi-tool on Pienaarsfontein Farm

*Imagine having such a versatile loading tool on a farm that not only has interchangeable attachments but can also be used to draw trailers when normal agricultural tractors are used for essential farming-related tasks.*



This is the happy situation Alec Pieterse has on his family's farm Pienaarsfontein in the Schweizer-Reneke district where he undertakes a multitude of tasks with his JCB 541-70 Loadall.

"I joined my dad, Ferdie Pieterse, on the farm in 1994 after studying mechanical engineering. I'm the third generation on this land that was first farmed by my grandfather, Ferdinand Alexander (Sak) Pieterse, after whom I was named," Alec says. "Our main crops are maize, sunflowers, and soya beans and we have a herd of Simmentaler cattle.

"Keeping up family traditions, we have since my grandfather's time done a bit of alluvial diamond mining on the farm, but we nurture this land and rehabilitate it immediately after mining."

Referring to their small-scale diamond mining, Alec recalls that they first bought a JCB JS205 Excavator in 2017 from Johnny Scholtz at JBJ Machinery in

Schweizer-Reneke for use on the mine. This machine is still being used mainly for the rehabilitation of the mined areas and it has some 7 850 hours on its clock.

"Johnny and I know each other from our schooldays so it was like dealing with an old friend when buying the JCB JS205 Excavator," Alec says. "Then in 2019 we bought a larger JCB JS305 30-ton Excavator from Johnny as we were mining slightly deeper to about two metres and we were dedicating the older JCB JS205 Excavator to the important rehabilitation of the mined areas."

According to Alec, both JCB Excavators are multifunctional, as they are used for bush clearing, taking out tree stumps, and digging and backfilling trenches for irrigation infrastructure, all of which makes them valuable assets on the farm.

Like many modern farmers, Alec believes that mechanisation is the way forward, and giving credence

to this belief, he in 2017 bought a JCB 541-70 Loadall from JBJ Machinery to further enhance this mechanisation effort.

"This machine is simply amazing, and it works throughout the year," Alec says. "Like many specialised tools, once you have it, you don't know how you had survived without it before."

Using the easily detachable fork attachment, Pienaarsfontein's JCB 541-70 Loadall is used to unload pallets with essential supplies into storage and bulk bags of feed into the feed mixer for the cattle. Switching to the bucket in mere minutes, maize from storage bags is loaded into a big debulking trailer.

"We have an extension on the seven-metre boom which increases its length to 11-metres that we use to lift down the gears of a windmill when repairs are necessary. We've even used the machine to hoist up sick cows onto trailers before transporting them to



**Johnny Scholtz of JBJ Machinery (left) with Alec Pieterse from Pienaarsfontein Farm.**



# HANDLING IT ALL WITH EASE



a recovery camp," Alec tells us. "This machine has a blade attachment available for grading our farm roads which makes it a super multi-tool."

But there is more. Alec tells that often after their maize has been harvested and his agricultural tractors are occupied with essential tasks, he has used the JCB 541-70 Loadall to haul trailers containing up to 10 tons of bulk bags with maize stalks for animal fodder. This turns the machine, with its powerful 63kW JCB Dieselmex engine, into an additional haulage

machine which he considers a real bonus.

"We're also really happy that Johnny Scholtz and his business JBJ Machinery are now in the Bell Forestry and Agriculture dealership chain as that gives us the assurance of sustained parts availability, not that Johnny has ever not looked after us in that respect," he adds. "BJJ Machinery's prompt attention to detail is legendary and as a farmer himself, Johnny understands our business and appreciates the challenges we face."

When asked about his policy on machine replacement, Alec is circumspect in saying that advice from his trusted accountant is that as soon as repair and maintenance charges exceed the interest amount on the monthly instalment of any equipment, it's time to consider a replacement. But as Pienaarsfontein's JCB equipment keeps clocking up the hours without running up repair costs, it seems a while before this hardy equipment will be replaced.

With narrow spaces, slippery ground and heavy workloads, the agricultural environment represents a unique challenge for operators and their machinery. The new JCB 527-58 Loadall is designed to meet this challenge head-on. Compact dimensions, incredible manoeuvrability, unparalleled build quality and all-day operator comfort are just the beginning.

**Contact your nearest JCB Agriculture dealer for more information.**

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# Bell Forwarder streamlines operations for Buhle Betfu

*Timber forwarding is often thought of as the unglamorous link in the timber supply chain. Felling trees, extracting and cross-cutting them gets the adrenaline going as it's mostly noisy and busy. However before the timber reaches the long-haul transport, done by either road or rail, it must be moved from the roadside to a loading depot. This must happen continuously, efficiently, and above all, safely.*



Buhle Betfu is essentially a transport company but one with a difference as it's a South African empowerment success story. Buhle Betfu evolved out of the well-established Cargo Carriers. The name Buhle Betfu means "our pride" in Siswati, the language of eSwatini (formerly Swaziland) and it's this pride which has carried it forward since its founding in 1986. The company's vision statement is "We are on the move" and, judging by its past successes that have been acknowledged with several awards, the pace of its movement is steadily increasing.

"Buhle Betfu operates in two industries namely sugar and timber," says Vinesh Gayaram, the company's Operations Manager. "Sugarcane transport, with the loading outsourced, is done with a 12-vehicle fleet in the Malelane and Komatipoort areas. In timber, we operate a 24-vehicle express fleet that supplies 80% of the timber that feeds a major pulp and paper mill west of Mbombela."

It is near this giant pulp and paper mill at Ndogwana in Mpumalanga that Buhle Betfu has its base for the timber haulage operation.





"We employ around 140 full-time staff and from here we cover the areas of Camelot North and South as well as Sudwala," Vinesh adds. "We're fortunate to have a low staff turnover and most of our employees have been here for a long time, which adds to our collective skills base."

Having timber handling and transport as its core business, the timber division of Buhle Betfu has since its inception made use of Bell Loggers to sort, stack, load, and unload the timber in its various forms. "Buhle Betfu has owned 15 Bell Loggers in various model sizes over the years with all of them being A-series machines apart from one newer Bell 225F series Logger," says Maurizio

Spasimante, owner of Forest Trading, a company closely associated with Buhle Betfu, and which looks after the fleet's maintenance. "The company has been innovative with new technology and using a performance-based operations system has been self-regulatory in finding ways to carry larger payloads and speed up production."

The need to speed up production to provide a constant stream of timber to the pulp and paper mill was recently highlighted by Buhle Betfu's clients. They suggested that the company look at replacing previous all-wheel drive road trucks, that were loaded using Bell Loggers, with two specialised

timber forwarders fitted with their own cranes. This would enable them to load and unload the timber independently during the forwarding process with the added advantage that it could include infield loading when that was required.

"What our clients wanted to see was a timber forwarder fitted with its own crane that could work independently of mechanised teams using Bell Loggers to load or unload timber, and this all in the name of keeping the timber supply to the mill flowing," says Johan van Zyl, Buhle Betfu's Shift Manager, and someone who is constantly at the forefront of the production process. "The thought was too that should there be timber left in a

compartment, a forwarder, being versatile and high enough off the ground to get over stumps, could also load infield and so speed up the supply process."

"While we researched the market thoroughly, our decision was made all the easier by what Bell Equipment's Sales Representative in Mbombela, Daniel van Huyssteen, a qualified forester with excellent product knowledge, could tell us," Vinesh adds. "Knowing Bell Equipment and the quality of their design and build, especially in their forestry-focused products, along with their excellent technical support, gave us the confidence to order the Bell TF302E Forwarder in January 2023."

The Bell TF302E Forwarder was delivered to Buhle Betfu in May 2023 and put straight to work. The operators, former truck drivers, took a while to get used to the seat swiveling through 180 degrees while using the onboard crane to

load and unload the truck with timber.

The timber that Buhle Betfu transports is all cut to 2,4 metre lengths which the Bell TF302E Forwarder's crane handles easily with its maximum capacity of 1,65 tons. The teleboom extension has proved to be incredibly handy when certain types of timber more suitable for pulp may be stacked at the back of piles and the longer reach of the crane enables it to comfortably load selected logs.

The Bell TF302E Forwarder has twin bunks that are ideally suited to the 2,4-metre log lengths.

"The Bell TF302E Forwarder runs an average haul distance of 5km and while most of the roads we traverse are hard and solid, some can get very slippery in our long rainy season in Mpumalanga," Johan explains. "We believe that with the Bell Forwarder's even distribution of torque across all three axles, we will

enjoy true 6x6 traction in all weather and underfoot conditions, and extended tyre life. The current fuel consumption of slightly over 13 litres an hour is fair, and we believe this will improve as our operators become more accustomed to the machine."

Buhle Betfu's Bell TF302E Forwarder has been bought with a standard warranty of 12 months or 2 500 hours. Both Maurizio and Workshop Manager, Pieter Woest, are of the opinion that it's easy to deal with Bell Equipment as you can talk to someone you know in the Nelspruit branch. "Bell, as a family business, is known for reaching out and ensuring each customer's machine delivers maximum uptime as they were designed to do," Maurizio says. "Buhle Betfu is a firm believer in the advantages of preventative maintenance and will fully familiarise its maintenance crews with the Bell TF302E Forwarders even while they are still under warranty."



**(From left): Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Daniel van Huyssteen; Buhle Betfu Workshop Manager, Pieter Woest; Buhle Betfu Shift Manager, Johan van Zyl; Buhle Betfu Operations Manager, Vinesh Gayaram; Forest Trading Owner, Maurizio Spasimante, and Buhle Betfu Bell TF302E Operator, Louis Malomane.**



# DT Farming Trust has endless uses for JCB 3DX Plus



**Sven Röhrs, co-owner of Drakensberg Agricultural Services (left) with Harry Braithwaite (5) and Ross Braithwaite standing at the shale borrow pit.**

*It is human nature to want to describe what uses there are for any mechanised equipment that looks and works differently from normal agricultural equipment on a farm. Near Winterton, in the picturesque foothills of the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg, a young farmer though poses a different question when he asks: "What can this machine not be used for?"*

Dieter Schröder has been farming in the area to the immediate west of Winterton since 1995. He first farmed only cattle but has since expanded the farm to now include crops like maize, soya beans, wheat, potatoes, and cabbages. His farm, under the name of DT Farming Trust, also grows seeds for sweetcorn, pumpkin, and butternut.

"We supply cattle we've fed in our own feedlot to abattoirs and having a feedlot implies, amongst other uses, that mechanised help will be needed to ensure manure is removed and the area is kept as hygienic as possible," says Ross Braithwaite, Dieter Schröder's son-in-law who is married to his daughter Nicky. "Despite our high annual rainfall in this area, we use centre-pivot irrigation, which entails creating and maintaining infrastructure for the irrigation

system and again, having mechanised equipment to do this effectively is a must."

Ross goes on to explain that although they had in the past used bucket and fork attachments on their agricultural tractors, the power needed to effectively move earth and pick up loads was not forthcoming. Renting in the plant to do this was expensive, not always available when urgently needed, and not always reliable.

"What we needed on this farm was a dedicated backhoe loader and, after much consideration and research, Dieter and I decided in the final quarter of 2022 to buy such a machine," Ross says. "We came very close to buying a rival machine when I spoke to Sven Röhrs, who along with his father, Leon, owns Drakensberg Agricultural Services, which is

literally situated next door to our farm. They had, at that point, just been appointed the official dealers for Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture in our area and could supply us with a market-leading JCB Backhoe Loader, which, with a very competitive price, turned out in reality to be our first choice."

With financing in place, DT Farming Trust took delivery of its JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loader in late October 2022 and as Ross says with a satisfied grin, they have not looked back since.

"As mentioned before, we generally have a high rainfall which often causes muddy underfoot conditions, and the power and 4x4 traction on the JCB 3DX Plus is simply great," Ross says. "The four-in-one clamshell bucket is so handy as one can pick up





pipes with it and while we haven't yet pinned down the fuel consumption, we believe it's not breaking the bank."

Ross, echoing the thoughts of the JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loader's operator, says the controls are soft and responsive and he took to the new machine quickly. Other tractor drivers on the farm are

keen to also gain experience with the Backhoe Loader and have eagerly gathered around the machine when its easily accessible service points were shown.

"We get chicken manure brought from nearby poultry farms that is combined with cattle manure from our feedlot. The JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loader is used to blend

the manure and load it into spreaders prior to planting," Ross adds. "We also use it to load lime into spreaders or into tractor-drawn dump trailers in preparation for planting crops."

"We maintain our own roads on the farm and have a shale borrow pit where we loosen the shale with the backhoe on the machine and

the operator loads it using the front bucket, a very quick and effective operation."

During its 12-month warranty period, DT Farming Trust's JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loader will be maintained by mechanics from Drakensberg Agricultural Services

under the watchful eye of Sven Röhrs, who is a qualified diesel mechanic. Ross is adamant that with their solid business relationship built over many years, he and Dieter are confident of good parts availability and proven technical backup from Drakensberg Agricultural Services.

"With its many features and great power, you simply cannot call the JCB 3DX Plus a budget or entry-level machine," Ross says emphatically. "This is the best value for money machine on this farm by far and I still ask, what can it not be used for?"





# Bell 225F Logger sustains sawmill production for Rance Timber

*Traditionally Bell Loggers have been known as quite simple yet robust machines, which is probably why they have become the industry standard as a loading and timber handling tool. But, as robust as they are, they can also display the odd quirk as the workshop and transport manager of a leading South African timber group will attest to.*

CJ Rance (Pty) Ltd, trading as Rance Timber, is a sawmilling company manufacturing premium quality South African pine-sawn board products that has been in operation since 1910.

Rance Timber has grown from humble beginnings as a one-man business in the earliest pioneering days of the timber industry in South

Africa, to a successful, modern enterprise employing 1 400 people over both the forestry and sawmilling divisions. It has been the backbone of the timber industry in the Amathole region of the Eastern Cape and continues to play a vital role in the socio-economic development of the rural economy and its people.

Its log resource is supplied mainly from the 15 000 hectares of plantations owned and managed by its sister company, Amathole Forestry Company. These plantations are managed on a sustained yield basis according to best international and environmental practices.

The company operates two sawmills, namely Kubusi Sawmill and Sandile Sawmill, and is committed to providing industry-leading service and quality for its valued customers.

It's at the Sandile Sawmill that we chat to Devan Sternberg, Rance Timber's Workshop and Transport Manager and a man with the responsibility of looking after a vast fleet of timber and forestry-related vehicles and machines comprising utility vehicles, Bell Loggers, transport trucks, wheel loaders, and skidders.

"Rance Timber (Pty) Ltd is a timber company in the true sense of the word with its own forests and

two sawmills and it therefore owns the whole value chain in producing saw timber that has a wide variety of uses and markets," Devan says. "Here at the Sandile Sawmill, we process pine logs from 13cm to 23cm in diameter and create timber products that are sold throughout the South African market. These products include structural, industrial, and packaging timber."

Getting the timber from the forestry compartments to roadside depots, onto trucks, and then onto stockpiles at the sawmills presents its own challenges and for a very long time Rance Timber has

made use of Bell Loggers in the 220A Teleboom and 225A Crankboom ranges. The company's fleet of Bell A-series Loggers numbers 30 machines.

"We run eight Bell Loggers on infield operations, another five loading transport trucks, and the balance at the two sawmills," Devan says. "Our oldest Bell Logger dates to the 1980s and was completely refurbished five years ago. A further four machines were subsequently refurbished by Bell Equipment in East London fairly recently.





"In that way, we extract further lives from these rugged machines and can do that if the machines' frames are intact. When refurbishing them, we generally fit a new engine, new wheel motors and replace the hydraulic pump under the seat as well as re-bushing the grab. Refurbishing or rebuilding will typically happen at around 10 000 hours with second and even third lives extending a Bell Logger's life to 30 000 hours and in some cases 40 000 hours, which constitutes a wonderful return on the initial investment."

In 2021, Rance Timber took the decision to buy a new Bell Logger specifically for use at the Sandile Sawmill where unloading of timber off trucks, sorting on the log deck, and feeding into the mill only occurs during daylight.

"We had consulted with Anthony Enslin, Bell Equipment's Sales Representative in East London, and took delivery of a new Bell 225F Logger in July 2021, the first such machine in the Bell F-series," Devan adds. "It made an immediate difference to our production at the Sandile Sawmill as there is now a sustained feed to the mill off the log deck."

"Having had only A-series Loggers before, we were impressed with how much quieter the new F-series Logger runs with its Yanmar engine and the fuel consumption is much better."

Rance Timber's new Bell 225F Logger has been bought with a standard warranty and has by now

exited the warranty period with around 2 000 hours on its hour meter. Despite this and the fact that Devan manages a fully stocked workshop and substantial parts holding, Rance Timber still insists that mechanics from Bell Equipment in East London do the major milestone servicing at the 1 000-hour marks.

"What makes our relationship with Bell Equipment special is that Denton Webber and his team in East London may be almost 100km away, but should we make that phone call, they drop everything to attend to our needs and always have," Devan says. "That level of service sells subsequent machines and breeds brand loyalty."



**Rance Timber Workshop and Transport Manager, Devan Sternberg.**

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# ORV upgrades its Loadall telehandler and joins the Bell family



*A fourth generation of passionate Karoo livestock farmers is doing more than making hay while the sun shines, turning high-quality crops grown along a major river into nutritional animal feeds, and using a world-class machine to unload raw products and load ready feeds for wide distribution.*

Prieska in the Northern Cape is situated on the banks of the Orange River, South Africa's biggest and longest river that gives life to this arid province. Along its banks, farmers grow wheat, maize, lucerne, and grapes. Three generations back, during the days of controlled agricultural markets, the Botha family needed lucerne for their animals in the Karoo.

But as the adage goes, nothing succeeds like success, and soon the feed that the Botha's produced for themselves under the name Oranjerivervoere (ORV) was sold to other livestock farmers in the area with the company's products now spread across the whole of South Africa and into Namibia.

"Ours is a real family business with my dad, Johan, still keeping an

overall eye while I look after the production plant. My brother Jan-Philip manages the agriculture and our sister Jacolize, an accountant, sees to the finances and administration," Johan Botha Jnr tells us. "As we are livestock farmers ourselves and know what feed keeps our animals in peak condition, our products are constantly evolving, and we rely on animal nutritionists to develop feeds that will benefit the needs of each livestock farmer and have each animal develop to its full genetic potential."

The Botha family has erected an impressive plant to produce the feeds on the outskirts of Prieska. The plant runs around the clock for five days of the week as a constant movement of truck and trailer traffic brings in raw materials and takes ready products away for

distribution. Central to this activity is one yellow machine that is constantly on the move, unloading trucks, feeding raw material into the plant, and again loading trucks.

"We've used a JCB 531-70 Loadall for the past three years to do all the material handling and loading in the plant and decided it was time to replace it with a newer model," Johan Jnr says. "Our policy is to limit such a machine to three years of constant usage and that machine had exceeded that time. Such was the quality of its design and build, we felt it natural to replace it with a similar machine, which is ideally suited to our purposes."

Johan mentions that in a 24-hour cycle, the JCB 531-70 Loadall would typically be used for 10



**Johan Botha Snr (left), Bell Sales Representative, Eric van der Merwe (centre), JCB Operator, Johannes Mokete (in the cab) and Johan Botha Jnr (right).**



hours. This would involve unloading big bales of lucerne and bulk bags of wheat, maize stover, and urea with the bags weighing up to 1,2 tons. Big bales of lucerne stacked seven high would be fetched from an exterior shed to feed into the plant.

"We've found that one of the really big advantages of the JCB

531-70 Loadall is its tight turning circle enabled by the three-mode steering that allows the machine to place bulk bags into tight spaces. The crab motion of the machine is a definite advantage and stacking big loads up to seven metres in height is a bonus while not forgetting its interchangeable tools like quickly swapping out the bucket for a set of forks."

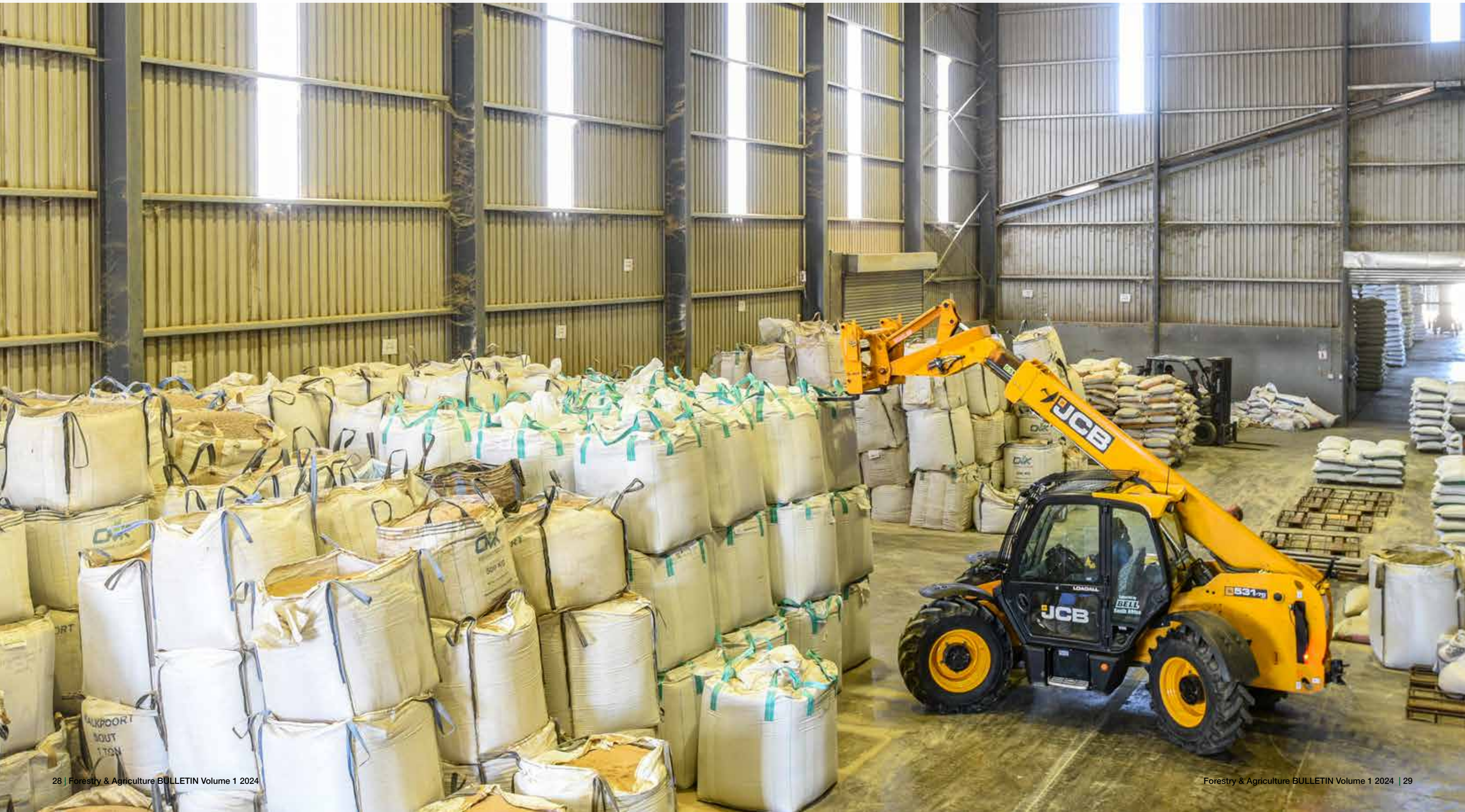
Other stand out features of the JCB 531-70 Loadall are the single-lever control, standard 4x4 configuration for superior traction, heavy-duty axle tips that help to absorb the enormous stresses generated during continuous movement of heavy materials, and daily checks and lubrication operations that can be done at ground level.

"The wheat and maize stover, along with the lucerne that we use for the feeds, creates a very fine fibre-based dust and were it not for the reversible fan on the JCB 531-70 Loadall that clears the radiator, we'd be in real trouble here, especially during our hot summers," Johan Jnr says. "That is why we're strict on the

preventative maintenance we do ourselves while leaving the major servicing to mechanics from Bell Equipment working out of the Kimberley branch of the company."

"While mentioning the latter, we're very happy to now be dealing with Bell Equipment as the official

distributor for JCB equipment. We can say that dealing with Sales Representative, Eric van der Merwe, when purchasing the new machine, and Shaun Malan and his maintenance teams, has been a positive experience and we look forward to continuing this business relationship."





# JCBs give great service to the van Straten family on De Park Farm

*The late Japie van Straten was known amongst his children and fellow farmers to be a perfectionist as he believed that success in any farming operation followed when you did what was necessary, timeously. That's why, on a day that he felt he needed the sole use of the JCB 3DX Backhoe Loader on his farm and it wasn't available, he got so angry that he promptly bought another one.*

"My late father, Japie, was 'that guy'," Michiel van Straten, the late Japie's son chuckles as he fondly remembers the incident. "Not that we cut corners, quite the opposite as taught to us by our father, but he was a perfectionist with strong morals and his word was law on this farm."

Michiel, his wife, Freda, and their son, Gerhard, work the farm De Park in the Schweizer-Reneke district and Michiel is the third generation of his family on the land. The couple's daughter, Elsje, works in biokinetics at Ananda Hattingh Biokineticists in Benoni. De

Park is known to produce big crops of maize, peanuts, soya beans and sunflower with Bonsmara-cross and Simmentaler-cross cattle herds adding value. Freda, a former teacher, keeps her hand on a herd of mutton Merino sheep. Victor Schmulian, Michiel's brother-in-law, is responsible for the cattle of JMS Boerdery BK, the entity in which the farm is doing business.

"Before we had yellow metal machines, we used smaller wheeled loader attachments on our agricultural tractors to clean feedlots of manure, load and unload lime and spread it as those

were the days before the use of bulk bags became popular," Michiel says. "Then in 2008, we bought a new Bell 315SJ Backhoe Loader that we used for the same tasks, but being a bigger and stronger machine, those tasks could be completed faster."

On any farm there is often work for larger earthmoving equipment and De Park is no exception. "When creating more acreage for planting, we have to bush clear the veld and often needed larger equipment to do this cost-effectively by taking out trees, shrubs and especially rocks,"





Michiel tells. "In 2010, we bought a JCB JS200, 20-ton Excavator and it proved to be a revelation on the farm as we used it to create all important fire breaks on our farm's boundaries."

"Although we no longer create berms at the edges of ploughed lands and on fences, because we now plough less and rather use chisel ploughs and rippers, the JCB JS200 Excavator was used initially to create these berms, which was light work for it. Just recently, we had to take out a large Eucalyptus tree and when an agricultural tractor delivering some 417kW of power couldn't drag away the stump, we used the JCB Excavator to roll the tree to where it was out of the way."

The JCB JS200 Excavator has now clocked some 8 500 hours.

In 2015, Johnny Scholtz, the owner of JBJ Machinery in Schweizer-Reneke, with whom Michiel and his family had dealt for years, let Michiel know of a JCB 3DX which a retiring farmer had sold. "This turbocharged JCB 3DX Backhoe Loader had done a mere 200 hours and was barely run in and

we snapped it up, as by then we were aware of JCB's market-leading status amongst backhoe loaders," Michiel recalls. "This machine became the multi-tasking tool of choice on the farm and there's almost nothing it could not effectively be used for from cleaning the feedlots, digging and backfilling trenching for irrigation piping, digging holes for refuse management and handling lime and gypsum into spreaders prior to the planting season."

By now, fertiliser was being supplied in 1-ton bulk bags and the fold-over forks on the JCB 3DX proved invaluable for this task of unloading these bags off supply trucks and trailers. The machine has also been extensively used in clearing invasive plants like the 'Vaalbos' or turpentine bush in livestock grazing areas.

"Then in 2020, we had the now 'famous' incident when my late father, Japie, decided that he needed the JCB Backhoe Loader for things he wanted done on the farm that day. As it was already busy with a full workload of other tasks, his impatience to do things timeously got the better of him

and he contacted Johnny Scholtz and promptly bought another JCB 3DX Backhoe Loader," Michiel says. "The advantage of having more than one JCB Backhoe Loader is that one is assured that there is never a machine not available and especially with us having land with crops further west of De Park, we can now simply drive the JCB Backhoe Loader there for whatever task is at hand."

On the day of our visit to De Park with Johnny Scholtz, one of his experienced mechanics JD Venter and Johnny's son, Hendrik, an apprentice with JBJ Machinery, were on the farm to attend to maintenance on the JCB JS200 Excavator.

"This is the level of service we've come to appreciate from Johnny and his team at JBJ Machinery, all due to a business and friendship relationship built over many years," Michiel says. "Their response times are prompt; parts availability is never a problem, and it always feels like we're dealing with friends and not merely suppliers of our excellent equipment."



**JBj Machinery Mechanic, JD Venter, with JBj Apprentice Mechanic, Hendrik Scholtz, Owner of JBj Machinery, Johnny Scholtz, and Michiel van Straten.**

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# Hands-on JCB Loadall training highlights strong market potential

*There is huge scope for JCB Agriculture's range of Loadalls (telehandlers) in South Africa as local farmers increasingly look to mechanisation to maximise the efficiencies of their operations, as Bell Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture dealers learned first-hand during an intensive two-day product training session.*

The training was presented by Ben Mansfield, JCB Product Manager for Loadalls from the UK, who expertly shared his knowledge and enthusiasm for the product during two two-day training sessions held at Caledon in the Southern Cape and Sasolburg in the Free State. Sales representatives from Bell Equipment South Africa, selling into the agricultural space, also attended the training.

On the first day, Ben acquainted the attendees with the history of

JCB Loadalls, design and production of which started in 1977, as well as the various features of the machine and the difference in the models. Further detail was shared on the various applications where a Loadall is more advantageous compared to modified tractors and backhoes. Those attending then had an opportunity to drive a JCB 530-70 Loadall and experience handling the machine.

The second day started with Natasha Swanepoel, JCB Manager: Finance, explaining the workings of the JCB Finance Calculator and Interest Rate Template for calculating rates, terms, and instalments.

Ben concluded the training session by explaining the workings and benefits of JCB's telematics system, LiveLink, which works as a web-based portal providing owners with data encompassing security,

location, whether the machine is idling or active, its speed, hours worked, fuel used and service notifications. This data can then be downloaded onto a spreadsheet. He also demonstrated the online training that is available as well as the JCB Hub which is an excellent iPad-based sales tool including product brochures, short informative video clips, and comparative information.

Finally, showing his quirky sense of humour wearing a Springbok rugby jersey, he spoke briefly about what the future holds for JCB equipment when he mentioned the E-tech range of electric machinery, hydrogen engines, more compact machines, larger equipment than what is currently available, and a futuristic Series III cab for all machines.

Charles Inggs, Dealer Development Manager: Bell Forestry & Agriculture South Africa, commented: "We are

appreciative of JCB Agriculture for their support and this invaluable face-to-face and hands-on physical training for our dealers and sales representatives. Our time spent with Ben was incredibly beneficial as the training was dedicated to JCB Agriculture's range of Loadalls specific to South African applications. It presented an excellent opportunity for our dealers and sales representatives to learn, understand, and operate the machine themselves, and it was heartening to see their enthusiasm to learn and experience more about the brand and equipment that will enhance their offering."

He added: "Our drive in South Africa is to keep track of the world as it becomes more mechanised. Farmers are applying more precision farming practices, which call for increased mechanised material handling to meet the demands of food production. This, in turn, creates the need for

equipment such as the JCB Loadall on our farms."

Mark Tolmay, owner of Dornings Motors in Kokstad, was full of praise after having had the experience of operating the JCB 530-70 Loadall: "We're excited at having the JCB range of agricultural machines to add to our offering. We feel that in southern and western KwaZulu-Natal we'll receive favourable feedback from especially dairy farmers who we believe will have real work for the JCB 530-70 Loadall."

Matt van Tonder of Tractor Giants in Pretoria believes that the JCB Loadall range will open new possibilities. "We can already picture that our many clients who run dairy farms and cattle feedlots will be excited to experience the JCB Loadall range because it will bring many advantages in terms of its adaptability and multi-purpose uses."





# JCB 530-70 Loadall is the ultimate multi-tool for Aqua Farming

*Imagine buying a machine that you thought would be used for the sole purpose of loading bales of animal feed but during a scant two months of using it you find that it is so useful for a myriad of tasks that you gradually come to consider buying a second similar model.*

This is exactly what has happened to Johan Greyling, the owner of Aqua Farming (Pty) Ltd, a large and successful commercial farming operation in the Western Free State, situated between Hertzogville in the Free State and Christiana in the North West Province.

Johan and his wife, Ronél, are the third generation of the Greyling family to farm this land after the arrival of Johan's grandfather, Faan, in 1938. Johan's father, Carel, took over the farming before Johan started farming in 1993 having completed a BSc Agric degree at Free State University.

"You may think our farm has an unusual name in Aqua Farming but there is an interesting tale to the

origin of its name," Johan tells us. "When my grandfather first worked this land there was no water, and water was conveyed 6km from the Vaal River using donkeys. When water was later found by drilling under an earthen bank, our family was so grateful that they called the farm Aqua and when we registered a farming company in 2003, we stuck with the name."

Aqua Farming has made its name cultivating potatoes, onions, lucerne and pecan nuts on a substantial scale with Simbra cattle and Merino sheep adding balance to the land usage. Johan and Ronél, who is a former schoolteacher, are also known for the way in which they treat their staff and the community around them with many initiatives in wellness, adult education,

schooling, scholarships, and various outreach programmes. The farm's motto of "quality counts" applies to its people, animals and produce.

"We produce five cultivars of potato as well as potato seed. Our commercial potatoes are sold to a large supermarket group and to those companies producing potato crisps and frozen products," Johan explains. "It is however on the animal feed side that we've shown some good growth and our lucerne is exported to amongst others, China, the United Arab Emirates, and Botswana."

Aqua Farming's lucerne is baled into especially dense rectangular bales that weigh 700kg each, with multiple bales stacked three high fitting snugly into a shipping

container. Handling the bales had been done with an agricultural tractor equipped with forks but Johan and his team were on the lookout for a nimbler machine with dedicated hydraulic functions that could provide faster and safer handling of the lucerne bales.

"We really looked around the wider market for a dedicated and versatile loading tool and we eventually found what we were looking for when visiting the Bell Equipment stand at Nampo in 2023 where we first saw the JCB 530-70 Loadall," Johan adds. "The special offer on the machine when purchased at Nampo made the offer to purchase even more enticing despite it being more reasonably priced than competitor models. With financing in place, we were pleased to be dealing with Johan Griesel, the Sales Representative of JBJ Machinery, the Bell Forestry and Agriculture dealer in Schweizer-Reneke. We have a long business relationship with Johan and he saw to it that we took safe delivery of the JCB 530-70 Loadall in June 2023."

"It would be safe to say that a product that was developed for the construction market is now delivering huge benefits to us in the agricultural space," says Cassie du Preez, Aqua Farming's Lucerne Production Manager. "To call the JCB 530-70 Loadall versatile would be an understatement as we keep finding new uses for it almost daily."

The JCB 530-70 Loadall is fitted with JCB's quickhitch system that sees the bucket quickly interchanged with a set of forks and Aqua Farming has taken the tool attachment selection a step further by manufacturing a spiked bracket that safely holds three 700kg bales of lucerne when loading into tautliner trucks or shipping containers.

With the standard fork attachment the JCB 530-70 Loadall easily handles and stacks pallets containing potatoes and pecan nuts as well as bulk bags of commodities like fertiliser. The bucket has proved valuable backfilling trenches and loading farm produce such as maize and silage.

"We impressed ourselves recently when installing solar panels on the roof of our shed and we used the forks and the long reach of the machine to lift pallets of solar panels onto the roof. This task, had it been done manually, would have been very slow, clumsy, and not altogether safe," Johan says. "For us though, the speed with which we can now load lucerne bales stacked three high into a shipping container is justification enough to have bought the JCB 530-70 Loadall. All its ancillary uses, with our different divisions vying for its availability, really got us thinking whether a second similar machine would not see various farming operations running smoother."

While Aqua Farming's JCB 530-70 Loadall is still new, Johan is considering a maintenance contract with JBJ Machinery, as the official dealer, to maintain the machine once it exits its 12-month/unlimited hours warranty period. It is envisaged that at the present usage of around four hours a day and for 10 active months of the year, the machine's current fuel consumption of 5,02 litres of diesel an hour will fit in well with the farm's budget.



**Owner of Aqua Farming (Pty) Ltd, Johan Greyling (left), with JBJ Machinery Sales Representative, Johan Griesel, and Aqua Farming's Lucerne Production Manager, Cassie du Preez.**





# SAFCOL's investment in three Bell 225F Loggers pays dividends

*The delicate balance of investing today to save in the long term certainly holds true for the forward-thinking management of the Timbadola Sawmill. What gives this balancing act a real homegrown flavour is that the spend was directed at a proudly South African company that produces a uniquely local yellow machine product.*

The South African Forestry Company SOC Limited (SAFCOL) is a state-owned company that falls under the Department of Public Enterprises. It has operations in the KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, and Limpopo provinces as well as in the Sofala and Manica provinces of neighbouring Mozambique.

At the largest sawmill in the Limpopo Province, Timbadola, situated at Levubu, which lies to the east of the town Louis Trichardt, we find Senior Sawmill Manager, Aubrey Kwamba, who holds a qualification in Wood Technology from the Saasveld Forestry College.

Aubrey tells us: "This particular sawmill was built around the 1930s and its boilers, commissioned in 1937, are amongst the oldest in the world."

The Timbadola Sawmill produces mainly structural timber with 85% of its production for the construction industry. The balance is split between an ever-decreasing furniture market and pallet manufacturing.

"Our mill processes 120 000 cubic metres of pine timber annually and employs 430 people," Aubrey explains. "We sell 50% of our

production into Gauteng, 40% into the local Vembe district, and 10% across the border into Mozambique."

SAFCOL sources its timber from its own forests surrounding the Timbadola Sawmill and the company uses its own harvesting and extraction equipment to bring the timber to the roadside. From there it is transported to the mill by haulage contractors. At the mill, contractors were, until recently, used to unload the timber trucks, and sort and stack the logs in preparation for them being fed into the mill.



**(From left): Log Yard Supervisor, Boyisie Shai (left), Production Manager, Thokozeni Khumalo, and Wet Mill Foreman, Peter Sithole.**

"As any progressive business does, we analyse our overhead costs on an ongoing basis and we came to the realisation that if we could unload the timber ourselves, we'd be saving money in the long-term," Aubrey says. "To do this, we realised we'd have to buy cost-effective loading tools.

Aubrey tells a charming story of the company's oldest Bell Logger, a vintage 125A model dating back to 1970. It had clocked an estimated 50 000 hours and was later named after a retired

employee with the surname Savhasa who had operated it for many years. "This answers the question as to why we've always relied on Bell Equipment for our timber-handling equipment as longevity coupled with reliability is key in our industry," Aubrey says. "We own two Bell Wheel Loaders fitted with timber grabs that have served us admirably as well, having clocked 56 000 and 28 000 hours respectively."

The Timbadola Sawmill owns two 220A Bell Loggers bought in 2010

that are currently undergoing some tender loving care before being put into service again. "We looked critically at rising costs in fuel, labour, utilities, and general inflation and decided in 2020 to review our inbound costs, which have the potential to affect us negatively as some timber is sourced from as far as 80km away. Going forward, handling will be insourced by deploying our own timber handling equipment, which will now save us a massive amount of money."







According to Aubrey, they researched the wider market before deciding on buying three Bell 225F Loggers. Their decision was ultimately influenced by Bell Equipment's competitive price, their positive experience with previous machines, and above all, the support they knew they could rely on from Bell Equipment's technical teams in nearby Tzaneen.

"Soon after we took delivery of the three new Bell 225F Loggers in mid-2022, Louis Fivaz, the new

Branch Manager at Bell Equipment Tzaneen, paid us a visit to personally assure us of his team's commitment to looking after our Bell-branded equipment and they have done exactly that," Aubrey says. "We're happy to say that Bell Equipment's response times are prompt, and the availability of parts and service kits assure us that we'll continue to extract long lives from these new Bell Loggers, which certainly have made a positive impact on our production and bottom line."

The Bell 225F Loggers have been bought with standard warranties of 12 months and unlimited hours.

Aubrey mentions that the machines operate in two nine-hour shifts during which they run for a total of 13 to 14 hours, which points to busy production schedules and high utilisation figures. They have been pleased with how much quieter the new Yanmar engines run and the favourable average fuel figures per hour.



# JCB Skid Steer shovels chicken litter for Jeras Boerdery

*It's a well-known fact in agricultural circles, where input costs are concerned, the price of chemical fertiliser has increased dramatically over the last year or two but a progressive-thinking farmer in the North West Province's Derby district, has a workable plan to counter this.*

Johan Erasmus has been a farmer all his life and started farming on his land near Derby in 1997. Derby lies roughly in the centre of a triangle formed by Rustenburg in the north, Ventersdorp to the west, and Krugersdorp to the southeast.

The Erasmus farm is aptly called Jeras Boerdery, derived from Johan's name and surname, and Johan is known as a leading Boran cattle breeder. The Boran breed looks a bit like the humped Brahman cattle and hails from East Africa, making it a true African breed. In addition to this, Johan grows maize and soya and this is where the organic fertiliser conundrum comes into play.

"In 2021, chemical fertiliser (NPK 30/22/30) cost around R5 400,00 per hectare and organic fertiliser (NPK 80/80/60) cost R1 400,00 per hectare," Johan says. "Because of the difference in both the nutrition obtained from these two methods of fertilising, and the cost per hectare, this is a no-brainer."

According to Johan, the difference in pricing in the 2022/23 season was even higher than in the previous season.

About 75km to the east of Johan's farm lies the agricultural hub of Skeerpoort, in a fertile valley flanked by the Magaliesberg. Here we find what is said to be the largest production unit of free-

range eggs in the entire world. The company concerned had removed the previous high-rise pens to allow the poultry to roam free within demarcated areas, with more than adequate shelter shielding them at night and in rain, cold, and extreme heat.

The free-ranging chickens typically spend 16 weeks being reared and then enter a monitored period of 60 to 70 weeks laying eggs. Small chickens lay small eggs and more mature ones, larger eggs, and these are sent to various markets. All eggs are coded, and by being familiar with the code a customer or consumer can tell exactly where and when the egg originated from.



**Johan Erasmus, owner of Jeras Boerdery (left), with Bell Sales Representative, Jan Barnard.**



As Johan explains it, the manure needs to be removed as soon as the laying cycle of 70 weeks has been completed. Time is of the essence as the pens need to be sterilised to prepare them for the next laying cycle. Removing the manure directly from the pens aids in the prevention of avian flu. As the columns supporting the former high-rise pens in the chicken houses have been left in place, a special loading tool was needed to work in extremely confined spaces.

"We were fortunate enough to have an existing contract at this poultry farm to remove the wet chicken manure from the chicken houses after each cycle," Johan says. "With the confined working space, we needed a specialised loading tool to do this quickly and efficiently and we were delighted to find that at Bell Equipment's impressive exhibition at the 2022 NAMPO Harvest Day near Bothaville."

What Johan found was a JCB 135HD Skid Steer with its compact design and enough grunt from its 34kW motor that pushes out 143Nm. "Having researched the wider market thoroughly and

realising the benefits of JCB products, now being distributed and backed throughout South Africa by a stalwart local company such as Bell Equipment, I had no hesitation in buying the JCB 135HD Skid Steer right there and then at NAMPO and the special show price was, of course, a welcome incentive too."

As the chicken manure is not very dense, especially when dry, Johan had the standard 1 524mm wide bucket swapped out for a larger one from a third-party supplier. This can hold at least one cubic metre and has a deflector plate at the top to stop the wet manure from landing on or near the JCB 135HD Skid Steer's radiator. A reversible half-arrow cutting edge on the bottom of the bucket assists in getting full bucket loads.

"The JCB 135HD Skid Steer is used for around six hours a day in daylight hours only," Johan adds. "Some manual sweeping of the manure also takes place around the support columns, and this is also hauled away by the JCB Skid Steer."

Once the manure has dried, it is loaded on trucks and conveyed to

Johan's farm, Jeras Boerdery, where it is blended with lime and then applied as fertiliser with four-cubic metres used per hectare.

"This is our way of circumventing the high chemical fertiliser price and with the 6 000 cubic metres of dried manure we haul to the farm each season, including the cost of transporting it, it comes in at a cost of only R1 400,00 per hectare, which to my mind makes good economic sense."

Johan mentions that the purchasing experience with Bell Equipment has been a pleasant one and he welcomes the fact that the Bell Sales Representative for his area, Jan Barnard, makes a courtesy call each month. The JCB 135HD Skid Steer is serviced by Bell Rustenburg while under warranty.

"The true value of the JCB 135HD Skid Steer lies in the fact that with its capital and running costs being low, we can absorb those into the general farming operations, while the existence of the machine itself delivers an almost passive income," he says.



# JCB Backhoe Loader is a game changer on Gert Coetzee's farm

When Gert Coetzee buys any piece of mechanised equipment for his irrigation farm in the fertile Vaalharts Valley in the Northern Cape, his eye is always on the resale value of such a machine, which is why he confidently bought a market leading JCB Backhoe Loader after a good maize crop in 2022.

Gert, his wife, Marelette, and their son, Pieter, farm their land in this unique area on the north-eastern border that the Northern Cape has with the North West Province. Started in the 1930s, the Vaalharts Irrigation Scheme is the largest of its type in the Southern Hemisphere. Water from the Vaal and Harts rivers is channelled along more than 1 000km of concrete-lined canals to 1 280 farms in the area that cover more than 39 000 hectares. Each farm is identified by a block letter or a number.

"My son, Pieter, will be the third generation of our family to farm this land as my own parents had been here for 50 years before me," Gert Coetzee says. "We grow maize, wheat, ground nuts, soya, some cotton, and lucerne, which is all under irrigation. Our latest plantings are pecan nut trees planted in the corners surrounding our circular lands under pivots."

The Coetzee family currently has 45 hectares under pecan nut trees and have plans to systematically plant another 20 hectares.

"While growing pecan nuts has really taken off in the past 30 years, with growing exports since the early 2000s, you may find it interesting that our lucerne is also exported," Gert explains. "It is in high demand in China and especially in the Middle East where it is used as fodder for horses and camels."

Lucerne from the Vaalharts Valley is harvested between August and May the following year and is baled before being exported. Handling the large bales has

always presented a challenge for the Coetzees along with digging irrigation ditches and trenches for irrigation pipes.

"We've long dreamt of how convenient it would be to have our own, new backhoe loader that could handle bales with a fork attachment or dig trenches and backfill them because hiring equipment is expensive and you can never get a machine when the need is at its most urgent," Gert continues. "We were also loathe to buy a used machine as you're never sure what hidden problems you may be buying."

"The price difference between new and used backhoe loaders is very small and to us it made sense to rather look at buying a new machine," says Pieter Coetzee.

The Coetzee family farm had a good 2022 and a bumper maize crop meant they could shop for a new backhoe loader. "I was

taught to always look at the resale value of any machine for when you should want to replace it, and we applied the same principle when looking at the wider backhoe loader market," Gert says. "The first name that stood out for us was that of Bell Equipment and when we learnt that this truly great South African company was now the official distributor of JCB equipment, the plan came together for us due to both Bell Equipment and JCB having such solid reputations, and their equipment known for proven resale value."

Bell Equipment's Sales Representative in Kimberley, Eric van der Merwe, assisted the Coetzees with the purchase of their JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loader in November 2022.

"As soon as the JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loader was delivered to our farm, Pieter cheekily claimed it as 'his' machine," Gert says smiling.

Pieter adds: "It's such an easy machine to operate and the controls are smooth and responsive. The fold-over forks work well for when we pick up bulk bags containing fertiliser that weigh up to two tons and crates full of pecan nuts that weigh 500kg, but to load three lucerne bales at once, we're considering getting a larger set of forks made by a third-party supplier."

"It's amazing that when you realise all you've been doing with the machine, you suddenly don't know how you had survived all those years without such a multifunctional tool," Gert says. "You'll appreciate that in the hot Northern Cape sun we like to keep our irrigation pipes buried under the soil and apart from the aforementioned loading applications, trenching and backfilling have been foremost in our uses of the JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loader – a true multitasking wonder!"



Pieter, Gert, and Marelette Coetzee, with Bell Equipment's Kimberley-based Sales Representative, Eric van der Merwe.





# Strong growth in independent dealer network benefits customers

*In just over eighteen months since starting to appoint independent Bell Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture dealers across South Africa, there are now twenty-three dealers and forty-seven outlets throughout the country, including Bell Equipment Sales South Africa (BESSA) branches.*

This is according to Bell Equipment's Forestry & Agriculture Dealer Development Manager, Charles Inggs, who said it is pleasing to see how the new dealers have embraced the Bell and JCB product ranges. "Our aim is to develop a strong independent dealer network that can provide better coverage across the country and provide a dedicated service and support directly to our agriculture and forestry customers, and we are starting to see real traction."

He added that as the network has grown it has been pleasing to see how the dealers have got an understanding of their new product ranges and recognise the value that they can offer their customers. In this regard, the most remarkable aspect has been to see how well the JCB Loadall concept has been accepted.

Charles explains: "The Loadall is a mind shift for South African farmers who have traditionally bought

backhoe loaders. Previously, pricing was a barrier to entry because a farmer could almost buy two backhoe loaders instead of a Loadall, but now with the entry-level JCB 530-70 it's a completely different conversation. It has bought owning a telehandler within reach of farmers who are needing a versatile and capable multi-tool that can handle almost any on-farm task.

"We've got two demo machines going around our dealer network in the Western Cape and North West, which are proving to be a great way to sell the concept. We are seeing a conversion rate of around 30% because once you see the Loadall in action the concept sells itself.

"We've had so many customers say they wondered how they ever managed without a Loadall because they can be fitted with a grain bucket, grain pusher, sugarcane grab, round bale clamp, drum handler, man

platform, unloading rake, forks, buckets, and a crane hook. Their uses are almost endless."

With an operating weight of seven tons, the JCB 530-70 has a maximum payload of three tonnes and a maximum lift height of seven metres making it more than capable of performing the tasks that are required of it.

Commenting on future expansion of the dealer network, Charles adds: "We're almost where we want to be. The focus is on KwaZulu-Natal and Southern Mpumalanga currently where we will be looking more at potential JCB Agriculture dealers to bring the product range closer to the customer base without taking away from our existing BESSA branches, so watch this space." Visit [bellequipment.com/forestryag/en-ZA](http://bellequipment.com/forestryag/en-ZA) for contact details of your nearest Bell Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture dealer.



Dorning Motors  
Kokstad  
Underberg



Lezmin Landini  
Kirkwood



M & F Tractor Parts  
Port Shepstone



OVK  
Bethlehem  
Clocolan  
Hopetown



Tractor Giants  
Pretoria



S. Haddad  
Landboudienste  
George  
Oudtshoorn



Balfour  
Treklanddienste  
Balfour



Trophy Tractors  
& Implements  
Letsitele





# OVK Bethlehem and Hopetown join dealer network

*The mechanisation division of a market-leading player in the retail agricultural space is excited at being appointed as a dealer for Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture as it will enhance the mantra of the company being a one-stop shop for its existing and potential new customers.*

The Oos-Vrystaat Kaap Operations Limited came into being three decades ago when, in 1993, four farmers' co-operatives in the Eastern Free State amalgamated. These were the co-operatives at Ladybrand, Ficksburg, Clocolan and Albert, and they each had well-established pedigrees going back to between 1919 and 1930 respectively. In 1999, the OVK Koöperasie was converted to a trading company called OVK

Operations Limited with OVK Holdings Limited as its controlling entity.

"Since that time, OVK has shown steady growth to now have 58 retail outlets across the entire Free State and large parts of the Eastern and Northern Cape provinces," says Wimpie Nel, OVK Sales Manager for Whole Goods in the company's Northern Region, based in Bethlehem. "On the

mechanised side, where we sell and maintain tractors and implements, we're split into Northern and Southern regions, with Bethlehem and Clocolan in the North, and Hopetown and Cradock in the South."

Wimpie hails from a family steeped in agriculture as both his grandfather and father had worked for an agricultural co-operative in the Northern Free

State town of Reitz where Wimpie was born and schooled. "I entered the business straight after finishing school and first worked as an assistant in the parts division before moving to other companies focused on agriculture where I gained valuable lessons of parts and service that led me to becoming a salesman," he says. "With equipment sales came exposure to JCB Backhoe Loaders and Loadalls and I could already then sense the value-adding benefits that these types of equipment could have on commercial farms, feedlots and agricultural processing plants."

Wimpie joined OVK in Bethlehem in 2021 and now oversees sales of both mechanical equipment such as tractors, combine harvesters, sprayers, and a host of common and specialised implements. "We sell agricultural tractors with power output up to 670hp that are monsters with all the bells and whistles that modern precision farming demands," he says. "The exposure we get to all types of

farming and material handling equipment is uplifting and sharing this information with clients makes for lasting business relationships that often turn into friendships."

"The same can be said of the information we've already gathered on the JCB Backhoe Loaders and Loadalls that we're positive will add value to our offering as experience has taught us that once a farmer gets to use either a JCB Backhoe Loader or a Loadall they seem to constantly find new and varied uses for the machines, and you'll often hear that they cannot fathom how they had survived without these machines."

We leave Wimpie and his team and scoot due west, crossing the mighty Orange River where it meanders its way past the town of Hopetown.

Hopetown is known historically as the place where the first diamonds were discovered even before Kimberley claimed fame for the

diamond rush. Here we find another important leg of OVK Mechanisation's dealership with Dewald Olivier, OVK Sales Manager for Whole Goods in the company's Northern Cape region, at the helm.

"OVK's presence in this area came into being back in 2004 when the directors of the then Karoo Oranje Landboukoöperasie (KOLK) decided to amalgamate with OVK for strategic reasons to better serve their members, the farmers," Dewald says. "We're proud to say that OVK celebrated 30 years in business in 2023 and that is something to be proud of, and build on."

OVK in Hopetown serves farmers in a wide radius that stretches to Prieska, Kimberley, Barkly-West, Britstown, De Aar, Bloemfontein and Hertzogville plus many smaller villages in-between. The regional office in Hopetown handles the bulk of credit administration and short-term and crop insurance. The Hopetown branch operates a



**John Kirsten (left), Manager of the OVK Bethlehem branch, with Wimpie Nel, OVK Sales Manager Whole Goods (North and Eastern regions).**





retail division and has three mechanics and one apprentice in its workshop. According to Dewald, 95% of the mechanical servicing and repair is done in the field with only major overhauls being brought into the workshop.

"These days however there is a new gem that sparkles in the area around Hopetown and it's in the shape of a smaller maize kernel that produces popcorn," Dewald explains. "This area is somehow well-suited to growing popcorn and we even have a popcorn factory on the outskirts of the town."

Other crops such as wheat, lucerne, and peas are also cultivated extensively with irrigation from the nearby Orange River.

"As farming practices become increasingly precision-based, more and more mechanisation is creeping into the modern farm and this area is no exception," Dewald says. "That is why we're excited about our appointment as dealers for the Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture ranges, as especially the JCB Backhoe Loaders and Loadalls are exactly the types of equipment that seem to slot in seamlessly into busy farming operations."

"Apart from the obvious trenching, backfilling, loading and material handling tasks, these machines almost create work for themselves when farmers build new sheds and warehouses, install irrigation systems and a host of other tasks."

Soon after the company's appointment, Dewald and his team sold a JCB 3DX Pro Backhoe Loader to a local farmer with another mulling whether a JCB 530-70 or the larger JCB 535-95AG Loadall would best suit his purposes.

"We've also been impressed by the attention to detail that Bell Equipment has provided with showing both our mechanics and parts staff how to access online ordering along with some mechanical training," Dewald adds. "Our mechanics and colleagues working in parts are comfortable with the online access to information and training bulletins as we believe we'll be selling more and more of these yellow machines into our area."







# 'Hay day' for Trekland as Bell and JCB's latest agriculture dealer

*Some eighty kilometres southeast of Johannesburg lies the town of Balfour. It wasn't always called that having started out its life as the proclaimed town of McHattiesburg, after Frederick Stuart McHattie who owned the farms on which the town lies. The town was renamed to Balfour in 1905 after a visit by the then Prime Minister of England, Arthur James Balfour.*

This, however, matters little to one of the largest family-owned businesses in this thriving town, which is mostly supported by the agriculture of the area and by a nearby gold mine. The agricultural dealership, Trekland, was founded on 1 November 1991 by Gert Diedericks after he had worked for a national brand of agricultural equipment distributors for several years.

"Our father, Gert, saw a gap in the local market for the supply and maintenance of agricultural equipment and, with his background knowledge of the industry, took the risk of opening a business to service the local farming community," says Gerrit

Diedericks, who along with his younger brother, Theo, now manage Trekland in Balfour. "Theo joined the business as an apprentice diesel mechanic when he left school and I spent 15 years as a detective in the South African Police Services before joining the family business."

Gerrit now takes care of equipment sales and the financial side while Theo oversees the vast technical division comprising the workshop, mechanics, and a comprehensive parts department.

"I, along with three colleagues working as sales representatives, visit farmers and farmer's days in our area to stay in touch with new

equipment sales and backup," Gerrit says. "We sell a lot of European-built equipment such as the Claas range of combine and forage harvesters and their tractors and associated implements."

"We see our appointment as Bell Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture dealers as a welcome opportunity to further extend our offering to our already established farming customer base and believe that only good can come of this."

Gerrit makes the point that as farming practices become more scientific, they've noticed a trend that farms are becoming more mechanised. He believes this is

where the JCB range of machines, especially the various JCB Backhoe Loader and Loadall models, will come into their own.

"We see so many farmers with Backhoe Loaders now maintaining their roads, drainage and stormwater canals and culverts, irrigation systems, and a whole collection of ever-increasing tasks for these versatile machines. Add to that the wider loading advantages the range of JCB Loadalls can give farmers who run feedlots, dairies, and studs, you soon realise that it's nigh impossible to sustain the increased food production that a growing population demands without mechanising."

Gerrit mentions that no matter how well any machine is designed and built, it will always need

maintenance and some repair or replacement of parts that have known lifespans. This is where his brother, Theo, comes into the picture.

"Theo, being a qualified diesel mechanic, has the background knowledge of what can go wrong at the best of times. He keeps his expert hands on our technical department, which is the mainstay of our business as we know that the proven technical backup our farming clients receive today sells the next machine tomorrow."

Trekland boasts a huge light-filled workshop where no fewer than 18 qualified mechanics ply their trade. They currently have four apprentice mechanics learning the ropes of which Gerrit's son, Werner, is one. Trekland has two low bed trailers for bringing

equipment into the workshop, but when field service is needed they have 15 fully equipped bakkies for use by the mechanics to get to outlying farms and sites. Supporting the technical teams is a substantial parts stockholding covering the consumable and replacement parts needs for the various brands Trekland represents.

"We've been impressed by the amount of information there is about the Bell and JCB brands of machines and their various models. We believe that with easy online access, our mechanics will soon get to grips with the 'where and how' of these new machines," Gerrit adds. "We're also looking forward to showcasing a JCB 3DX Pro Backhoe Loader and a JCB 530-70 or similar Loadall at the annual 'Hay Day', which is held on a farm in our district."



Brothers, Theo (left) and Gerrit Diedericks, together manage Trekland.





# JCB and Bell agriculture dealership secured for Kokstad and Underberg

*Marc Tolmay, by his own admission, is a great fan of learning new things. Marc is the owner of Dorning Motors, the newly appointed dealer for Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture in the Kokstad and Underberg areas of KwaZulu-Natal and says he first learnt important business-related insights from his accountant.*

But chatting to Marc we realise he learnt about integrity much earlier at the knee of his late father, Wally.

"My parents, Wally and Janet, arrived in this area from Zimbabwe in 1981 and my dad first sold used cars for a well-known Japanese brand," Marc says. "He then moved to a dealership that sold new cars and tractors, and such was his sales prowess that he was soon appointed dealer principal before becoming a partner in the company."

Sadly, a serious car accident in 1998 left Wally unable to work for a year and by the time he returned,

the franchise holder no longer sold agricultural tractors and Wally chose to dissolve the partnership.

"My dad, however, refused to liquidate the business, which would have left a lot of people without jobs. It would have also had a negative effect on his own creditworthiness and reputation," Marc explains. "To absorb the business debt my dad sold houses, and this was a lesson about integrity in business and in life that was impossible to ignore."

In 1999, Wally became the dealer for Landini tractors in the area and retained the name of the original

owners of the previous dealership, Dorning Motors, which was an established name by that time.

Marc had been schooled at Michaelhouse and after completing a degree in Computer Science and Information Systems at Rhodes University with an Honours degree through UNISA, he joined Wally in the business and, like his father before him, cut his teeth selling used cars.

"We subsequently obtained the Hyundai franchise, and I ran that side of the business, which was a steep learning curve," Marc adds. "My dad passed away in 2014 and



**Dorning Motors Sales Manager, Keith Chapman, with the owner of Dorning Motors, Marc Tolmay, and the company's Workshop Manager, Johan Kloppe.**

I ran the whole business for two years before buying it out of the estate in 2016."

Marc has learnt to surround himself with a decent support base. His Workshop Manager, Johan Kloppe, joined the business as an apprentice in 2000 and, according to Marc, has no equal in the area with his knowledge of agricultural tractors, especially the Landini brand.

"I also rely heavily on the father-and-son team of Punch and Keith Chapman," Marc continues. "Although they were originally our opposition, we're a close-knit community and we were especially pleased when the Chapmans, with their vast knowledge of planting and haymaking, joined us in 2015 with Keith our Sales Manager and Punch the Manager of our Underberg branch."

Working from its main dealership in Kokstad and the newly built branch at Underberg, Dorning Motors serves the local farming community with equipment and service for dairy, beef cattle and sheep farming and crops such as maize, soya, sunflowers, vegetables, and potatoes.

The Kokstad workshop has five mechanics with four apprentices in training and at Underberg three mechanics and two apprentices cover onsite and outlying servicing and repairs with comprehensive parts divisions in both locations.

"Around five years ago we started looking for a suitable brand of earthmoving equipment, especially backhoe loaders and telehandlers, as we believe there is a need for such equipment for a myriad of uses on any farm," Marc says. "During a visit to NAMPO in 2022, we were especially focused on finding such equipment and took note of the variety that Bell Equipment, as the newly appointed distributors of JCB equipment, had on offer."

"We were naturally very pleased when Charles Inggs, Bell Equipment's Dealer Development Manager: Forestry & Agriculture, approached us to become a dealer for this powerful brand, with the associated wide variety of machine models, as we believe this will add real benefits to our wide customer base and added

income for us while securing employment for our own people."

Dorning Motors was appointed as a dealer for Bell Equipment's Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture in September 2023 and almost immediately information began to flow about the new products on offer.

"Coming from an information systems background, I for one can tell you that I have never experienced such free-flow and great accessibility of information as we're enjoying from Bell Equipment and JCB on their machines, the parts and service aspects," Marc enthuses. "This bodes well for us in sales but especially for our parts and technical teams as any information is but a click away on a computer or tablet."

Marc and his team have not rested on their laurels and delivered their first JCB 3DX Pro Backhoe Loader to a farmer near Kokstad in mid-November 2023 and they believe that as word amongst the farmers spreads, the local countryside will soon be dotted with more and more yellow machines.







# Newly appointed M & F Tractor Parts sells its first JCB

*The everlasting value of learning at a father's knee, even in the case of selling tractor and implement parts, has held true for Bryan Taylor, owner of M & F Tractor Parts in Marburg, Port Shepstone's light industrial area on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast.*

M & F Tractor Parts is a newly appointed dealer for Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture and the excitement this has caused for this energetic entrepreneur is palpable as he recalls his life story thus far.

"I was born in Zambia where my dad, Keith, had worked for Massey Ferguson after qualifying as a mechanic in the United Kingdom where he and my mom hail from. My parents spent 16 years in Zambia and we moved to South Africa in the 1980s so that my brother and I could attend St. Andrews College in Grahamstown."

Keith Taylor had been transferred to Bizana in the Transkei where he ran a workshop fixing agricultural equipment. It was here that Bryan

started work after finishing school in 1996 and some two years later felt the urge to be self-employed.

"I told my parents that I wanted to run my own business and with their support, I started a small spares shop in Port Shepstone selling tractor and implement parts, which I was by now familiar with," Bryan tells us. "But those were tough years, and I can respectfully say to try and break the habits of farmers who had been buying spares from one place for years, is a tough nut to crack, but I hung in there."

Bryan says his business, named M & F Tractor Parts, grew slowly but steadily and when he moved to larger premises the business next door to his happened to be one selling agricultural

'knapsacks', the common term for back-mounted and hand-operated spray tanks used for spraying herbicides and pesticides.

"Being next door to the knapsack business suddenly produced more foot traffic into our business and we grew exponentially from there," Bryan says. "When the owner of the knapsack business retired we bought him out and still service, repair and sell new knapsack sprayers that we import from Brazil and Thailand. It's been a profitable venture for us."

In 2009, Bryan became a dealer for the Italian tractor brand, Landini, which he still is to this day. Along with that came the opportunity to sell and service agricultural mulchers and sprayers, the latter which he now designs and builds himself with the best components sourced locally and internationally. M & F Tractor Parts can custom-design and build a sprayer to fit the exact needs of a farmer rather than the farmer having to adjust his spray regimes to that of the implement.

"We service a wide community of farmers up to around 100km to the south, west and north of us, and we would have gone east had it not been for the Indian Ocean being in the way," Bryan says with

a chuckle. "We have three fulltime mechanics and also make use of two freelance mechanics for a lot of our field servicing and the latter have served us well for over 20 years with a good understanding of mutual loyalty that benefits our customers in the end."

M & F Tractor parts boasts 14 people in its workshop and another six working in the comprehensive parts department and administration.

We asked Bryan about his feelings and expectations now that his business is an official dealer for Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture: "I can tell you that while we're over the moon about the appointment, we also realise that this is a huge opportunity for us which comes with a big responsibility representing strong brands like Bell and JCB. Then too, most farmers in our area who plant cane have Bell 125 Cane Loaders and we're confident that they will want to get

their consumable spares and service kits from us, which will mean that we should be well stocked and have our mechanics up to speed on training."

Knowing his local customer-base well by now and taking the initiative, Bryan had ordered a JCB 3DX Pro Backhoe Loader to have as a machine on display, but no sooner had it arrived when one of his loyal customers, local farmer Quentin Elliott, snapped it up with the favourable financial deal that JCB and the ABSA banking group offered, and M & F Tractor Parts had its first sale of a JCB machine in the bag.

"Quentin had an older, similar JCB Backhoe Loader that he had sold out of hand, and he was overjoyed at the joystick controls of the new machine, which he said was similar to those of an excavator he had on his macadamia farm," Bryan tells. "The JCB 3DX Pro with its 6-in-1 bucket will no doubt be used for

loading the nut husks into trucks and for a variety of other tasks that always seem to need prioritising on any farm.

"We're also keen to get a JCB 530-70 Loadall or similar as a demonstration machine for our local farmers and we believe that when the macadamia price stabilises, we'll get more enquiries about such equipment and its many uses," Bryan adds.

Bryan is ably assisted by Rory Elim and his Chief Mechanic, Johan Basson, who has had training on earthmoving equipment, and both are equally excited at the prospect learning about and servicing the yellow metal machines.

In future developments, Bryan's son, Declan, will be joining the business to get his trade and hopefully continue to grow the business.



**Bryan Taylor, owner of M & F Tractor Parts in Port Shepstone.**





# Lezmin Landini excited to represent market leading backhoe loader brand

*When you hear the vernacular reference to any make of backhoe loader as being a 'JCB', then you know that is a brand that will almost sell itself due to that most effective form of advertising, word of mouth.*

So says Riaan Pretorius, one half of Lezmin Landini, a newly appointed dealer for Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture. Lezmin Landini is situated in Kirkwood, a neat and leafy town at the top end of the citrus-filled Sundays River Valley in the Eastern Cape.

Riaan and his business partner, Kenneth Thatcher, started Lezmin Landini in 2000. Riaan hails from George while Kenneth is from Uitenhage, and both are qualified diesel mechanics.

"We became agents for Landini tractors in 2008 after another Italian manufacturer, Same, withdrew from South Africa," Riaan says. "We also run a successful transport company called Sun Valley Transport which sees our many tautliner trucks hauling general cargo from Gqeberha to Gauteng as well as a variety of citrus produce from our valley to destinations all over the country."

Lezmin Landini imports specialised agricultural sprayers from Spain, which are used in the citrus,

macadamia and pecan nut industries across South Africa.

"Another branch of our business is that of land preparation services and we run dozers, excavators and tractors hauling mulchers for these purposes," Riaan adds. "Working in a wide radius of up to 80km from our base in Kirkwood, we've come to notice that there are many JCB Backhoe Loaders on farms that are used for many different tasks, and we've been asked to service and repair them from time to time."

Earlier, Riaan had become familiar with JCB during the 1990s when he worked for a contractor who had run JCB machines, and he is thus familiar with both the mechanical and operational virtues of the brand.

"That is why, despite entertaining an offer from another supplier at one point, when it was offered to us, we jumped at the chance of representing Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture. We're aware of the large number of JCB machines around and as mentioned, with the JCB name being synonymous with any backhoe loader means it really is the market-leading brand. We believe this, together with Bell Equipment's wider product offering and reputation, will add value to our portfolio of services."

Riaan goes on to mention that within the immediate needs of the bulk of the farmers in their area, they foresee that the demand will

be the greatest for JCB Skid Steers and 3DX Pro Backhoe Loaders. "We're aware that the physical space in the citrus orchards is tight with only 1,2 to 1,5 metres of free space down the rows of trees and this will make it ideal for the wheel-driven Skid Steer Loaders with forks to operate there loading and unloading crates with fruit. The high flotation tyres on the JCB Skid Steers have a low ground impact even when turning."

As to the viability of JCB Backhoe Loaders, Riaan says: "We hear from farmers who already have these machines that they prefer the JCB 3DX Pro model due to the joystick controls on the backhoe which operate like an excavator. This was echoed by the farmer to whom we sold our first JCB 3DX Pro machine in November 2023.

"Also, as many production units are fragmented, meaning not all the land belonging to a given farmer is in one place, the mobility

of the machine allows it to simply be driven to where it is needed next without the need of a rollback truck or lowbed rig."

Lezmin Landini employs 20 people of which six are qualified mechanics, with two apprentices and two experienced employees in the parts department. Field servicing is done with three fully-equipped bakkies.

"To say that we're excited at the prospect of having access to Bell Equipment's full range of forestry and agricultural machines would be an understatement as we've already started planning intensive marketing campaigns," Riaan concludes. "One of our aims is to target farming study groups where small groups of farmers discuss farming methods, challenges, and solutions. We believe that by finding support for our products amongst these opinion leaders who talk to other farmers would be a recipe for success."



**Riaan Pretorius, Managing Partner at Lezmin Landini in Kirkwood.**







# New George dealer proud to represent Bell and JCB equipment

George is said to be the second largest city in the Western Cape where it lies between the towering Outeniqua mountains and the blue Indian Ocean. This pretty town surrounded by many forests and farms is where we find S. Haddad Agricultural Services, a newly appointed dealer for Bell Equipment's Forestry & Agriculture Division.

Sandor (Sandy) Haddad established the business in George in 1975 after moving there from Bloemfontein where he had qualified as a diesel mechanic. His initial aim was to provide general repair and servicing to the

agricultural sector as he had gained much experience of the industry and its many mechanical challenges, like becoming an expert at fixing problematic gearboxes in agricultural tractors.

Success in one field breeds success in others and Sandy soon found his business immersed in a much wider offering as his son Sidney explains: "My dad is sadly no longer with us as we lost him in 2020 but his legacy in the business lives on due

Sidney Haddad, holding a portrait of his late father Sandor, stands in a passage which features photographs of customers with their new Landini tractors.



to the solid groundwork he had laid over 45 years along with attention to detail and his caring nature that made him known across South Africa.

"Even before I joined the business in 1994, we had been the agents for some well-known tractor brands and since 2005 we have been the local distributors of Landini tractors. Added to this we sell and service a host of agricultural equipment and another very interesting aspect of our business can be found in the land preparation and planting we do on behalf of clients, for dairy, vegetable, and fruit cultivation."

Sidney mentions that they have become adept at bush clearing, creating ridges on land where any variety of fruit trees may be planted, de-stumping and mulching of old orchards and preparing and planting of pastures. Strawberry cultivation in the George area has expanded exponentially in recent times which has kept S. Haddad's teams busy.

The company services clients such as farms, sawmills, schools, processing plants and the construction industry within a 200km radius to the east, west and north around George. Sidney's

wife, Lisa, is also involved in the business and they have recently established a depot in Oudtshoorn, which will soon have mechanics as well to further expand the company's service offering.

S. Haddad Agricultural Services employs three qualified mechanics who are mentoring two apprentices and inhouse servicing and repair is shared with infield servicing. The company stocks an impressive number of spares.

"We've found that many farmers and industries in our area already own JCB Backhoe Loaders in various models and we've in turn been asked to service these machines for some time now," Sidney says. "We've known Gerhard Riekert, JCB's District Sales Manager for the agriculture division, for a long time and he approached us recently to hear whether we'd be keen to formalise our relationship with Bell Equipment, who are the South African distributors for JCB equipment, and we jumped at the opportunity."

"We see this as a wonderful opportunity to expand our portfolio of services and reach a far wider target market with Bell Equipment

and JCB's innovative machines that have a real purpose in farming and forestry, and even turf industries. From the many models of JCB Backhoe Loaders to the JCB Loadalls, which seem born to load and unload fruit crates and animal fodder, down to the Skid Steers with their compact design and tight turning circles – these machines all show huge potential to take over the market in our area."

"The favourable financing options that Bell and JCB have brought to the market has made it inviting for customers to consider buying new machines and we already have a local farmer seriously considering a new JCB 3DX Eco Backhoe Loader. We're confident that more current owners will consider replacing older equipment soon with these excellent interest rates in mind."

Going back to its founder Sandy Haddad's time, S. Haddad Agricultural Services has cultivated a reputation as a company with a big heart as it freely gives back to its community as well. The company services equipment for certain community projects free of charge and makes equipment available to local schools and golf courses.





# Huge scope for JCB's agriculture range for Trophy Tractors in Letsitele

*The small farming town of Letsitele in the Limpopo Province, close to Tzaneen, has a name derived from the Northern Sotho phrase meaning "valley of death", believed to refer to the many deaths that malaria caused in this area in bygone times.*

In modern times though, the rich farming area surrounding the town creates much activity making it very much alive as we visit Trophy Tractors, one of many thriving businesses in the town.

Trophy Tractors is owned by the father-and-son team of Jon and Ryan Hyde and is one of many outlets they own in the retail motor, tyre, fuel, and agricultural sectors. At Trophy Tractors in Letsitele we chat to the energetic Manager, Gavin Dorfling, about the outlet's recent appointment as a dealer Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture.

"I studied IT at tertiary level and worked in the retail motor industry before joining Trophy Tractors in 2022," Gavin says.

"It's been an exciting learning curve for me personally learning about agriculture, the equipment and the people but I fortunately have a strong and experienced sales team backing me in Hannes van Deventer and Garreth Spaumer, plus the mentorship of Jon and Ryan Hyde."

"The farming area that surrounds our town stretching away to Tzaneen as well is riddled with successful commercial producers growing large percentages of all types of citrus fruit, avocados, macadamia nuts, potatoes and tomatoes and they all seem to own a backhoe loader for its versatility. This is the market that we'll be targeting primarily as well as looking further afield with the broad range of equipment that both Bell and JCB have on offer."

Trophy Tractors has for some time been the official distributor in the area for Massey Ferguson tractors and this has created a firm client

**Gavin Dorfling,**  
Manager of  
Trophy Tractors.

base which Gavin predicts could be a springboard for creating the need for the types of equipment that Bell and JCB offer.

"We became part of the Bell and JCB dealer network in December 2023 and even though it is very recent we've had massive interest shown from existing and potential owners of equipment in the JCB Backhoe Loader and Loadall ranges," Gavin adds. "To date we've sold two JCB530-70 Loadalls and have ordered two JCB 3DX Pro Backhoe Loaders to have on display here in Letsitele as we believe once customers get to see them, they'll be sold soon enough."

Gavin is of the opinion that with many older backhoe loaders of varied brands in the area, having a dedicated dealer on their doorstep with trained mechanics and a fully stocked facility for parts and service kits, will stand them in good stead when it's time to replace older equipment.

"JCB in itself is a very strong brand and, once the first three machines have been delivered, we'd be keen to keep our own stock



**Donovan van Zyl (left) Parts Assistant and Etienne Janse van Vuuren, Parts Manager at Trophy Tractors.**

machines on display as such a machine is normally much easier to sell when it can be seen," he says. "The same can be said of the JCB Skid Steer range.

We believe these will work well in the poultry industry in our area as the JCB Skid Steer is nimble enough to work in henhouses clearing out chicken manure."

Trophy Tractors currently has two qualified mechanics mentoring two apprentices and the bulk of their work sees them doing field servicing within a radius of 150km

from Letsitele. Gavin feels that with both Bell Equipment and JCB offering so much training online, it will be an advantage for their mechanics, apprentices and personnel working in parts to be able to learn online and benefit from the vast amount of information there is with remote learning.

"We're excited and at the same time a little nervous as there is a lot to learn for all of us but we're confident that with the solid backing that Bell Equipment and JCB are known for, we'll soon see many more of those distinctive new yellow machines dotted around this beautiful farming area that we have the privilege of working in."







# New Tractor Giants dealership is a winning formula to meet customer needs

*Dusty Freudiger believes that if you can advertise your brand on the steering wheel of a Formula 1 racing car, yours must be a brand worth pursuing. And Dusty should know as his own company, Tractor Giants, is used to taking gigantic steps forward in establishing itself as a worthy brand.*

But this wasn't always so as Dusty literally grew into the world of motorised sales and service the hard way, starting at the very bottom, as he recalls.

"After finishing high school in Potchefstroom, I joined a franchise of a German motor company and started work as a picker in that company's parts department," he says. "Tough as the job certainly was, I kept at it until after eleven years I ended up as the parts manager for a large motor dealership in Gauteng's Midrand."

Dusty, however, always had the urge to be self-employed and when the opportunity arose, he started buying old agricultural tractors and repairing them, with the help of a mechanic, before selling them on.

"We worked off a piece of rented land which ironically is part of the property we now own. We'd started off with only four agricultural tractors that got us going. From then on, I would visit auctions and farmers to source old tractors that we'd repair. Our favourites were Massey Ferguson machines in the 135, 165, 188 and 290 model ranges."

According to Dusty, they still sell used and refurbished tractors as any sale means a profit margin can be had, although his company Tractors Giants, has been Landini franchise holders since 2022. "During 2022 we sold the most Landini Solis tractors in South Africa and we're proud to say that no less than 200 of these blue liveried Italian-built machines

passed through our hands here in Pretoria and at our branch in Polokwane."

"A major target market of ours is the emerging farmer market, especially in Gauteng and Limpopo, as we're able to supply these farmers with a wide range of tractors and implements such as ploughs, planters, rippers, boom sprayers and feed mixers," Dusty explains. "We also import and sell smaller earthmoving equipment such as wheel loaders and miniature excavators."

While dealing with established commercial farmers, Tractor Giants' sales team, which now numbers four in the Pretoria head office, has over time fielded numerous enquiries about whether they could supply both backhoe loaders and telehandlers for a variety of purposes any large commercial farm can demand.

"I first met Charles Inggs, Bell Equipment's Dealer Development Manager: Forestry & Agriculture for South Africa at the 2023 Nampo show near Bothaville and we started having discussions about Tractor Giants becoming a dealer for Bell and JCB products in the forestry and agricultural space," Dusty explains. "Our negotiations bore real fruit as we've been appointed dealers for Bell Equipment and JCB forestry and agricultural equipment and have the distribution rights for these fine products in Pretoria and working in a wide circle north to Brits, east to Delmas and west to Potchefstroom, and anywhere in between."

Dusty is keen to add these distinctive yellow machines to his already impressive product offering at the company's premises in the north of Pretoria, close to Wonderboom Airport.

"We've ordered two JCB 3DX Pro Backhoe Loaders and one JCB 530-70 Loadall as stock items and we believe that when they are on display here, they'll be snapped up quickly by an eager farming market," he enthuses. "Both these models of machines are already known to make any commercial farmer's life easier with the multitude of tasks they can be used for, and we're excited at being able to offer them for sale and with Bell Equipment's support and wide footprint as backup."

Dusty adds that he made online bookings for training dates for the four mechanics they employ along with six workshop assistants and another four people working in their comprehensive parts department to all undergo training in the rudiments of servicing, repairing, and selecting spare parts for especially the JCB models they'll be dealing with.

"Bell Equipment is such a household name in South Africa and we're proud to be associated with the brand. As a bonus we get to relate to the JCB brand as well and considering that it is advertised on the steering wheel of a Formula 1 racing car, it must surely rank as a worthwhile product that will enhance our own reputation."



*Dusty Freudiger, owner of Tractor Giants.*



**BRAAI KIT - BOMA**



**R2 100<sup>00</sup>**

**BRAAI KIT - COMPACT**



**R1 300<sup>00</sup>**

**FLASK**  
650ML  
DIFFERENT COLOURS



**R350<sup>00</sup>**

**CAP - OILED CAMO**  
BROWN / GREEN



**R150<sup>00</sup>**

**CAP - JCB**  
BLACK



**R120<sup>00</sup>**

**HAT - LEATHER**



**R355<sup>00</sup>**

**LEATHERMAN REV**



**R1 500<sup>00</sup>**

**MULTI-TOOL**



**R200<sup>00</sup>**

**TORCH**



**R1 050<sup>00</sup>**

**SHIRT - SHORT SLEEVE**  
FATIGUE  
SIZE: S - 5XL



**R550<sup>00</sup>**

**SHIRT - LONG SLEEVE**  
FATIGUE  
SIZE: S - 5XL



**R600<sup>00</sup>**

**JACKET - MENS K-WAY PUFFER**  
BLACK  
SIZE: S - 5XL



**R1 090<sup>00</sup>**

**PICNIC BASKET COLLAPSIBLE**



**R450<sup>00</sup>**

**COOLER BOX**  
BLUE (25 LITRE)



**R1 550<sup>00</sup>**

**LED FLASHLIGHT**  
USB Rechargeable



**R450<sup>00</sup>**

**JACKET - BELL/JCB MENS K-WAY SOFTSHELL**  
BLACK  
SIZE: S - 5XL



**R1 090<sup>00</sup>**

**BOOT - JCB 8844 LACE-UP**  
BROWN  
SIZE: 6 - 13



**R1 300<sup>00</sup>**

**BOOT - JCB 8855 SLIP-ON**  
BROWN  
SIZE: 6 - 13



**R1 300<sup>00</sup>**

**LAPTOP BAG - LEATHER**



**R2 900<sup>00</sup>**

**JCB 3CX BACKHOE LOADER SCALE MODEL**



**R1 400<sup>00</sup>**

**WOODEN CANE LOADER SCALE MODEL**



**R720<sup>00</sup>**

**BELTS**  
BLACK/BROWN  
LEATHER STITCH/  
BURNISHED



**R270<sup>00</sup>**

**SHOE - VELDSKOEN**  
YELLOW  
SIZE: 5 - 11



**R960<sup>00</sup>**

**SHOE - S5 TURBO VELLIE**  
(NONE STEEL CAP)  
TAN  
SIZE: 5 - 12



**R780<sup>00</sup>**

**WOODEN LOGGER SCALE MODEL**



**R550<sup>00</sup>**

**WOODEN TRACTOR SCALE MODEL**




**R450<sup>00</sup>**

**MULTI-PUPOSE DESK MAT**



**R250<sup>00</sup>**



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