F2 - Interview Commercial Farmer, female, Hochfeld - 27-01-2023

**So yesterday you of course also explained us a lot about the farm and what you're doing here. So you in total you have 4000 hectares, right with cattle farms and.**

4000 yes. Our, our income methods are tourism and livestock agriculture, so we have cattle that we obviously sell on auctions, and we have agriculture. We plant corn or we plant our own feed for the chicken and the pigs and then we have a guest farm and we are also registered as a hunting farm.

**And how many workers work?**

Here we do have at the moment 10 people working for us, and there are, it's four women and six men together.

**And you told us that you started this foundation.**

That was in 2019 when I came to the farm, I was a freelance tour guide as well.

For them.

And then obviously through COVID, we all lost our income. And then I was using my old contacts because I still wanted to you know, develop the farm in the way that I thought. Would be positive for the future and part with that, it comes also to invest some money into staff accommodation and to ensure that the workers get a bit. I'm not saying luxury, but a bit the basics, you know, like a toilet and a bathroom and a shower and. So we started that in 2019 and I did some crowdfunding and I was able to build 2 bathrooms and three verandas for the workers and we are now the next step is furniture and then the next. We are always on the side funding the school fees, obviously from the foundation or soccer tournaments and there are some. We donate money or meet and the idea on the long run is if you are looking at the government school and the quality of schooling, which is terrible to also maybe start a little farm school at some point, then get some European interns who want to have some farm experience for two or three months and then they can come and teach for a few hours a day. And then, you know, do whatever they want to do. That is the long term aim of it. But for that I still need to earn money for building the little building, the little school. Building and we are in training sessions now that my staff can be sent on a housekeeping course for $40,000 to wintek or maybe a welding course for the guys or these kind of things, you know, just or team building exercises is the same, you know, show them, show them a little bit what Namibia has to offer. Maybe go and see the ocean one day. A lot of them haven't seen the ocean yet, so that is probably on top of the wish list, that is for sure. That is what we do with the foundation. It was when I came in 2019, I realized that a lot of women in this area, obviously they have no jobs and they prostitute themselves to get a little income. Here and there and that really made me sad and shocked me because is it really necessary? Can't we find jobs for women that they can also work on farms? So what we have now in the farm is also that that the women that work with us here, they need to be a little bit of a all rounder kind of person. They need to be willing to want to learn. How to milk or do a bit of physical gardening work. Sometimes it's not only housekeeping or cooking. Or with the twins than any job as well.

**And then in farms in the. Area like is it? Do they employ more men than female, or is it?**

Most of the farms in this area don't have hospitality business together with their farming business. So for them it is convenient to have one lady, who's coming in and does the dishes and a bit of cleaning and then go home again. Oh, they don't really need a lot of women working for them, to be honest. And I know some people who don't employ anybody because they are so under the impression that working doing the jobs alone is stressless more stressless than having somebody around.

**And how do you find the people? Who work for you? Said go via you know someone and then.**

How do I find them? Contacts the all my staff that are employed now are probably, we're coming to this farm through the farm where I grew up and the workers there then just passed on my phone number. And then the people called or they passed me on the phone number and I called them. And then we figured out if the English skills are basic enough to be able to do the job. I employed 2 ladies whose English can be improved but you want to give the people an opportunity, even those that don't speak English well, or even those who can't read and write and we have at the moment. I would say 20% illiterate last year it was 80%. Now we have 20% people who are illiterate. It's not a big deal. You just need to be hands on when you work on the farm. Everything else you can learn by doing you know. But for training purposes it is convenient when the people already can read and write, because then there is an opportunity for them to learn more stuff like for example guiding you know like in tracking and they can read up on information about the animals on their own and these things, it's easier for them than obviously to improve also in their position.

**You said that you sort of rather employ people from the north.**

The motivation, the work motivation that is just the experience that the farmers made in this area, the work motivation of the oshiwambo and the Kavango tribe is really not bad and the unemployment rate in Namibia is that high. I don't need to motivate people to work, I want people who are motivated already and we just found that also alcoholism is not such a big problem with the oshiwambo and with the Kavango tribe.

For example, the ladies in the House that work 2 from 4 don't drink. Because that's just what the religion or the culture expects of the women, so those are now the Kavango ladies that are working in the House. That is an advantage if you don't have you know it's also, it's also a problem always with abuse, when alcohol comes into play and when I came to the farm four years ago, I sat down and I wrote some contracts and some farm rules and. Two of my guys learned that no women are being hit on the farm. By getting a final warning, I think still that they obviously deserve a second chance or whatever, you know, by it's a learning curve, but they just realize that on this farm the women are and the children are not getting hit. I don't mind if the child gets, you know, a little slap or whatever for. That kind of reasons, but no, no beating in that sense, no. That is important.

**So we would just say that most other farms employ the bamboo and.**

A lot of people employed oshiwambo and then there are a lot of illegal employed people also working in the rural areas here who are coming from Mongola who don't have a Namibian citizenship, but they are motivated enough to do a hard physical job like Bush cupping. Bush shopping.

**And with your foundation, would you eventually also like to expand like to other farms or something like that?**

Yes, of course. When I at some point have time in my life, again, I will do that. Probably when I'm 50. No, I'm not. I'm kidding. I'm no, but it is. Obviously when I have a little school here, then the children from the neighboring farm can also join here. You know that that kind of thing, it's. I don't want to go to teach it back to teaching or so I could. But it's not. Thank you. There's a reason why I changed my secondary teaching degree. At some 2 masters, I don't really want to be a teacher, so it has potential. Or one can also get maybe? If you don't want to have so many different people from different areas on your farm, and you don't want to have so many people living on this farm, you can also go maybe to this school that is 60 kilometers from here and then you can just work together with them and see if they would be interested in having some foreign teachers coming in as the helping hand, but that would be a political discussion again, if people from a government school want to be helped by teachers from outside now funding or whatever, whatever things.

**And what would you say are the biggest challenges being? A commercial farmer here, this this area.**

Theft is a huge problem, so for us over the to go on a holiday over Christmas time and everybody is very hungry for meat is risk. Poaching is increasing through because of the poverty and don't put skin color. Approaching or on theft? Please don't be so ignorant, no. No, that is a is a big problem. Droughts is always a huge challenge for a farmer every few years and last year our average rain is around 400 millimeters. Last year we had 200. This year we are now at 160 so. We are still waiting on the big rains. Every new gambling and then you then you think halfway through the rain season is it going to last the food or not? And if it's not lasting, then you make a plan, an alternative. Then you need to try to find and hire some land where you can put your kettle for that time, that's what we did now with a third of our livestock, we relocated it 100 kilometers from here and we are going to pick them up again end of February, bring back 50% of that sell, 50% of that and then we just hope that we don't need to lose any grazing. Next year, again, the problem is when you have to lease grazing then normally you are not the only farmer who wants to lease grazing because then it's normally a drought that is more over the whole area or so than everybody's looking for grazing. That is probably the biggest challenge. The rain, which you can't influence and theft because these are a huge like in everything else you can handle.

OK. And how were you affected by the encroachers? Who's sharing which encroachment?

Well, the Bush for us in our eyes is the enemy because he's stealing the water off the grass and the grass is our precious food for the cattle. We personally do believe Floriana and myself, that burning the Bush would be a very good way of getting rid of it. But in order to do that you obviously need material that can burn so you can't burn and have a natural or have a Bush fire going that you control the control Bush fire when you don't have grass. When you had a bad rain season. So that is also one of those trick things and then you need to pray that the wind direction doesn't change while you are burning. The field that your friendship with your neighbor is still going to last, that is what we have. We have our ten employees and we always have two of these ten who are. Permanently chopping Bush. It's like doing the dishes. It's a never ending story.

**And you said that neighbors are doing charcoal and but you're not.**

A lot of people in this area do charcoal, and it's a very stressful business for those people who have to motivate the employees chopping the Bush. You obviously need to also supply the people with enough meat. Now you have 30 people working for you, for example. You have to make sure that they eat enough so they are productive enough and you need to check that they don't go out and poach when you don't supply them with enough food in that sense, it's difficult one, but there are different ways of doing it. One of our neighbors is used to an airplane and you know got his way of dealing with it, but therefore you need to have the funds in order you know to do that. So Flora and me, we as a young family, we just like, can afford a few people that we can pay a few actors. But we thought now with how the Bush is coming back so quickly, maybe it is we are busy calculating on what is actually cheaper to take some poison and put it on the Bush or to actually have people chopping constantly because the Bush is growing back so quickly.

**Oh, we can show you this image that we're working on is the concept. It's called the biohub. And the idea is that there are different communities of farmers that supply biomass. So in this case it would be the Bush to a bio refinery, and in this biorefinery we are investigating a technology that can produce different outputs. The main one is a bio oil that can in the end be used in for example shipping industry, but it can also be used for other things. Biochar that can be used again in the in the fields and also ways for the stream and a gas stream which can be used in the facility here in Namibia, we would like to find out how this concept work in the context of Namibia, what kind of benefit should it generate, how should it look like to be viable in this context, but also what would be the challenges. So as a commercial farmer with bush on your lens. How do you? How do you see this concept?**

I think it's a very positive concept and I think there's definitely a market bush is something that the farmers always want to get rid of and that will not change in the future because I don't see how the land can be productive when it has too much bush. So there is only one way of going and fighting the Bush. The kettle won't start eating Bush, so antelopes won't start, obviously, some do, but were they also? No, that is definitely something that that I think in the future and maybe it's also it might also be an idea, not only for the commercial farmers, but also for the communal land. Now to seriously improve employment in the communal areas and challenges are to actually harvest the Bush in a responsible manner and leave those trees that should stand standing.

**So if this this would be a possibility here, under what conditions would you participate or supply?**

I mean, for now my income it on this tourism and it is cattle farming and on some point, I mean when we the question is funding, I can tell you. Yes, go ahead. But I don't have the money to harvest the Bush. So if you fund me, then I can harvest the Bush you are very welcome to do that and take it along and sell it and do whatever with it. But that is that. Is always, you know, everybody wants to do it but in a big style, I mean not like one or two hectares. Now I mean like properly, but therefore you need the funding and it would not be a problem to supervise it in that sense, that would not be the problem, but the funding would be, I would see from my side for now I wouldn't be able to fund it on my own to go and say, OK, there's 500 hectares of Bush, pick it up. Go ahead.

**So I have two questions. So the first one you said. While Bush clearing using so do you use two selective or do you just? Clear out everything. He leaves some behind.**

If the Bush is growing back so quickly now that it is better for you to actually focus on the open spaces that you have already and carry on doing the maintenance on them as well. That is one important thing, but this is a 4000 hectare farm and with two people you can imagine how you are actually always just doing the maintenance, the basics and it's following you up and away because it's overwhelming how quick it if I would have half a million and I could pay a lot of people, particularly, which I would do it. Immediately now.

**So is it also because do you also do the aftercare? Because so it's like so once you clear the Bush and. Then you have.**

Yes, you have to because one rain season later.

**And if you don't actually drop it then, then the next year you have breast and then you already have spend longer on hitting out that Bush than the smallish ones.**

On my second business, you said you and Florence strongly believe fire setting us, burning them is the is the one of the easiest way to do it because one of the most natural ways, I think, because I think it's not, I mean there are some animals that die, but I think it is, I mean you can, you can convince me with the theory that it is not the case because I'm a young, unexperienced farmer. But The thing is, if you chop down a tree, how do you get rid of it? Burning it is actually not a very good way because you are wasting this resource that you are just burning it away, but it would be in it's in an efficient way because it has a lot of hectares. It covers in a quick in one day, so that is why it's efficient. Not because it's like very sustainable in in that sense. I mean would in other places that people pay a lot of money for the wood here we have it lying around.

**OK, OK. So if you have because you don't have any other purposes, the most efficient way and quickest way possible is burning. So you practice that?**

The most the cheapest and efficient way. Let's put those two together and I'll cost efficiency if I go and I put a plane into the air or I go and take the bulldozer and pay a lot of diesel or I take a chain. And you know. All these things are more expensive than a controlled fire, I would say. Also, I'm not so convinced with all these chains and all these bulldozers, because when they come to the tree, all the seeds that spread, that's just, you know, increasing the Bush and it comes out more even worse than before. And that's also fluorene also mentioned that yesterday.

That he can observe that on the other farm where they do charcoal already, that's there, where they shop now, that's where they chopped off the big bushes, the huge, the big trees that a lot of small ones are coming. I mean, that's in a way logical, because there's then enough water again for a lot of small ones to come up so, but is that what you want? You want actually the way of getting rid of the Bush on the long on the long term. But on the other hand, it's not a bad thing because then you can carry on harvesting so.

**So then just. Also because this is also something which others also reported. Right. So this equipment you fear there will be much more a quicker regeneration than how much you are harvesting? Proceeds, which means the best way to do or preferred way to do is like individually chop them using manual labor. But as a commercial farmer, not only you, many people are, you know, afraid of the theft, of livestock and so on and so forth. So this problem has to be addressed, right? So what do you think can be done to address this issue because you are not the only commercial farmer who has this issue or told about this, but I see that this has to be addressed first. If Bush clearing has to be done in a good way. So do you have any options or suggestions do you think? It might work. Do you think example for examples as a suggestion, giving them props, ensuring their basic livelihood is met, like giving them proper food, shelter, sanitation so on and so forth is good working conditions? Is it enough to motivate or?**

If the working conditions are good enough and that will also motivate people to do that job, which is obviously at the moment still I think one of the hardest jobs except mining, I can imagine that is on the similar level now because it's constant physical work. No, the, but then it's all standing and falling with funding. It's all standing and falling with funding for sure. And then obviously you can also think about having different methods of harvesting. You can combine labor and machines in a way you know that you

**Alright. I think these were the questions, thank you so much.**