Casidra

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Western Cape Government
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Casidra is a Provincial Government Business Enterprise for the Western Cape

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Chief Executive Officer's Overview

Despite economic pressures, **Casidra** closed the 2024/25 financial year with resilience and impact. In partnership with the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, we implemented more than 7 400 food security projects exceeding targets and reinforcing our commitment to combating hunger, supporting vulnerable communities, and strengthening rural livelihoods. This is a major highlight for us and reflects the dedication of our teams across the organisation.

During the last quarter, **Casidra** achieved 92.86% of its performance targets, with 13 out of 14 on track. We also secured approval for R153 million in disaster funding to implement critical projects across the Western Cape. This not only demonstrates the trust placed in **Casidra's** project management capabilities but also provides opportunities to generate management fees and interest income, thereby strengthening our financial sustainability.

Prudent financial management enabled us to direct limited resources toward project delivery and efficiency. Spending remained aligned with our mandate, focusing on rural infrastructure, farmer support, job creation, and agricultural resilience.

At the same time, we faced challenges, including capacity constraints, and procurement delays. To address these, we are prioritising recruitment, skills development, and streamlined processes. A supplier performance tracking tool and targeted development sessions are being introduced to strengthen our supply chain.

Looking ahead, **Casidra** will focus on climate-smart agriculture, digital monitoring platforms, enterprise hubs for rural entrepreneurs, and stronger partnerships with the private sector. We are also moving ahead with the appointment of a Business Development Service Provider in September 2025 to diversify income streams and strengthen **Casidra**'s long-term financial position. Stakeholder engagement continues to be a priority, with the organisation actively participating in outreach and building partnerships essential for project delivery.

Casidra received its 36th unqualified audit opinion with findings, and corrective actions are already underway. These include strengthening Finance and SCM units, automating data processes, and enhancing compliance training. The Audit and Risk Committee continues to provide strong oversight, which is highly valued by management.

While the broader economic climate remains uncertain, **Casidra**'s core business remains stable. We are pursuing alternative funding and public-private partnerships to expand our reach and scale high-impact interventions.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Board, our Executive Authority, WCDoA leadership, **Casidra** staff, and partners for their continued support. Together, we remain committed to delivering real change across the Western Cape's rural landscape.

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Casidra Restores Borehole for Water Access on Boplaas Farm

By: Jay-dee Solomons

As part of its ongoing efforts to support land reform beneficiaries and emerging farmers, **Casidra** on behalf of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture has successfully completed the rehabilitation and equipping of a borehole on Boplaas Farm near Beaufort West. The project directly benefits Mtebelo Mafireka, an emerging farmer dedicated to building a sustainable farming operation in one of the most water-stressed regions of the Western Cape.

The borehole had existed on the farm for many years but had become unusable due to damage to the water extraction infrastructure. Recognising the vital importance of water in livestock farming, **Casidra**'s Project Manager: Technical, Farzaad Khatieb, from the Environmental Sustainability Unit, initiated a comprehensive yield and water quality test to assess the borehole's viability. The results confirmed it could serve as a reliable water source.

Based on these findings, Farzaad explains, *"The borehole was rehabilitated and fitted with a solar-powered pumping system, including four 585-watt solar panels and a 1,500-watt submersible pump. The pump was installed at a depth of 35 metres in the 40.4-metre-deep borehole, which has a static water level of 24.3 metres."*

He confirms that this new system is not only efficient but also sustainable, significantly reducing long-term operational costs and environmental impact.

The rehabilitated borehole now supplies clean water for livestock on Mafireka's farm, an essential resource for productivity and animal well-being. Mafireka expressed his gratitude for the support received: *"This borehole has changed everything for my farm. Without water, I was struggling to keep my livestock healthy, especially during the dry months. Thanks to the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and **Casidra**, I now have a reliable and sustainable water source. It gives me hope and confidence to grow my farming business."*

This project is a clear example of how targeted infrastructure investment can create tangible, lasting improvements in the lives of individual farmers. **Casidra** remains committed to delivering practical solutions that promote sustainable agriculture, economic empowerment, and food security in the Western Cape.

Rooibos Radiance: The Skincare Journey Rooted in the Heart of Wupperthal

By: Jay-dee Solomons

In the remote village of Wupperthal, cradled by the majestic Cederberg Mountains, a powerful story of resilience, innovation, and homegrown entrepreneurship is quietly flourishing. Rooibos Radiance, formerly known as *Marice Skincare*, has grown from a kitchen experiment into a proudly local agri-processing business that champions the power of indigenous plants and the spirit of community.

At the heart of this inspiring journey is Marice Mercuur, a determined founder whose skincare venture was born not in a laboratory, but in her own kitchen.

Back in 2016, Marice was seeking a gentle, natural solution for her baby daughter's eczema. Turning to the indigenous rooibos plant—long celebrated for its soothing and anti-inflammatory properties—she began using rooibos-infused water made from simple tea bags and leaves. The results were remarkable. Encouraged by the improvement in her daughter's skin, Marice started experimenting with handmade rooibos soaps.

"I didn't have any experience in skincare or product formulation, but I knew I had to try", Marice recalls.

While holding down a full-time job, Marice devoted her evenings and weekends to her budding business. The road was far from easy. With limited resources and no formal training, breaking into the competitive skincare market was a daunting challenge.

She says, "Starting out was the hardest part, but my family, friends, and our supportive local community kept me going."

From those humble beginnings, Marice steadily built Rooibos Radiance into a brand offering a full range of handcrafted skincare products facial treatments, body care, and more all infused with the naturally nourishing power of rooibos. Today, the business is co-managed by a team of four, each overseeing different aspects of the growing enterprise.

As her business matured, so did Marice's network and knowledge. Through industry connections, she discovered **Casidra**—a Provincial Business Enterprise supporting agricultural and agri-processing businesses across the Western Cape.

Casidra and the Western Cape Department of Agriculture's involvement were the game changer. They helped install a reliable water system crucial for production, supplied raw materials, and assisted with packaging procurement key upgrades that elevated both the quality and scalability of her products.

Although Rooibos Radiance remains a small enterprise, its impact is deeply felt. The business sources ingredients locally and creates much-needed employment in a region where job opportunities are limited.

Marice is passionate about sharing what she's learned and encouraging others to start where they are. Her advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is clear and heartfelt:

"If you haven't started yet and you have an idea—just start. And if you've already started, stay persistent. Do a little bit every day. If you don't know what to do next, reach out to your community. There are people and organisations like ***Casidra and WCDOA*** *are ready to help you grow."*

Marice Mercuur's journey is a powerful reminder of what's possible when purpose, community, and perseverance come together. Rooibos Radiance is more than just a skincare brand it is a celebration of local ingenuity and the healing power of nature, nurtured in the rugged beauty of the Cederberg.

Klein Morgenwaght Dam Project Moves into a Restoration Phase

By: Tina Dayimani

Casidra has officially commenced the restoration of the Klein Morgenwaght Farm Dam in Malmesbury. This marks a significant milestone in the project's development, following extensive planning, coordination, and emergency preparatory work carried out by **Casidra**'s Environmental Sustainability Unit.

The project reflects **Casidra**'s ongoing commitment to supporting sustainable agricultural infrastructure across the Western Cape and strengthening the resilience of rural communities.

Earlier this year, the Klein Morgenwaght Dam sustained substantial damage during severe flooding, prompting **Casidra** and the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDoA) to initiate emergency repairs. As part of the continuing assessment and rehabilitation process, several priority interventions have been identified:

- **A comprehensive inspection of the spillway to ensure its operational safety and integrity;**
- **Surface repairs on the dam wall to address visible damage and deterioration;**
- **Structural rehabilitation of the dam wall's upper and downstream sections;**
- **Erosion control measures further downstream to prevent future environmental degradation.**

These critical works are essential for restoring the dam's structural integrity, ensuring long-term stability, and protecting both the surrounding ecosystem and agricultural operations.

Casidra's Environmental team continues to play a pivotal role in overseeing the project's compliance with environmental standards and sustainability principles. Their involvement underscores the importance of integrating environmental stewardship into every phase of infrastructure development. Nothing would have been possible without the project funding received from WCDoA.

The rollout also brings together key civil engineering expertise, highlighting the collaborative effort driving the project forward. These partnerships are central to delivering resilient infrastructure that directly supports the agricultural sector.

Transitioning into the construction phase represents an important step toward restoring vital water infrastructure and ensuring long-term water security for the Malmesbury farming community and the wider region.

Boost for Darling Farm as Lime Spreader Lays the Ground for Growth

By: Jay-dee Solomons

There's a fresh wave of optimism at *Sheegra Colenso Farm*, nestled at Darling in the Swartland district. The **Casidra**'s handover of a brand-new lime spreader has delivered a welcome boost to the farm's grain and livestock production laying the foundation for improved soil health and long-term sustainability.

Established in 2022, *The Winter Grain Project* is the brainchild of husband-and-wife duo Ivan and Natashia Cleote, who have turned their vision into a thriving, diversified farming enterprise. From lambs and pigs to ewes, sheep, and cattle, the Cleotes rear a variety of livestock while planting their own feed crops to maintain a self-sustaining ecosystem on the farm.

But their journey hasn't been without hurdles. Like many emerging farmers, they've faced tough challenges particularly in managing livestock health and navigating resource constraints. Fortunately, support from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDOA) and **Casidra** has helped them overcome key obstacles. Previous interventions, including a feed mixer and animal feed, significantly boosted operational efficiency and resilience.

Now, with the lime spreader added to their toolkit, the Cleotes are ready to take the next step in enhancing soil quality and boosting crop yields. Healthy soil is the bedrock of sustainable farming, and this new equipment ensures more consistent lime application restoring soil pH levels and creating ideal growing conditions for animal feed crops.

The success of the project is due in no small part to the dedicated support of WCDoA's Extension Officer, Rebecca Mathobela and **Casidra**'s Project Manager Mulalo Nemutudi, who have worked hand-in-hand with the Cleotes over the years to reach project goals. Their guidance, technical support, and commitment have been instrumental in helping the farm grow from strength to strength.

Reflecting on their journey, Ivan offers inspiration for others walking a similar path: *"Farming will always be challenging. Having perseverance is key, but passion is what drives you."*

With unwavering determination, growing expertise, and continued support from passionate professionals, the Cleotes are cultivating not just crops and livestock but a resilient farming legacy in the heart of Darling.

Included Group Homes: The Garden that Nnourishes a Community

By: Jay-dee Solomons

What began as a vision for food security and empowerment has blossomed into a thriving hub of growth, dignity, wellness, and opportunity. The INCLUDID Group Home Vegetable Garden, located in Maitland at the corner of Upper Camp and Haven Roads, is more than just a garden, it is a symbol of resilience, inclusion, and transformative community impact.

In 2023, the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDoA) and **Casidra** began supporting this initiative as part of their commitment to food security and sustainable development. “The vegetable garden serves a dual purpose: improving nutrition and enhancing lives. Here, agriculture becomes a vehicle for healing, education, and economic opportunity,” says Project Implementer, Ntaketo Hlatshwayo.

At its core, the garden functions as a subsistence farming system designed to feed the 71 residents of the group home, most of whom are living with disabilities. Fresh, organically grown vegetables contribute to the residents’ daily nutrition, promoting health and well-being. During times of surplus, produce is sold to staff and members of the public at Oude Molen, generating additional income for the facility.

Faith Kgokong, the Employment Training Coordinator for the INCLUDID Group Home Vegetable Garden, plays a central role in this transformation. She provides hands-on job training to residents, many of whom also work in the garden instilling self-worth, independence, and practical skills. Training remains a cornerstone of the initiative, with ongoing development in key agricultural areas such as grafting and irrigation maintenance.

This approach not only supports the sustainability of the garden but also equips participants with life-changing knowledge and competencies.

Looking ahead, the group intends to expand into poultry production, specifically breeding Lohmann Brown laying hens. This will further diversify the project and open new income streams through the sale of eggs and hens to the local community. Additionally, plans are underway to preserve surplus crops through dehydration and other value-adding methods, creating new products for sale and furthering food sustainability goals.

Casidra’s support, guided by Hlatshwayo’s unwavering commitment, has been instrumental in turning this vision into reality. The organisation has delivered critical infrastructure including a storage unit, chest freezer, and borehole repairs as well as vital inputs such as gardening tools, a dehydrator, compost, seeds, and an egg incubator, laying the groundwork for sustainable growth.

“This initiative is not just about growing food it’s about growing people. It shows what’s possible when communities invest in inclusive development that recognises the potential in every individual,” says Kgokong.

The INCLUDID Group Home Vegetable Garden is a powerful example of how agriculture, when nurtured with compassion and purpose, can be a true catalyst for change. As the garden continues to flourish, it will remain a source of nourishment, pride, and inspiration not only for the residents it directly supports but also for the wider community it touches.

IT Graduates to Organic Farming Pioneers in Atlantis

By: Jay-dee Solomons

What started as a vision rooted in sustainability and community upliftment has blossomed into a thriving agricultural success story. Based in Atlantis, the Native Way Permaculture Institute, co-founded by IT graduates Sizo and Refiloe Nsibande, is proof that with innovation, resilience, and the right support, small-scale farming can flourish even in the face of challenging conditions.

Native Way is operating as a mixed farming enterprise that combines livestock farming with intensive organic vegetable cultivation. However, at the beginning, limited water access and safety challenges threatened their project growth. Crops were difficult to maintain, livestock suffered, and the security of their infrastructure was a constant concern.

The turning point came through the support of **Casidra** and the Western Cape Department of Agriculture. With dedicated implementation led by **Casidra**'s Project Administrator, Ndyebo Gqirana, a solar-powered borehole water system was installed, a game-changing solution that addressed their most pressing need of reliable water source.

"The installation of the borehole and solar panels changed everything for us," says Sizo Nsibande. "We're now able to expand our operations with confidence, knowing that water security is no longer a limitation."

Sizo, now a self-taught organic farming expert, credits much of their success to technology and continuous learning.

"Invest in digital platforms and do your research, that's what gave us an edge," he advises.

Native Way is more than a farm it's a symbol of regeneration, innovation, and rural empowerment in Atlantis. With the right infrastructure and passionate leadership, the Nsibandes are paving the way for a more sustainable future, inspiring a new generation of farmers in the Western Cape.

Municipality Cultivates a Greener Future with Landmark Urban Agriculture Project

By: Tina Dayimani

In a bold stride toward sustainable development and inclusive economic growth, Mossel Bay Municipality has unveiled a trailblazing initiative under its Agricultural Development Programme bringing the farm to the city and planting seeds of opportunity in the heart of the community.

The municipality has earmarked approximately 1.5 hectares of urban land and committed R1.6 million to the establishment of a transformative urban agriculture project. This investment includes the installation of critical infrastructure such as irrigation systems, gardening tools, and essential production inputs laying down fertile ground for a thriving, self-sufficient urban farming ecosystem.

The project, a first of its kind in the Garden Route District, sets a powerful precedent for how municipalities can champion food security, social upliftment, and grassroots economic participation. Far more than a gardening venture, this initiative is a strategic investment in people, purpose, and the planet.

Targeting individuals with agricultural experience, the programme aims to tap into existing local skills while cultivating new avenues for employment, entrepreneurship, and food independence. In doing so, it nurtures not only crops but also long-term resilience and dignity for families and individuals across Mossel Bay.

To steer this initiative to success, the municipality has partnered with **Casidra** an implementing Company renowned for its developmental expertise and commitment to building sustainable rural and urban livelihoods. Guided by its mission to empower communities, **Casidra** brings a holistic approach that fuses environmental stewardship with social cohesion.

"**Casidra**'s role goes beyond infrastructure, they bring people together connecting them to nature, to each other, and to new possibilities. I am so proud of the progress," said Sharion Louw, the Local Economic Development Officer from the Municipality.

Through the creation of vibrant, shared gardening spaces, **Casidra** is helping transform underutilised urban land into hubs of eco-conscious living and income generation. These green spaces will not only yield fresh produce but also nourish the spirit of community.

Warren Marcus, **Casidra**'s Project Manager, shared an optimistic progress update from the field and said, "We've made significant headway. Infrastructure is already in place, and the first phase of plot allocation is underway. The enthusiasm from the community has been overwhelming people are ready to get their hands in the soil and start growing."

Michael Mackenzie, Programme Manager at **Casidra**, praised the teamwork and momentum;

"We are truly proud of the progress to date. I'd like to thank Warren Marcus and the entire implementation team for their dedication and energy. This project reflects what's possible when collaboration and community come together with purpose."

At the heart of the initiative lies a simple yet profound idea: empower people to grow their own food, and you empower them to shape their own future.

Residents are now invited to lease individual garden plots small but mighty patches of soil that offer the chance to grow fresh, nutritious produce just steps from their homes. These plots promote healthier lifestyles, food self-sufficiency, and a renewed relationship with the environment.

Participants will also gain access to shared tools, compost, and hands-on training through practical workshops focused on sustainable gardening methods. Whether a seasoned grower or an enthusiastic beginner, everyone is welcomed into this green movement.

With this initiative, Mossel Bay is reimagining what urban spaces can be turning vacant land into productive gardens, and communities into stewards of their own wellbeing.

As cities grapple with food insecurity and social inequality, Mossel Bay's urban agriculture project is a living example of how local government can lead with vision, compassion, and innovation. One garden at a time, a greener, more resilient future is taking root.

A Multi-Award Winner Growing Resilience, One Mushroom at a Time

By: Tina Dayimani

Raised by her grandmother in the rural town of Idutywa in the Eastern Cape, Zokhanyo Bikani grew up surrounded by values that would later shape her journey in agriculture: hard work, resourcefulness, and respect for nature. Her grandmother, her greatest inspiration, instilled in her a strong sense of discipline, care for the environment, and a love for growing from the land. She also taught her the basics of gardening, how to use natural resources wisely, and the importance of recycling.

Bikani's agricultural journey began in 2017 with a humble oyster mushroom project at her small town in Gansbaai in the Western Cape. This is a small beginning rooted in passion and resilience. After losing her job in 2020, she turned a setback into an opportunity. In 2022, she officially registered Zozo Mushrooms and Veggies, committing fully to her dream of farming and feeding communities.

"What keeps me going is knowing that my work not only feeds people but also inspires others," says Bikani.

Like many small-scale farmers, she faced challenges of limited access to markets, lack of funding, and no proper storage facilities. But her tenacity and willingness to learn helped her rise above these barriers. She invested in agricultural training, consistently produced high-quality mushrooms, built strong networks, and applied for funding support.

A key turning point came with funding from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDoA) and expert project implementation by **Casidra**. This support enabled her to expand her mushroom house, increase production, supply fresh oyster mushrooms to local communities, and open doors to high-end clients, including hotels and restaurants.

Her dedication has not gone unnoticed. She was named Best Performing Women PES Farmer in 2023 at the National Female Entrepreneur Awards held in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga followed by Best Subsistence Producer in 2024 at DALRRD Women Entrepreneur Award. These accolades are a testament to her excellence and impact in agriculture achievements that extend far beyond her own farm.

Through her workshops, Bikani teaches others especially women and youth how to grow food at home using recycled materials. These community-driven initiatives empower people to become self-sufficient and take pride in producing their own food.

For Bikani, Women's Month is more than just a celebration it's a call to action.

"Women are capable of feeding communities, creating jobs, and driving change. But we need more recognition and equal access to land, resources, and markets," she says.

She advocates for targeted funding for women, accessible mentorship programmes, and better infrastructure support. She envisions a future where women are not only contributors to agriculture, but leaders are shaping policies, strengthening food security, and transforming communities.

Balancing her roles as a farmer, family member, and community leader is no easy task. However, with effective time management and her family's involvement in the business, she continues her outreach work, running gardening workshops that reflect her deep commitment to lifting others as she grows.

Looking ahead, Bikani sees women at the forefront of innovative, sustainable farming and agri-businesses across South Africa.

"Start small and start now. Learn as much as you can, be patient with the process, and never let challenges discourage you. Farming is not just about producing food; it's about creating opportunities and building a legacy."

This thriving food security project is a shining example of what determination, support, and vision can achieve. **Casidra** is proud to be associated with Bikani's journey, a powerful testimony of a woman who is not only cultivating the land, but sowing seeds of hope, empowerment, and change for generations to come.

Stakeholder Engagement and Networking Breakfast to Drive Inclusive Agricultural Growth

By: Tina Dayimani

Casidra in collaboration with Old Mutual hosted a Stakeholder Engagement and Networking Breakfast, bringing together over 30 influential partners from both the public and private sectors. The event served as a strategic platform to foster collaboration, unlock funding opportunities, and align efforts towards a more inclusive and resilient agricultural economy in the Western Cape.

The event provided valuable space for dialogue, connection, and shared learning focusing on sustainable agricultural development and inclusive growth across the province's rural communities.

During the event, **Casidra** CEO Dr Keith du Plessis shared insights into the organisation's business model, value proposition, and strategic direction. He highlighted the critical importance of cross-sector collaboration in strengthening the agricultural value chain.

Dr du Plessis had an opportunity to thank everyone who joined us in building meaningful connections that will drive impact in the year ahead. "We will continue to host engagements like this to unlock funding opportunities and support the growth of our projects across the region", he said.

The event was proudly sponsored by Old Mutual, with Regional Manager Abdul Hassim delivering a compelling message on the importance of collaboration and purpose-driven investment and said; "Today's event is about building partnerships for growth and alleviating poverty within our communities,". He alludes that, "We must facilitate stronger connections between public and private partners and identify synergies that boost agri-development. In South Africa, agriculture feeds not only our families, but also our dreams of an inclusive, thriving economy."

This successful engagement marks another milestone in **Casidra's** ongoing commitment to driving inclusive economic development, supporting emerging farmers, and transforming rural areas into vibrant agricultural hubs.

Casidra remains dedicated to empowering people and partnerships because rural development starts with connection, collaboration, and shared purpose.

Commemorating Mandela Day with Acts of Service Across Rural Western Cape

By: Jay-dee Solomons

In honour of Mandela Day 2025, **Casidra** together with Land Bank, Kaap Agri, RTL Agri, Nel Tanks, and Tri-Toad embarked on a heartfelt mission to uplift rural communities through acts of service rooted in compassion and sustainability. The commemoration, held over two impactful days, showcased a shared commitment to social impact, food security, and educational support across the Western Cape.

The commemorative activities kicked off on 16 July 2025 at the Siyabonga Project in Vredenburg, where **Casidra**'s CEO, Dr Keith Du Plessis, and staff joined Deputy Director-General of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, Darryl Jacobs, and his team in honouring the Mandela Day spirit with 67 minutes of hands-on service in the food garden.

The engagement was more than symbolic it was deeply meaningful to the project beneficiaries, who felt seen and supported through this practical demonstration of solidarity. The day centred on promoting sustainable agriculture, enhancing food security, and strengthening the resilience of rural households.

On 18 July 2025, **Casidra**, in partnership with Land Bank, continued its outreach at Amalienstein L.B. Primary School in Zoar. Over 350 pairs of brand-new school shoes and warm socks were handed over to delighted learners, along with rainwater harvesting tanks and vegetable seedlings to boost the school's food garden. The day brimmed with energy and joy as **Casidra** staff spent time with the children, sharing stories, planting seedlings, and nurturing hope.

In his remarks to the learners, Michael Mackenzie, **Casidra**'s Programme Manager for Food Security, offered words of encouragement:

"Wear your new shoes with pride, and keep them shining, because you are walking into a brighter future. Take ownership of your journey, because you are the leaders of tomorrow."

Henry Jantjies, representing Land Bank, emphasised the importance of collaboration:

"Our goal as Land Bank is to make a meaningful difference in rural communities by supporting development and food security. We are grateful to **Casidra** *for the opportunity to partner on this initiative and for helping us align our shared commitment to uplifting the people of this land."*

Expressing heartfelt gratitude, School Principal Lesné Bosman shared:

"To ***Casidra*** *and its partners you are truly outstanding. Thank you for saying 'yes' when it mattered most, and for embracing this initiative with open hearts. On behalf of all of us at Amalienstein Primary School, our heartfelt thanks for every effort, big and small, that made this day so special."*

Casidra extends its deepest appreciation to all sponsors, partners, and staff whose dedication and contributions made this year's Mandela Day initiatives a success. Their collective efforts are a testament to the enduring spirit of Ubuntu that together, we can achieve more.

As the implementing Company of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, **Casidra** remains steadfast in its mission to drive sustainable rural development and social change, one community at a time.

Casidra at the Agri Investment Promotion Day for Cape Winelands region

By: Tina Dayimani

On 29 July 2025, **Casidra** was proud to participate in the Agri Investment Promotion Day in the Cape Winelands, hosted by Wesgro at Elsenburg. This high-impact event brought together key stakeholders from across the public and private sectors, including the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), Nedbank, and Pumpkin, to showcase opportunities and support available to entrepreneurs in the agribusiness and food & beverage sectors.

The event served as a valuable platform for engagement, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing laying the groundwork for meaningful partnerships to drive inclusive growth in agriculture.

Key Themes from the Day

Contributions from our partners and stakeholders reaffirmed several key priorities:

- The importance of collaborative partnerships to unlock inclusive agricultural growth.
- A shared commitment to supporting emerging and previously disadvantaged farmers.
- Ongoing challenges around access to timely and appropriate finance for smallholder farmers.
- The role of agriculture in advancing inclusive industrialisation and rural economic development.
- The need to strengthen public-private networks across the agricultural value chain.

Casidra's Commitment

This event underscored **Casidra's** dedication to rural transformation through collaboration and empowerment. For us, rural development is not only about building infrastructure, it's about building people. We remain focused on unlocking access to finance, support services, and markets that enable entrepreneurs, smallholders, and rural communities to thrive.

Through partnerships like these, we aim to transform rural areas into vibrant economic hubs that contribute meaningfully to the Western Cape's food system and the broader economy.

Together, we are building a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient agricultural sector, one investment at a time.

African Farming Workshop | Empowering the Future of Agriculturalists and Farmers

By: Tina Dayimani

The Landbouweekblad African Farming Workshop, held in Wellington on 7 August 2025, was a well-attended event designed to unlock the farming potential of emerging smallholder farmers and equip the next generation of agricultural youth with essential financial knowledge.

From access to markets and funding opportunities to infrastructure and the importance of saving for retirement, the workshop sparked impactful conversations around sustainability and farmer development. A team of specialists and experts from various entities including **Casidra**, Mafube Fresh, Land Bank, Afgri, Cape Winelands District Municipality, the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and many others, led these discussions.

The programme addressed a wide range of financial and production matters for farmers. Emmaculate Malashe from Mafube Fresh set the tone with an inspiring testimonial on market access for smallholder farmers and community garden growers.

“Mafube Fresh sources its produce from a large network of growers across the country to cover different seasons all year round. We achieve quality through a rigorous selection of farms and partner suppliers who share our vision of excellence, as well as by maintaining a short supply chain and an efficient logistics system,” said Malashe.

Her presentation was one of the highlights of the day, touching the audience’s hearts and receiving enthusiastic applause.

As funding remains a key concern for most farmers, Angelo Plaatjies and Mario Ruiters from Land Bank presented their blended finance funding programme. This was followed by the Cape Winelands District Municipality, which shared details about its Small Farmer Support Programme.

Mzwanele Lingani from the WCDoA spoke about the importance of succession planning in farming, emphasising agricultural accounting and highlighting the department’s farmer support programmes.

Casidra’s PR & Communications Manager, Experience Matshediso, outlined **Casidra**’s significant role in agriculture and economic development as a project management company in the Western Cape.

“Over the past year, **Casidra** implemented agricultural projects worth R200 million across the Western Cape. Furthermore, we have rolled out approximately 36,000 food security projects over the past five years,” said Matshediso.

Land access, another major challenge for farmers, was addressed by Le Fras Nortje of the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development, who offered guidance to farmers facing land and title deed issues. There was a strong response from attendees from Gouda, Saron, and other areas, where cooperatives are struggling to secure land for farming.

Sylvester Lubambo from Afgri highlighted the importance of being a well-trained farmer, outlining the organisation’s four pillars to unlock farmer potential: training, mentorship, access to finance, and access to markets.

The workshop concluded with Johan Smith from Allan Gray, who explained the importance of saving for retirement as a member of a farm business. He shared practical guidance on how much to contribute towards retirement to achieve a sustainable income and invest wisely in financial markets.

In his closing remarks, workshop organiser Appollo Bomvana thanked all sponsors and attendees for making the event a success.

“Together, we’re building a stronger, more sustainable future for agriculture. We look forward to more partnerships and collaborations for future events like this,” said Bomvana.

Danielle Marais' Inspiring Journey in Equine Studies

By: Chesnay du Preez

Danielle Marais began her journey in 2008, when she joined Green Acres Riding School at just five years old. From an early age, she was drawn to the strength, grace, and calming presence of horses.

As a young person uncertain about securing financial support to pursue her dreams, Danielle's path changed when she was awarded a bursary from **Casidra**, designed to empower dependents of its employees.

This support enabled her to pursue studies in her chosen field without financial burden. Over the course of two years, Danielle dedicated herself to her studies in Equine Management, Trail Guiding on Horseback, and Coaching Skills. With full financial support from **Casidra**, she was able to focus entirely on mastering the intricacies of equine care and stable operations. Her training blended practical tasks such as mucking out stalls, monitoring feeding schedules, and learning horse health essentials with in-depth classroom learning.

Danielle's hard work paid off. She met every qualification requirement and excelled in both theoretical and practical aspects. Her coursework covered a wide range of subjects, from horse anatomy and stable management to mental health and problem-solving skills. She also developed strong competencies in riding proficiency and basic schooling.

"I enjoy working with horses, and their well-being has always been my top priority," Danielle shared. "*One of the most eye-opening experiences during my training was a module focused on supporting learners with special needs. It really showed me how horses can make a positive impact on individuals.*"

Rosemarie, Founder and Director of the Academy, praised Danielle's dedication: "*Well done! You have immersed yourself in the different aspects of equine stable management, developing your understanding of the horse, through both unmounted and mounted practice*." Known fondly as "Rose" by her students, Rosemarie consistently commended Danielle's strong work ethic and commitment.

Danielle's story is a shining example of the life-changing impact that **Casidra**'s employee dependent bursaries can have especially in today's economic climate.

Well done, Danielle!

Casidra Interns Turning Experience Into Opportunity

At **Casidra**, internships and learnerships are far more than mere work placements, they are strategic investments in cultivating capable, confident, and future-ready professionals. Through hands-on training, mentorship, and immersion in real-world operational environments, **Casidra**'s internship and learnership programmes play a pivotal role in shaping young talent poised to make meaningful contributions across various sectors. We highlight the inspiring journeys of three emerging professionals who not only completed their 18-month internships at **Casidra** but also secured full-time employment ahead of schedule having already exceeded expectations in their respective fields.

Jonay Bekeer: Communicating for Change

A young marketing professional with a passion for purposeful storytelling, Jonay Bekeer joined **Casidra**'s Public Relations, Marketing, and Communications unit with a vision to make an impact. Over the course of her internship, she played an integral role in stakeholder engagement, content development, and strategic communication across multiple platforms helping to bring **Casidra**'s mission to life.

"My internship at **Casidra** gave me more than just workplace experience. It gave me direction, confidence, and a sense of purpose," Jonay reflects.

She has since transitioned into the corporate sector, where she continues to apply the skills and values developed during her time at **Casidra**.

Jay-dee Solomons: Spotlight on Success

Born and raised in Paarl, Jay-dee Solomons has turned her internship at **Casidra** into a springboard for success. Joining the organisation as a Marketing Management student, she spent 18 months learning, growing, and leaving her mark on the Public Relations, Marketing, and Communication team.

With her flair for writing, creativity, and boundless energy, Jay-dee helped create fresh content, supported events, and strengthened communication across the organisation. Her contributions quickly made her a valued colleague and team player.

Looking back on her journey, Jay-dee shared:

"As I close this exciting chapter at **Casidra**, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has been part of my journey here. From the very first day, I felt welcomed and supported, and I've learned so much—both professionally and personally. Being part of the Public Relations, Marketing, and Communication team has been an incredible experience, and I'm so proud to have contributed to the creative and meaningful work we've done together."

Todd Lewis: Advancing in Public Finance

Todd Lewis began his professional journey at **Casidra** as a SAICA trainee and aspiring Chartered Accountant (SA), completed part of his articles at **Casidra**, where he gained hands-on experience in public sector finance, compliance, and governance.

"**Casidra** helped me realise how finance can be purpose-driven. It taught me that sound financial management can uplift communities and support sustainable development", says Todd.

Currently completing his articles at a government entity within the Saldanha Bay Freeport, Todd credits **Casidra** for equipping him with the values and skills that continue to shape his career. His long-term goal is to grow globally and return to make a lasting impact in South Africa's development space. "**Casidra** was more than a rotation it was a turning point", Todd concluded.

Zaid Gasnodien: Building a Career in IT

For IT graduate Zaid Gasnodien, **Casidra** served as a launchpad into the dynamic world of Information and Communication Technology. During his internship, he was immersed in maintaining digital systems, resolving technical issues, and understanding the crucial role of IT in supporting a development-focused organisation.

Though his time at **Casidra** has come to an end, his professional journey is only beginning. With practical experience and a strong grasp of real-world IT operations, Zaid is well-equipped to take on the next chapter of his career.

"**Casidra** gave me the space to grow, learn, and understand the real demands of working in IT. I leave here with gratitude, growth, and a clear direction forward," he shares.

"As we bid farewell to our young stalwarts, I extend my sincere gratitude for the dedication, positivity, and innovative perspectives they brought to **Casidra**. Their contributions have enriched our organisation, and I am confident they will continue to excel in their future endeavours. On behalf of **Casidra**, I wish them every success as they embark on the next chapter of their journey," CEO of **Casidra**, Dr Keith du Plessis.

Empowering the Next Generation and Unleashing the Potential of Youth

At **Casidra**, we believe every success story begins with opportunity, growth, and transformation. Whether in marketing, finance, IT, or any other field, our interns and new employees bring fresh energy and innovative thinking that enrich our organisation. We remain deeply committed to equipping young people with structured skills development, mentorship, and meaningful workplace exposure. When young professionals are empowered to succeed, they grow into the leaders who will shape our future. We are proud to welcome this new generation of talent into the **Casidra** family and look forward to supporting them as they take their first steps in building impactful careers," says Dr. Keith du Plessis, CEO of **Casidra**.

Ridaa Kearns joined us as a **Project Manager: Civil Engineering**

Tina Dayimani joined us as a **Marketing and Communications Graduate**

Viveca Smit joined us as a **Human Capital Student**

Mpho Malatjie joined us as a **Civil Engineering Graduate**

Franklyn Pedro joined us as an **Information Technology Graduate**

Luhle Mgayi joined us as an **Intern**

Miche du Plessis joined us as a Trainee **Accountant**

Lyle Cedras joined us as an **Intern**

THE EDITOR

As we strive to make a difference through effective and efficient project management at Casidra, follow us on our Social Media Platforms. We also would like to hear from you, kindly send us your thoughts and suggestions to: Experience Matshediso.

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